

judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.' A rod dipped in guilt may smart sore upon the back of God's children, if they will play the wantons and rebels with God. Eli broke his neck, his sons were killed in battle, the ark taken. But then there are some other things belonging to his internal government, as the withdrawing the comforts of his Spirit, or the lively influences of his grace; for this was the evil David feared when he had gone into wilful sins: Ps. li. 11, 12, 'Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not away thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.' When God's children fall into sin, though the Lord doth not utterly take away his loving-kindness from them, he may abate the influences of his grace so far as they may never recover the like measure again as long as they live.

SERMON III.

Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.—ACTS III. 26.

THESE words are the conclusion of the second sermon that was preached after the pouring out of the Spirit, and in them you may observe three things:—

I. The parties concerned: *unto you first.*

II. The benefit offered: *God, having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you.*

III. The blessing interpreted, or what kind of blessing it is we shall have by the Mediator: *he hath sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities.*

Let me a little open these, before I come to observe anything.

I. For the parties concerned: *unto you first.* Why was the first offer of Christ made unto the people of the Jews? For sundry reasons. Partly:—

1. Because they were the only church of God for that time, and the people that were in visible communion with him. And God hath so much respect for the church, that they shall have the refusal and the morning-market of the gospel. And whatsoever dispensations of grace are set on foot shall be first brought to them: 'He hath showed his statutes unto Jacob: he hath not dealt so with other nations,' Ps. cxlvii. 19.

2. They were the children of the covenant: 'Ye are the children of the covenant,' therefore 'unto you first.' God was in covenant with their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and God follows a covenant people with more offers of grace than he doth vouchsafe unto others, and bears with sin after sin till he can bear no longer. And when the branches of the covenant-stock run quite wild, then they are cut off, Rom. xi. 20.

3. Christ came of them after the flesh, and was of their seed, Rom.

ix. 5; to teach us first to seek the salvation of our kindred, and countrymen, and near relations: those that are nearer to us lie next our work and service. Therefore, *to you first.*

4. That he might magnify his grace and faithfulness, not only in the matter of the gospel, but even in the first offer of it. He doth magnify his faithfulness herein, for it is said, 'Christ is the minister of the circumcision to confirm the truth to their fathers,' Rom. xv. 8. God had promised their fathers that he would raise up a Saviour, therefore he must be first discovered here; and he magnifies his grace, for there was Christ preached where he was crucified. They had the first handsel of this good news, and wrath came not upon them to the uttermost till they had despised the gospel, as well as killed the Lord of glory, 1 Thes. ii. 14, 15.

5. This was necessary too for the confirmation of the gospel: *to you first.* Christ did not sneak nor steal into the world clancularly and privately, but he would have his law set up where it was likely to be most questioned. They were most concerned to inquire into the truth of matters of fact upon which the credit of the gospel had depended. If he had first gone to the Gentiles, the Jews might have objected their condemning Christ as a malefactor, and that his messengers and apostles durst not set on foot the report of his miracles, life, and death in their confines. But Christ would have the gospel preached there, where, if there were any falsehood in it, it might easily be disproved; and because the main of the Jewish doctrine was adopted into the Christian, and was confirmed by the prophecies of the Old Testament, they were the only competent judges to whose cognisance these things should be first offered. Therefore he saith, 'Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you.'

6. That the ruin of that nation might be a fit document and proof of God's severity against the contemners of the new gospel, Acts xiii. 45-47. There it is showed that they were the first people to whom it was offered, and they contemned it, and therefore wrath came upon them to the uttermost. Therefore this did authorise and confirm this doctrine, wherever it should be preached and offered.

7. That the first ministers might be a pattern of obedience, to preach where God would have them, to preach in the very face and teeth of opposition. Christ appoints their station. The Jews were like to be the most virulent enemies against the gospel, because the rulers put Christ to death: Go, preach the gospel to all nations, but begin at Jerusalem, though there you meet with a great deal of spite and opposition. Now, because of these reasons, 'Unto you first, the Lord, having raised up his Son,' &c.

II. The second thing to be explained is the benefit offered: wherein is set forth the great love of God unto the people to whom the gospel comes.

1. In designing such a glorious person as Jesus Christ: *having raised up his Son Jesus.*

2. In that he gave notice, and did especially direct and send him to them: *hath sent his Son.*

3. Why he came among them in his word: it was *to bless them.*

[1.] In designing the person who should do them good, 'God hath raised up his Son Jesus.' It may seem to be meant of his resurrection from the dead; but I think rather to raise up is to exalt, to call, to authorise, to appoint to some notable work; and it is used for installing, consecrating, as in this very chapter: ver. 22, 'He shall raise up a prophet from among you;' Acts xiii. 23, 'Of this man's seed hath God raised up to Israel a Saviour;' that is, hath put authority upon him, given him commission to save sinners, raised up, designed him to this work. But then:—

[2.] The special direction of his providence: 'God having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you.' Sometimes the word is said to be sent to us: Acts xiii. 26, 'To you is this word of salvation sent.' He doth not say, We have brought this salvation to you, but 'To you it is sent.' God hath a great hand in directing the course of the gospel. And sometimes Christ is said to be sent, as here in the text; for where the gospel is preached to a people, Christ is sent to them as a token from heaven; if he be neglected, you despise the riches and bounty of God, and the best and choicest gift that ever could be bestowed upon the sons of men. Therefore he saith, 'God having raised his Son, hath sent him.' Where the gospel goes, there Christ is sent; there he comes that he may have work to do.

[3.] Here is the end and purport of his coming; not to take vengeance of the affronts and contumelies they had put upon him, but he comes to bless. For the opening of this word, you must look to the preceding verse. He speaks of the covenant made with Abraham, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' Now Jesus was sent unto them to assure this blessing. The blessing is any good that accrues and results to us from the covenant of grace, but chiefly those special blessings we have by Christ, reconciliation with God, and life eternal, those things which he minded to purchase for us, and hath dispensed to us by his gracious covenant. This is the blessing intended,—All nations are to be blessed in the seed of Abraham; now God having raised Christ of this man's seed, hath sent him to bless you.

III. Here is the blessing interpreted and restrained, and that is conversion from sin: 'In turning every one of you from his sins.' They expected a pompous Messiah, that should make them an opulent and potent nation. But Christ came upon another errand, to convert souls unto God. Only mark, when the apostle speaks this, he speaks it not of the intention of God, but the offer of his grace; otherwise every particular Jew must be converted, or God missed his end. God may send him to bless, and yet some may contemn the offer; others God prevents by the special efficacy of his grace, or else all would contemn it. They that do contemn it are justly passed by; and they that receive it, owe it to his grace, and not to themselves. It was the secret purpose of his grace to bring in many, and this brought in three thousand men. There were others refused this blessing offered from the Mediator, and they justly perish for their unbelief.

The point, though there be many, that I shall insist on, is:—

Doct. That a main blessing we have by Christ is to be turned from our iniquities.

I. Here I shall inquire, What it is to be turned from sin.

II. I shall show you, That certainly this is a very blessed thing.

III. That this is the great blessing of the Mediator that we have by Christ in the gospel.

IV. In what manner Christ turneth us from our iniquities.

I. What it is to be turned from sin. Take these considerations:—

1. Man fallen, lay under the power and guilt of sin: he was ‘dead in trespasses and sins, and liable to the wrath of God,’ Eph. ii. 1-3. So man was both unholy and guilty.

2. Christ came to free us from both these. The guilt: Eph. ii. 7, ‘In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins;’ and the power: Titus iii. 5, ‘He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.’ To be freed from guilt, and delivered from hell and wrath to come, is a blessing for which we can never be sufficiently thankful; but to be freed from sin, that is the greater mercy, and therefore ‘he hath sent his Son to bless you, in turning every one of you from your sins.’

3. To be turned from sin implies our whole conversion. Though one part only be mentioned, the term *from which*, yet the term *to which* is implied; that we are turned to God as well as turned from sin; to God, as our happiness, and our supreme Lord, that we may love him, and be happy in being beloved by him, Acts xxvi. 18.

4. That remission of sins is included in our conversion to God. The meaning is, that he may turn you from your unbelief and impenitency, and so make you capable of his pardon and mercy; for so it is explained, ver. 19, ‘Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,’ &c. Without sound repentance the Mediator’s blessing will not be had; and when Christ came to save us from wrath, his way was to turn us from sin. These two must not be severed: ‘God hath exalted him to be a prince and Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins,’ Acts v. 31. You see, then, what is meant by the blessing the Mediator offers,—to be turned from our sins.

II. It is a blessed thing to be made partakers of this benefit. Blessedness imports two things: negatively, a removal of evil; and positively, a fruition or enjoyment of some great good. When we are turned from our sins, there is both.

1. An immunity from, or a removal of, the great evil, and that is sin.

[1.] The great cause of offence between God and us is taken out of the way: Isa. lix. 2, ‘Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and have hidden his face from you.’ Sin makes the distance between you and God, that you cannot delight in God, nor God in you. You cannot delight in God, for your hearts are alienated from him. You are become ‘enemies in your mind by wicked works.’ Where sin reigns, man is an enemy to God; partly through carnal prepossession; there is something takes up his heart, and diverts it from God: 1 John ii. 15, ‘If any man love the world, how dwelleth the love of the Father in him?’ His heart is taken up with another love. And partly through carnal liberty: we cannot enjoy our lusts with that freedom and security, by reason of the restraints of his law,

that would curb us and cut us short of our desires; and partly through slavish fear. We hate those whom we fear. A condemning God can never be loved by a guilty creature. We look upon him as one that will call us to an account for our sins. Now, all these reasons concur to show us, that till sin be taken away, we cannot love nor delight in God, neither can God love us and delight in us. God will not have communion with us while we are in our sins. Christ, when he came to bring us to God, he came not to make any change in God, to make God less holy, but to make us holy and amiable in his sight. The reasonable nature cannot digest this conceit, that the holy God should take sinners into his bosom without any change. Would it become the governor of the world to be indifferent to good and bad, the holy God to be a friend to sinners? The new nature in us showeth the contrary; for that causes an abomination and abhorrence both of impurity and the impure; as Lot's righteous soul was vexed with the Sodomites. And we are told, Prov. xxix. 27, 'An unjust man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.' If a man be sanctified but in part, he cannot delight in the wicked freely to converse with them. He hath a hatred, not of enmity so as to seek their destruction, not a hatred opposite to good-will—that is contrary to the nature of grace, which is made up of love—but a hatred of abomination, which is contrary to the love of complacency; he cannot take any delight in him. Now, then, without a manifest reproach to the holy God, we cannot imagine he should admit sinners into an intimate communion with him: 'Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity,' Ps. v. 5. God said to the prophet, Jer. xv. 19, 'Let them return unto thee, but return not thou to them.' God will not return to us in our sins, but we must come off from our sins to him.

[2.] We are freed from the great blemish of our natures. Sin defaced the image of God in us: Rom. iii. 23, 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' We lost not only the favour of God, but the image of God; the great excellency of our nature was eclipsed and defaced. Now the plaster will not be as broad as the sore, nor our reparation by Christ correspondent to our loss by Adam, if our nature be not healed, and the image of God restored in us. If Adam had only left us guilty, the pardon of sin had been enough; but he conveyed an evil nature, and therefore we must be turned from our sins, as well as pardoned, otherwise Christ would not restore all that Adam took away, Ps. lxxix. 4. Is he a good physician that takes away the pain, and leaves the great disease uncured? But Christ has procured the favour of God for us, and repaired the image of God in us, and therefore certainly put us into a way of blessedness again. Holiness was our primitive excellency and amiableness.

[3.] We are freed from that that is the great burden of the creature, as well as his blemish. Whatever it be to the common sinner, that is no matter; he hath no right thoughts of things, and is besotted with his carnal choice; for sin is an evil, whether it be felt or no. But the awakened sinner is sensible not only of the guilt of sin, but it is his greatest burden that he should have a nature inclines him to grieve and dishonour God. Pharaoh could say, 'Take away this

plague.' But a penitent, broken-hearted sinner cries, 'Take away all iniquity.' They desire a change of this state by regeneration. Therefore the promises of the gospel, considering a penitent soul under such a distress, are suited to the case: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' If you know what sin is, and penitently bemoan yourselves to God, you will be troubled with the power and pollution of it, as well as the guilt: Micah vii. 18, 19, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He will turn again, he will have compassion, he will subdue our iniquities.' A heart truly affected doth not only desire pardon and ease, but power against sin. A man that hath his leg broken would not only desire ease of his pain, but to have his leg set right again. A leprous condemned malefactor desires not only to be freed from the sentence of condemnation, but to be cured, or his pardon will do him no good. Now, surely, it is a great blessing to be turned from our sins, to be freed from that a penitent soul finds to be so great a burden; and the Mediator gives us a notable proof of his love in it.

[4.] Being turned from our sins, we are freed from the great bane of our persons and all our happiness. Sin is a cursed inmate, it fires the lodging where it is entertained and harboured, unless speedily cast out of doors; it involves us in the curse of the law, 'The wages of sin is death;' therefore Christ, that he might free us from misery, doth first free us from sin. If pardon of sin be a blessing, certainly to be turned from sin is a blessing (for the one cannot be had without the other); till you are turned from sin you cannot be pardoned, not justified till you are sanctified: Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, 'Blessed is the man whose sin is forgiven, and whose iniquity is covered, and unto whom the Lord will not impute his sin, in whose spirit there is no guile.' When God hath given us a holy sincere heart, and turned us from our sins, then we have the blessedness of pardon: 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit,' Rom. viii. 1. We are freed from the condemning power of the law when freed from sin, and all that woe and wrath that belongs to every soul that doth evil.

By all these considerations it appears how great a blessing the turning us from sin is in the privative notion, that is, the removal of so great an evil.

2. Take blessedness in the positive notion, that is, to enjoy a great good; and it will appear it is a blessed thing to be turned from our sins.

[1.] Because this is the matter of our serenity, comfort, and peace here, and the pledge and beginning of our eternal felicity hereafter. The soul can never be settled in a holy peace till it be turned from its sins; we can never find rest till we get out of Satan's yoke and get into Christ's blessed liberty: 'The fruit of righteousness is peace,' Isa. xxxii. 17. We are freed from those unquiet and troublesome thoughts wherewith others are haunted. A wicked man's soul is in a mutiny, one affection wars against another, and all against the conscience, and the conscience against all; but where the heart is framed

to the obedience of God's will, there is peace. *Pax est tranquillitas ordinis*, when all things keep their place, as in an accurate orderly life they do: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and the whole Israel of God.' There is peace, for there is a harmonious accord between God and them, and between them and themselves: Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they that love thy law;' not only peace, but great peace, 'a peace that passeth all understanding.' Whilst we are in our sins, there is ever a fear of the war which is between God and us, and there is a war in ourselves, conscience disallowing our practices, and our practices disliking the conduct of conscience, so that there is no peace to the wicked. But when the Lord Jesus hath taken us in hand, and begun to cure us, and frame us aright, and show us his wonderful grace in turning us from our sins, here is matter provided for serenity and peace.

[2.] It is the pledge of our eternal felicity hereafter; for heaven is the perfection of holiness, or the full fruition of God in glory. Now, when the Mediator begins to take away sin, he blesses you; for the life is then begun which shall be perfected in heaven. Unless it be begun here, it will never be perfected there: for 'without holiness no man shall see God,' Heb. xii. 14. But if it be begun, it will surely be perfected there; for 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' The vision and fruition of God is begun here, the spirit of holiness is the earnest of our inheritance, Eph. i. 13, 14. Oh, what blessedness is it then to have the new heart planted into us by Christ, and to live the new life! It is the beast about you that delights in the momentary, base, dreggy pleasures of sin. But when Christ hath turned you from your sins, you are blessed indeed, you are in the way to blessedness, and you shall be blessed for ever; he gives peace as a pledge of happiness and eternal glory.

III. I shall prove that this is the Mediator's blessing.

1. Let me lay down this, that those blessings that are most proper to the Mediator are spiritual blessings. We forfeited all by sin, but especially the grace of the Spirit, whereby we might be made serviceable to God. Other mercies run in the channel of common providence, but spiritual blessings are the discriminating graces and favours that are given us by the Mediator: Eph. i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.' Christ came not to distribute honours, and greatness, and worldly riches to his followers, but to turn away every one of us from our sins, to reduce us to God, that we may love him, and be beloved of him. He came as a spiritual Saviour, to give us grace rather than temporal happiness. Most men have a carnal, Jewish notion of Christ, they would have a temporal safety and happiness, they would have deliverance from affliction, rather than deliverance from sin. To be 'delivered from every evil work' is more than to be 'delivered from the mouth of the lion.' This is most proper to the Mediator, 2 Tim. iv. 18. A sanctified use of troubles is more than an exemption from them; a carnal man may have exemption from them, but not a sanctified use of them. Poverty, lameness, blindness, are not as bad as ignorance, unruly lusts, and want of grace.

Moral evils are worse than natural. Daniel was cast into a lion's den, you would think that was a misery; but it was a greater misery when Nebuchadnezzar was thrust out among the beasts, being given up to a brutish heart. Exemption from trouble may be hurtful to us, but deliverance from sin is never hurtful to us.

Among the spiritual blessings we have by the Mediator, conversion from sin to God is the chiefest we have on this side heaven. That it was the main part of Christ's undertaking, I shall prove by scripture and reason. For scripture, the text is clear for it; for thus the apostle interprets the covenant-blessing. 'In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed,' namely, 'God hath sent him to bless you.' Wherein? 'In turning every one of you from your sins.' 'He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins,' Mat. i. 21; not only from the guilt, but the power of sin; not only from the evil *after* sin, but the evil *of* sin itself. *Denominatio est a majori*—the name is taken from what is chiefest. And so when he is promised to the Jews, 'The Redeemer shall come out of Sion, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' There is his principal work: 1 John iii. 5, Christ came 'to take away sin, and in him is no sin.' He means not only the condemning power, but the power of it in the heart; for he is pleading arguments for holiness, why believers should not run into sin, which is 'a transgression of the law.' One is from the undertaking of Christ, he came 'to take away sin;' and from the example of Christ, 'in him is no sin.' He plainly means the power of sin.

2. Now, to give you some reasons why this is the chief benefit, most eyed by Christ, and should be most regarded by us.

[1.] Christ's undertaking was principally for the glory of God: 'All the promises are in him, yea and amen, to the glory of God;' and it should not be a question which should have the precedence, the glory of God or our good. Christ came to promote God's glory, and that must have the precedence of our benefit. Now, then, the abolishing the guilt of sin doth more directly respect our interest and good; but the abolishing the power of sin, or the turning and cleansing the heart from it, doth more immediately respect the glory of God, and our subjection to God. Therefore Christ would not only pacify the wrath of God, but his chief work, that doth mostly concern the glory of God, was to heal our evil natures, and prevent sin for the time to come.

[2.] To be turned from sin is to be freed from the greatest evil; for pardon gives us an exemption from punishment, which is a natural evil, but conversion gives us freedom from our naughty hearts, which is a moral evil; and, certainly, vice is worse than pain, and sin than misery. Besides, sin is the cause of all evil, and the taking away the cause is more than ceasing the effect.

[3.] This hath nearer connection with the life of glory. Pardon only removes the impediment, but the sanctifying and healing of our natures is the beginning of the life of glory, and introduction into it. Pardon removes our guilt, which hinders our happiness; therefore, divines say, justification is *gratia removens prohibens*, that that removes the impediment; but the sanctifying the heart is an introduction into our glorious state, and the more sanctified the more meet to be partakers thereof, Col. i. 12. Now that which doth positively make

us capable of glory and happiness is a greater privilege than that which only removes the impediment.

[4.] That is the greatest benefit which makes us more amiable in the sight of God, and is the object of his delight. Now he delights in us as sanctified rather than pardoned. We love him, indeed, for pardoning and forgiving so great a debt: 'She loved much, because much was forgiven her;' but God delighteth in holiness, and the reflection and impress of his own image upon us: Prov. xi. 20, 'The upright in the way are his delight.' When the Spirit hath renewed us according to the image and nature of God, that makes us amiable in his sight, and an object of divine complacency; therefore, surely this is the great privilege and blessing we have by the Mediator here in this world. I come to the fourth thing.

IV. In what way doth Christ turn us from our iniquities?

1. He doth purchase this grace for us; and—

2. He works it in us.

1. He purchaseth this grace for us that we may be turned: 1 Peter ii. 24, 'He bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness.' That was his end, not only to lay the obligation upon us, but to procure the grace whereby we may be enabled to do so. This sacrifice was a truly propitiatory sacrifice, whereby God was appeased, and forfeited blessings restored. The loss of God's image was a great part of our punishment, and it is a part of our deliverance that Christ hath purchased this grace as well as pardon. He hath given himself for us, that he might cleanse us, and sanctify us, and make us a pure and holy people unto God, Eph. v. 25, 26.

2. As he hath purchased it for us, so he works it in us, partly by the power of his internal grace, and partly by blessing and sanctifying external means and helps for such an end and purpose.

First, I say, by the power of his internal grace changing our hearts and minds: Titus iii. 5, 6, '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;' and he acteth in us as Christ's Spirit, and as we are members of Christ. It is the Spirit enlightens the mind, so that we begin to see the evil that is in sin, the necessity to get rid of it: 'After I was instructed, I smote upon the thigh;' and also to overcome the obstinate heart of man and turn it to God, and to fix the inclination of the soul against sin. In short, by his preventing grace he doth convert us, by his exciting grace sanctify us, by his assisting grace he makes us persevere, in turning us more and more from sin to holiness.

Secondly, He sanctifies and blesses external helps and means. I shall instance in two—ordinances and providences.

[1.] Ordinances, such as the word and sacraments: John xvii. 19, 'I sanctified myself, that they might be sanctified by the truth,' that is, the preaching of the word. 'He gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word.' Mark these and other places of scripture, and you will find the merit of Christ doth reach the ordinances, that by them grace may be conveyed, and sin might be mortified and subdued in us. The word

calls us to excite our resolutions against sin, and strengthen them to avoid occasions to cut off the provisions of the flesh, to make it our daily task to war and strive against it; and none conscientiously wait upon the word but something by every attendance is given out for the weakening of sin and setting them afresh against it. And then the sacrament, that represents the death of Christ as the price of our dying to sin; and it represents him as the pattern according to which we must be conformed, that we may know that our old man is crucified, and that we may renew our covenant with God, and our resolutions, and bind ourselves to more serious endeavours against sin. The Lord Jesus, after he had procured the Spirit, and this wonderful grace to turn us from our sins, hath appointed congruous and fit ordinances, whereby he may dispense this grace to us more and more. And as he sanctifies ordinances, so—

[2.] Providences; for we are threshed, that our husks may fly off. Wherefore doth he chasten us sometimes, and very sorely, but to make us out of love with sin: 'The fruit of all shall be to take away sin,' Isa. xxvii. 9; and 'He chastens us verily for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness,' Heb. xii. 10. By all these means we are sanctified, by ordinances and providences, and by the all-powerful grace of this Holy Spirit.

Thus I have opened the fourth thing, how the Lord Jesus doth turn us from our sins.

The uses we may make of this point are:—

I. Of information. It informs us:—

1. Of the vain hopes of the carnal, and such as yet live in their sins; for at present they have no interest in him, and so living and dying will find him rather a judge than a Saviour, for the greatest part of their work is undone. We must be saved from the guilt and power of sin, and the latter is the proper sign of our recovery. We are 'justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified also in the Spirit of our God.' Christ did not purchase our salvation by piecemeal, nor can we receive it by piecemeal; a whole Saviour we must have, or no Saviour. She was the true mother that pleaded against the dividing of the infant. They are true Christians, I am sure, who would have Christ undivided, who would have him 'wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;' for if you take him in one respect and neglect him in another, especially the chief thing you should make use of him for, you do not take him at all. Therefore the carnal, that live in their sins, are at present excluded from all claim to Christ.

2. It shows us what we should mainly seek in our prayers. Leave not the Redeemer till he hath blessed you with his principal blessing. Our prayers for temporal happiness are not so welcome to Christ as our prayers for sanctifying grace and power against sin. Natural sense will put us upon asking corn and wine and oil; but the new creature saith, Lord, take away iniquity. Every man hath a sense of outward evils, and would fain be at ease; but every man hath not a sense of sin, and an hunger and thirst after righteousness. Self-love will prompt us to beg exemption from trouble, but sin is the worst burden to a tender heart. When your children ask you for apples and plums, and such things as are pleasing to their childish appetite, they do not

please you so much as when they desire you to teach them and instruct them in their duty, that they may not offend God and you. When you ask temporal things of God, you do not sin, for God hath given a liberty to ask daily bread; but when you ask grace, that you may be free from sin, that you may not offend God, or be a scandal to the gospel, this is most pleasing to God. When Solomon had asked wisdom, and not riches and honours, the thing pleased the Lord. These prayers are most acceptable to God, they will bring their answers with them; then you set your Redeemer about his proper work, for God 'sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your sins.' Nay; if you beg only for pardon, and do not mind the destruction of sin, you are no more willing to be saved than the devils are. Certainly the devils are willing to be saved from the wrath of God. Every creature seeks its own ease, and they would be eased of their torments. Every one would have eternal life: 'Evermore give us this bread.' But you are unwilling to be saved upon Christ's terms, if you will not let him mortify your lusts, and submit to his healing.

3. If this be the Mediator's great blessing, to turn you from your sins, then it follows that those who have their corruptions most mortified are the best Christians. The Redeemer hath been at work in their hearts, and they have most of the Mediator's blessing. He is not the best Christian that hath the most plausible gifts, that can with art and parts best perform outward duties, that hath the strongest memory, clearest apprehension, readiest elocution; but he that hath a humble, mortified, holy, pure, and self-denying spirit; for this is a more weighty point of Christ's undertaking, to make you holy, humble, and meek, than to furnish you with gifts, and make you free in speech. Again, he is not the best Christian that hath most fanatical raptures of joy, or pretended admirations of grace; but he that is crucified to the world, and hath felt the power of Christ's death. Many who are not careful, watchful, and exact in their conversations, yet will pretend to live upon Christ, and think they need not be so scrupulous to be troubled about their sins. These neglect the main end of Christ's coming, which was to turn every one of us from our iniquities.

4. It shows the necessity and excellency of holiness. The necessity of it will appear thus:—It is not only an evidence of our interest in the relative privileges, such as pardon, adoption, and the like; not only necessary by way of gratitude for salvation received, but it is necessary as a part of salvation itself. This is the salvation, the blessing of the Redeemer, this is the thing wherein he hath showed his free grace, in that he hath purchased the Spirit to heal our natures, and restore the image of God to us which was defaced by sin. Herein is Christ a Saviour, in saving his people from their sins, and 'he hath saved us by washing us in the laver of regeneration.' And once more, it is not only a main part of our salvation, but a necessary means to obtain the rest. No obtaining pardon without conversion, nor heaven till sin be quite done away. Secondly, The excellency of holiness appears. For this end we are redeemed by Christ, Luke i. 74, 75. And renewed by the Holy Ghost, Eph. iv. 24. Yea, our everlasting blessedness consists in the perfection of holiness, Eph. v. 27.

It informs us how much Christians are to blame, that they im-

prove their Christianity no more to get power and strength against sin. Christ, consider him as a prophet, priest, or king, doth still discover himself to be one that came to take away sin. As a prophet, he hath given us such a doctrine as is fit for such a use, John xvii. 17. His word is the best glass to see corruption. The highest motives in the world are propounded to purge it out. His calls, promises, and threats are all to take away sin; and as a priest, he hath paid the price that was necessary to preserve the honour of God's justice, that there might be no stop in the way of that abundant grace, and that we may have the gift of the Spirit, 1 John i. 7. Because his blood was that meritorious price that was shed, that we might be turned from sin, and this blood is pleaded before God, 'He lives for ever to make intercession for you,' that in all your conflicts and temptations you may have necessary strength against sin. As a king, he doth powerfully by his Spirit maintain his interest against the devil, world, and flesh, and helps you to overcome sin. He is 'the captain of your salvation.' Yet lamentable it is to see what a poor cowardly spirit is in most Christians, how soon captivated with every slender assault and petty temptation, and their resolutions so soon shaken, not so much for want of strength, as sluggishness and cowardice, and want of care. Men spare their pains, and then cry out they are impotent, when there is such grace provided in the Redeemer. Like lazy beggars that personate and act diseases because they would not work, they are not able to stand before the slightest motions of sin, because they do not stir up themselves and improve the grace they have, or might have by Christ. Certainly idle complaints of sin will not become those that profess an interest in Christ, for his main great undertaking, which is by all methods carried on still, is the taking away sin. So much for the information.

II. Take home with you this truth in your hearts, that Christ's work is to turn you from sin, and it is the great blessing we have from him in the new covenant. Then do not neglect this work, nor contemn this blessing. You know the fault of those, they made light of these things. Especially do not resist this work, nor grieve the Holy Spirit of Christ which would work it in you, and quench not his sanctifying motions; rather deliver up yourselves to all his healing methods, and be so far from resisting, that you should improve the power of his grace every day. He turns us indeed by way of efficiency, but we turn ourselves by submission to his blessed motions. He draws, and we run after him. Therefore, every time Christ offers this saving help, thou art put to thy choice, whether thou wilt have Christ or sin to reign over thee. Christ, that doeth it for thee, must do it in thee. Christ is the author that turns, but the sinner is the subject, and he first works upon you, and afterwards he works by you. He converts you to God by the victorious impressions of his grace, and afterwards, 'ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body.' We cannot do it; Christ must do it, but he will do it in his own way. He hath sanctified ordinances to convey this to you. Now, wilt thou wait diligently till it be accomplished? The physician cures the disease, but the patient must take the appointed medicine. You must not expect he should cure it, and thou feel it not, as it were by spells and charms without

thee, without putting thee to the trouble of physic. Take up a resolution to look after the cure of thy soul, and observe the whole progress of the work, and what a wound is given to sin in every ordinance: what in the word, what in the Lord's Supper; how thy resolution is strengthened against it; how the carnal nature wears off every day. The work is not perfect in an instant, but he is still turning; therefore when thou beginnest to be dead to sin, die more. Ye are dead, therefore mortify. Christ hath perfectly bought off all sin in every kind and degree; should not we strive to have all that he hath purchased? At least do not strengthen thy bonds, the sin thou canst not avoid hate it, and keep up the lively resistance still. Hear diligently, pray earnestly, watch narrowly, and keep thyself from thy sin: do not only pare the nails of it, but cut off thy very right hand, and mortify and subdue it yet more and more, that Christ may have his conquest in thy soul.

SERMON IV.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.—2 PET. I. 4.

In these words the apostle extolleth the grace of God towards us in the gospel. In them take notice of:—

First, The means.

Secondly, The end and use of them.

Thirdly, The method and order in which this effect is wrought in us.

First, The means whereby God conveys his grace to us, viz., the promises of the gospel, which are set forth:—

1. By their excellency: *exceeding great and precious promises.*

2. Their freeness: *are given to us.*

1. Their excellency is set forth by two adjuncts. They are 'exceeding great and precious': τὰ μέγιστα καὶ τίμια ἐπαγγέλματα. The one noteth their intrinsic worth and value; they are 'exceeding great.' The other, our esteem of them; they deserve to be 'precious' to us.

[1.] Τὰ μέγιστα, so called from the matter of them, which are great and precious gifts, such as pardon, and life begun in sanctification and perfected in glory.

[2.] Τὰ τίμια ἐπαγγέλματα, precious, deserving and challenging our esteem, being so suitable to our necessities and desires. Our necessity ariseth from the fears of misery so justly deserved. Our desires are after a proper happiness, which is only offered to us in the promises of God, not only as probable, but as certain to be ours, if duly qualified. Now these promises, being so great and precious, should attract us to all purity and holiness; for what is greater, and