

A wise man doth not dally with religion, but thoroughly sets himself to it.

Use 1. Be persuaded that serious Christianity is the true wisdom; and the wisdom of the world, which is only conversant about worldly things, from a worldly principle to a worldly end, is foolishness with God. This is wisdom, which acquainteth us more with God, and leadeth us into everlasting happiness.

2. Admire the wisdom of God in dispensing salvation by Christ, who could bring light out of darkness, and so great a demonstration of his glory out of man's sin, and vanquish Satan by the way, whereby he seemed most to prevail, and still attain his end by means seemingly contrary. There is more of divine power and wisdom showed in Christ crucified than in anything men could think of. It was a more glorious act of power to raise Christ from the dead, than in not permitting him to die. He prevailed more by laying down his life, than by being prosperous in the world and taking the lives of his enemies.

3. If God hath abounded to us in all wisdom, let us not disturb the order of this grace by asking privileges without duties, or minding duties without the help of the Spirit; or placing all in duties, so as to exclude the merit and satisfaction of the Redeemer; or to eye the ransom so as to exclude the example of Christ. All things are well ordered in God's covenant; the confusion arises from our darkness and misapprehensions.

4. There should be wisdom and prudence in us, for the impression must be according to the seal and stamp. Wisdom is a saving knowledge of divine mysteries; and prudence, to regulate and order our actions and practices, to perform our respective duties to God and man. The apostle prays for the Colossians (Col. i. 9), that they might 'be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.' All have not the same measure of saving knowledge and prudence, yet the least saint hath what is necessary to salvation. You must every day grow in those graces, for by degrees they are carried on towards perfection.

SERMON IX.

And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?—MAT. XXVII. 46.

IN the history of the passion you will find that our Lord Jesus was exercised with all kind of temptations; affronted by men, assaulted by the powers of darkness, deserted by his own disciples—one of them denied him, another betrayed him, but all fled. And thus he was not only 'rejected of men,' but was stricken, and smitten, and forsaken of God. This was as gall and vinegar to his wounds, the passion of his passion. The world's cruelty and Satan's rage had been nothing, if the brightness of the divine presence had not been eclipsed. When the people were set against him—'His blood be upon us and our

children'—he complained not of that. When 'friend and lover were afar off,' he doth not complain of that. Judas, why hast thou betrayed me? Peter, why hast thou denied me? Disciples, why have ye forsaken me? But when God was withdrawn, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' This is his bitter complaint now.

The words, then, are Christ's complaint, not of God, but to God. In them observe:—

1. The circumstance of time when this complaint was made: *about the ninth hour.*

2. The matter of it: God had *forsaken* him.

3. The manner of it: with vehemency, and yet with faith. There was faith in it, for he saith, *My God.* The vehemency is seen in the extension of his voice: he *cried with a loud voice*; and by the ingemination of the name of God: *my God, my God.*

1. The circumstance of time: *about the ninth hour.* We read in the former verse, that 'from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.' At the passion of Christ the earth trembled, the sun seemed to be struck blind with astonishment, and the frame of nature to put itself into a funeral garb and habit, as if the creatures durst not show their glory while God was manifesting his anger for sin, and Christ was suffering. After three hours' darkness, he complaineth not of that, but of the sad eclipse that was upon his own spirit.

2. The matter complained of: *why hast thou forsaken me?* It is not an expostulation, so much as a representation of the heavy burden that was upon him. Questions among the Hebrews imply earnest assertions; as Ps. x. 1, 'Why standest thou afar off? Why hidest thou thyself in the time of trouble?' that is, Lord! thou hidest thyself from me. So Ps. xliii. 2, 'Why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy?' that is, I do go mourning. The case is represented in such forms of speech.

3. The vehemency.

[1.] In the extension of his voice. Great griefs express themselves by strong cries; for burdened nature would fain have vent and utterance. And the apostle taketh notice of this circumstance, *μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς*, Heb. v. 7, 'He offered prayers and tears, with strong crying.'

[2.] In the ingemination of the name of God: *My God, my God.* These possessive particles are words of faith striving against the temptation. He had great trouble of spirit, but to that he opposeth his interest: *My God, my God.* In the bitterest agonies Christ despaired not, but still had a most firm persuasion of God's love to him, and necessary support from him. But all showeth the trouble was not light, but heavy and grievous.

Doct. That Christ, as suffering for our sins, was really deserted for a time, in regard of all sensible consolation.

I. What was Christ's desertion?

II. Why it befell him.

III. What use may we make of it?

I. What was Christ's desertion? I shall, for more distinctness, handle it negatively and affirmatively.

First, Negatively.

1. It was not a desertion in appearance or conceit only, but real. We often mistake God's dispensations. God may be out of sight, and yet we not out of mind. When the dam is abroad for meat, the young brood in the nest is not forsaken. The children cry as if the mother were totally gone, when she is employed about necessary business for their welfare. 'Sion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me,' Isa. xlix. 14, 15. In the misgivings of our hearts God seems to have cast off all care and thoughts of us. God's affectionate answer showeth that all this was but a fond surmise: 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' So we think that we are cut off when God is about to help and deliver us, Ps. xxxi. 22. Many times we think he has quite cast us off, when we are never more in his heart. Surely, when our affections towards God are seen by mourning for his absence, he is not wholly gone; his room is kept warm for him till he come again. We mistake God's dispensations when we judge that a forsaking which is but an emptying us of all carnal dependence: Ps. xciv. 18, 19, 'When I said, My foot slipped, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.' He is near many times when we think him afar off; as Christ was to his disciples when their eyes were withheld that they knew him not, but thought him yet lying in the grave, Luke xxiv. 16. But this cannot be imagined of Christ, who could not be mistaken. If he complained of a desertion, surely he felt it. It was a real desertion. He could not misinterpret the dispensation of God he was now under, for such misapprehensions are below the perfection of his nature.

2. Though it were real, the desertion must be understood so as may stand with the dignity of his person and offices. Therefore—

[1.] There was no separation of the Father from the Son; this would make a change in the unity of the divine essence: John x. 30, 'I and my Father are one'—*Ἐμπεριχώρησις*. This eternal union of the person of the Father with the person of the Son always remained; for the divine nature, though it may be distinguished into Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, yet it cannot be divided.

[2.] There was no dissolution of the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, for the human nature which was once assumed was never after dismissed or laid aside; *Ἀχωρίστως*, Christ ever remained Immanuel, God with us, or God in our nature. He was 'the Lord of glory,' even then when he was crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 8. It was the Son of God that was delivered up for us all; not a mere man suffered for our redemption, but God purchased the church 'with his blood,' Acts xx. 28. Death, that dissolved the bond and tie between soul and body, did not dissolve the union of the two natures. They resemble it by a man drawing a sword, and holding the sword in one hand and the scabbard in another; the same person holds both, though separated the one from the other.

3. The love of God to him ceased not. We read, 'The Father loved the Son, and put all things into his hand,' John iii. 35. Now, he was his dear Son, or the Son of his love, Col. i. 13; 'In whom his

soul delighted,' Isa. xlii. 1; Eph. i. 6, 'He hath made us accepted in the beloved'—*primum amabile*; He was 'the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,' Heb. i. 3. Therefore he could not but love him in every state; yea, he never more loved him as mediator then when on the cross, that being the most eminent act of his self-denial and obedience (Phil. ii. 7), and so a new ground of love: John x. 17, 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life to take it up again.' The Father was well pleased with the reconciliation of lost sinners, he loveth Christ for undertaking and performing it; therefore it is unreasonable to imagine that, now he was about the highest act of obedience, there was any decrease of his love to him. No; his dispensation might be changed, but not his love. As the sun shining through a clear glass, or through a red glass, casts a different reflection, a bloody, or a bright, but the light is the same.

4. His personal holiness was not abated or lessened. The Lord Jesus was 'full of grace and truth,' John i. 14. He had the 'Spirit not by measure,' John iii. 34; he had in perfection all divine gifts and graces to accomplish him for this office, Col. i. 19; John i. 16, he was anointed by the Holy Ghost, and the oil that was poured on him never failed. Therefore he was always most holy and pure, one that never knew nor did sin. Neither his nature nor his office could permit an abatement of holiness: Heb. vii. 26, 'Such an high priest became us as was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' The Son of God might fall into misery, which is a natural evil, and so become the object of pity, not of blame; but not into sin, which is a moral evil, a blot, and a blemish. When he died, 'He died, the just for the unjust,' 1 Peter iii. 18. The death of Christ had profited us nothing if he had been a sinner for a moment; therefore this desertion was not a diminishing of his holiness, but a suspension of his comfort.

5. God's assistance and sustaining grace was not wholly withdrawn, for the Lord saith of him, Isa. xlii. 1, 'This is my elect servant, whom I uphold.' And everywhere the Lord is said to be with him in this work: Ps. cxxi. 5, 'The Lord is at thy right hand;' and Ps. xvi. 8. 'I have set the Lord always before me: he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' Which passage is by Peter applied to Christ: Acts ii. 25, 'For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved.' The power, presence, and providence of God was ever with him, to sustain him in his difficult enterprise. When his agonies began he told his disciples, John xvi. 32, 'Ye shall leave me alone: yet I am not alone, but the Father is with me.' The Father was with him when his disciples forsook him, and fled every one to his own, to carry him through, and that his arm might work salvation for him, and that he might not sink under the burden.

Secondly, Positively.

1. God's desertion of us, or any creature, may be understood with a respect to his communicating himself to us. We have a twofold apprehension of God, as a holy and happy being; and when he doth communicate himself to any reasonable creature, it is either in a way of holiness or in a way of happiness. He doth now in the kingdom of grace communicate himself more in a way of holiness, but in the king-

dom of glory fully in a way of happiness, both as to the body and the soul. These two have such a respect to one another, that he never gives felicity and glory without holiness, Heb. xii. 14. And a holy creature can never be utterly and finally miserable. He may sometimes give holiness without happiness, as when for a while he leaveth the sanctified, whom he will try and exercise under the cross, or in a state of sorrow and affliction; therefore holiness is the more necessary. In his internal government God doth all by his Spirit; now the Spirit is more necessarily a sanctifier than a comforter. It was by the Spirit that Christ was with God, and God with Christ; therefore his desertion of Christ, or any creature, must be mainly understood with respect to the Spirit working in any, either as to holiness or comfort. When God withdraweth either holiness or happiness, one of them, or both, or any degree of them, from any creature, he is said to desert them. Now apply this to Christ. It is blasphemy to say that Christ lost any degree of his holiness, for he was always pure and holy, and that most exactly and perfectly; therefore he was deserted only as to his felicity, and that but for a short time.

2. The felicity of Christ may be considered, either as to his outward and bodily estate, or else to his inward man, or the estate of his soul.

[1.] Some say his desertion was nothing else but his being left to the will and power of his enemies to crucify him, and that he was then deserted when his divine nature suspended the exercise of its omnipotency so far as to deliver up his body to a reproachful death, so to make way for this oblation and sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. God could many ways have protected Christ, and hindered his passion: Mat. xxvi. 52, 53, 'Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then could the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?' If the Lord had seen it fit to glorify himself by the deliverance, rather than the sufferings of Christ, he could have found ways and means enough to save him; but how then could our redemption be accomplished? Christ himself by his divine power could have protected his bodily life, for he telleth us: John x. 18, 'No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.' But it pleased God to appoint, and Christ to submit to another course, and therefore was he so far deserted, and left in the hand of his enemies. He telleth them, Luke xxii. 53, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' This, some say, was all Christ's desertion; and that he cried out with a loud voice, in the hearing of all, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' to give notice of the price that was to be paid for our ransom. He complained not of the Jews that had accused him, nor of Pilate that condemned him, nor of Judas that had betrayed him; but of God that had forsaken him, and left him in the hands of his enemies, as if this were the most grievous thing to the Son of God. But certainly this was not all; the desertion was not only in his outward estate, and with respect to bodily death, for these reasons:—

(1.) Why should Christ complain of that so bitterly, which he did so readily and willingly undergo, and might so easily have prevented,

and which was most obvious, and so clearly foreseen in his sufferings? He foretold it again and again to his disciples, and spake it to his enemies; and should he now represent it as a strange thing? Surely these strong cries were not extorted from him by the mere fear and horror of bodily death. I confess he died not insensibly, but showed the reality of all human passions; yet there was no reason why he should so bitterly and lamentably complain, if nothing else but bodily death had been in the case, and that brought upon him by his enemies.

(2.) If we look merely to bodily pains and sufferings, certainly others have endured as much if not more, as the thieves that were crucified with him lived longer in their torments, and the good thief did not complain that he was forsaken of God. Peter was crucified, and that with his head downwards, as ecclesiastical history tells us, which, as it was greater cruelty in the adversaries, so also greater pain to him; and yet he trusted that God would sustain him and support him under it. Therefore, certainly, there was something greater and more grievous to the soul of Christ than these bodily pains, which drew this lamentable and loud cry from him.

(3.) It would follow that every holy man that is persecuted and left to the will of his enemies, might be said to be forsaken of God, which is contrary to Paul's holy boasting: 2 Cor. iv. 9, 'Persecuted, but not forsaken.' Therefore there was something more than to be left to the will of his enemies.

(4.) This desertion was a punishment, one part or degree of the abasement of the Son of God, and so belongeth to the whole nature that was to be abased, not only to his body but his soul. We read often of his soul-sufferings: Isa. liii. 10, He was to 'make his soul an offering for sin,' and to 'see the travail of his soul,' ver. 11. His soul was deprived of consolation, and some effects of the Spirit as to joy and comfort.

[2.] As to the felicity of his inward estate, the state of his soul. Christ carried about his heaven with him, and never wanted sensible consolation, spiritual suavity, the comfortable effects of the divine presence, till now they were withdrawn, that he might be capable of suffering the whole punishment of sins, and feel not only pains and torments of body, but troubles of soul, such as we have when God hideth his face from us, but without sin. The divinity kept back those irradiations of heavenly light and comfort, or, for a while, suspended that joy and comfort which otherwise he felt in himself, though it gave out that virtue and strength which was necessary to support and sustain him under so great sufferings. As when the sun is eclipsed, the light of it ceaseth not, but is only hidden from the earth by the interposition of a dark body. So here, Christ had not the participation of that heavenly joy which before his soul felt by dwelling with God in a personal union, though there were no separation of the human nature from the divine; the ground of it was not taken away, but only the sense suspended; no dissolution of the union, but a ceasing of the comfort of it.

In short, I will show how this sort of desertion is—

1. Possible.

2. Grievous.

1. Possible, the union between the two natures remaining; for as

the divine nature gave up the body to death, so the soul to desertion. Christ, as God, is 'the fountain of life,' Ps. xxxvi. 9, and yet Christ could die. So the Godhead is the fountain of all joy and comfort, for he is called 'the God of all comfort,' 2 Cor. i. 3; and yet Christ's soul was troubled and heavy unto death, the Godhead suspending its virtue and operation. Both might well consist, for though the presence of the divinity be necessary with the humanity of Christ, yet the effects are voluntary. God worketh not out of necessity, no, not in the human nature of Christ; all kind of communications are given out according to his own pleasure. The divinity remained united to the flesh, and yet the flesh might die; so it remained united to the soul, and yet the soul might want comfort. The bond by which the two natures were united in one person remained firm and indissoluble, but the influx of sweetness and comfort was suspended. Some effect there is of the union, but not that which affords comfort and felicity, and this was suspended but for a time. There is a desertion, indeed, which agreeth not with the dignity of Christ. There is a total and eternal desertion, by which God so deserteth a man, both as to grace and glory, that he is wholly cast out of God's presence and adjudged to eternal torments, which is the case of the reprobate in the last judgment; this is not compatible to Christ, nor agreeing with the dignity of his person. There is a partial, temporal desertion, when God for a moment hideth his face from his people, Isa. liv. 7. This is so far from being contrary to the dignity of Christ's nature, that it is necessary to his office for many reasons.

2. That it is very grievous. This was an incomparable loss to Christ.

[1.] Partly because it was more natural to him to enjoy that comfort and solace than it can be to any creature. To put out a candle is no great matter, but to have the sun eclipsed, which is the fountain of light, that sets the world a-wondering. For poor creatures to lose their comforts is no great wonder, who, though they live in God, are so many degrees distant from him; but for Christ, who was God-man in one person, that is a difficulty to our thoughts, and a wonder indeed, for by this means he was so far deprived of some part of himself.

[2.] Partly because he had more to lose than we have. The greater the enjoyment, the greater is the loss or want. It was more for David to be driven from his palace, than a poor Israelite to be driven from his cottage. We lose drops, he an ocean. A poor Christian that hath some heaven upon earth in the fore-enjoyment of God, and the first-fruits and earnest of the Spirit, hath more to lose than another that hath had only some vanishing taste in the offer of eternal life, and receiving the word with joy. Proportionably judge of Christ, who was *comprehensor*, while he was *viator*, had the beatifical vision whiles on earth.

[3.] Partly because he knew how to value the comfort of the union, having a pure understanding and heavenly affections. God's children count one day in his presence better than a thousand, Ps. lxxxiv. 10; one glimpse of his love more than all the world, Ps. iv. 7. If they have anything of the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, they would not part with it for all the sensual enjoyments which others prize and value so much, and if they lose it they are touched to the

quick; they lose that which is the life of their lives, which they account their chief happiness. Now Christ was best able to apprehend the worth and value of communion with God, having such a clear understanding and tender affections, and therefore it must needs be grievous to him to have his wonted consolations suspended.

[4.] Partly because he had so near an interest and relation to God: Prov. viii. 30, 'One bred up with him, and daily his delight;' Col. i. 13—*Τὸς ἀγάπησ*. Look, among the children of God if they have any interest in him, how mournfully do they brook his absence. Mary Magdalen, 'Woman, why weepest thou? They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him,' John xx. 13. She sought a Christ, and found a grave. Christ's words, *my God*, do not only express his confidence but affection, when his God and Father hideth his face from him.

[5.] Partly from the nature of Christ's desertion. It was penal. All desertions may be reduced to these three sorts—for trial, for correction, or punishment. For trial; so God left Hezekiah, 'to prove what was in his heart,' 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. For fatherly correction; so God leaveth his people for a while, to teach them repentance, humility, hatred of sin, more entire dependence on himself, Isa. liv. 7, 'I have left thee for a small moment, but with everlasting mercies will I love thee.' For punishment; so he left Saul: 1 Sam. xxviii. 6, when he answered him 'neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.' So he leaveth the wicked to a reprobate mind. Now Christ's desertion was not for a trial. Fallible creatures may be put upon trial, but the Son of God needs it not. It would not agree with the goodness and wisdom of God to put his beloved Son on such a trial. He was neither unknown to his Father, nor did he vainly presume of his own strength as to need to be confuted by trial. Nor can it properly be called fatherly correction, for there was no sin in Christ that needed to be corrected. Indeed, 'the chastisement of our peace was upon his shoulders,' Isa. liii. 5. Therefore it remains that this desertion was penal and satisfactory, such as came from the vindictive and revenging hand of God. Our sins met in him, and he was forsaken in our stead. There was no cause in Christ himself, wherefore he deserved to be forsaken of God, but we had done the wrong, and he maketh the amends. There was nothing in Christ's person to occasion a desertion, but much in his office; so he was to give body for body and soul for soul; and this was a part of the satisfaction. He was beloved as a Son, forsaken as our mediator and surety.

II. Why was Christ forsaken?

Ans. With respect to the office which he had taken upon him, to expiate our sins, and to recover us from the deserved wrath and punishment into the love and favour of God. This desertion of Christ carrieth a suitableness and respect to our sin, our punishment, and our blessedness.

1. Our sin. Christ is forsaken to satisfy and make amends for our wilful desertion of God. When Adam sinned, we all turned the back upon God who made us. Yea, all actual sins are nothing but a forsaking of God for very trifles, an aversion from God, and a conversion to the creature: Jer. ii. 13, 'They have forsaken me, the fountain of

living waters, and have hewn out unto themselves broken cisterns that will hold no water.' Now we that forsook God deserved to be forsaken by God; therefore what we had merited by our sin, Christ endured as our mediator. He himself submitted to desertion. It is strange to consider what small things draw us off from God: 'For handfuls of barley and pieces of bread will that man transgress,' Ezek. xiii. 19; 'for a pair of shoes,' Amos ii. 6; 'for one morsel of meat,' Heb. xii. 16; Isa. lii. 3. This is the great degeneracy and disease of mankind, that a trifle will prompt us to forsake God, as a little thing will make a stone run down hill; it is its natural motion. There is nothing that is so easily exposed and put to hazard as the favour of God. Now this being the great sin of man, and the cause of other sins, it was needful that the odiousness of this sin should be set forth by the bitterness of Christ's sorrow under the want of the love of God. Christ's complaints show how God's favour is to be valued, and that it is a dangerous thing to part with it for carnal satisfactions. The consolations of God are cheap, and small things in the eyes of most men in the world. What is more slighted than God and Christ and our own salvation, and neglected for very trifles? And then what more perfect cure, and better way to instruct the world, than that these sins could not be expiated but by the desertion of the Son of God, and his bitter complaints for the suspension of the effects of the love of God to him?

2. It carries a full respect to the punishment appointed for sin. Certain we are that he 'bore the curse of the law,' Gal. iii. 13. Now the curse of the law, actively taken, is nothing but the sentence of the law, or rather of God the judge, condemning the transgressors of it to such punishment as the law appointed; passively taken, it is the punishment itself. And the final and great curse is that described, Mat. xxv. 41. To be banished from the presence of the Lord, and cast into extreme torment. There is a double punishment—*pœna damni et sensus*, the loss and the pain. The loss consisteth in our separation from God, from the comfortable happy fruition of him in glory: 'depart, ye cursed.' The pain in eternal torments is set forth by the worm and by the fire, Mark ix. 44. Now Christ being our surety, Heb. vii. 22, and giving himself 'a ransom for all,' 1 Tim. ii. 6—*ἀντιλυτρον*, the word implies a substitution or surrogation of one person in the room of another; he was to suffer what we were to suffer; if not the *idem*, every way the same, yet the *tantundem*, that which was sufficient to Christ's ends, that which was to carry a full resemblance with our punishment. It is one part of the punishment of sin to be forsaken of God, and many say the punishment of loss is greatest; he was therefore to suffer so much of it as his holy person was capable of; something that answereth to the *pœna damni* in his desertion, and to the *pœna sensus* in his agonies and pains: Isa. liii. 4, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.'

It is true the accidentals of punishment Christ suffered not. As—

[1.] To the place, he was not in hell. It was not necessary that Christ should descend into the hell of the damned. One that is bound as a surety for another needs not go into prison provided that he pay the debt. All that justice requireth is, that he satisfy the debt. Indeed, if he doth not, nor cannot satisfy the debt, he must to prison.

So here the justice of God must be satisfied, the holiness of God and hatred to sin sufficiently demonstrated, but Christ need not to go into the place of torments.

[2.] For the time of continuance. The damned must bear the wrath of God to all eternity, because they can never satisfy the justice of God, therefore they must lie by it world without end. As one that pays a thousand pounds by a penny a week, is a long time in paying; a rich man lays it down *in cumulo*, in a heap of gold all at once. Christ hath made an infinite satisfaction in a finite time; he bore the wrath of God in a few hours, which would overwhelm the creature. Christ did not suffer the eternity of wrath, but only the extremity of it, *intensivè*, not *extensivè*. The eternity of the punishment ariseth from the weakness of the creature, who cannot overcome this evil, and get out of it.

[3.] There is another thing unavoidably attending the pains of the second death in reprobates, and that is desperation, an utter hopelessness of any good, yea, a certain expectation of continual torment, Heb. x. 27. The gates of hell are made fast on them by an irresistible decree; and the gulf is fixed between the place of the damned, and the place of the blessed, so that there is no coming from the one to the other, Luke xvi. 26. Now this despair is not an essential part of the law's curse, but only a consequent, occasioned by the sinner's view of his remediless and woful condition. But this neither did nor could possibly befall the Lord Jesus, who was able by his divine power both to suffer and satisfy, to undergo and overcome, and therefore expected a good issue in his conflict: Ps. xvi. 9, 10, 'My flesh shall rest in hope; for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine holy one to see corruption,' was spoken as from Christ, Acts ii. 27. A shallow stream would drown a little child, whereas a grown man may hope to escape out of a far deeper place, yea, a skilful swimmer out of the ocean. Christ passed through that sea of wrath which would have drowned all the world, and came safe to shore.

3. With respect to our blessedness, which is to live with God for ever in heaven. Christ was forsaken, that there might be no longer any separation between us and God. He was forsaken for a while, that we might be received for ever. Our separation from God by sin was the meritorious cause, but the final cause was our eternal conjunction with God; so that this desertion, which was so bitter to Christ, is the cause of sweet consolation to us, as it hath procured for all them that obey the gospel that they should be happy for ever in the eternal vision and fruition of God. I observe this, because of the constant use of the scripture, which expresseth our benefits in a direct opposition to Christ's sufferings; as 'He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21. He was 'made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us.' He was 'made of a woman, that we might receive the adoption of sons,' Gal. iv. 4, 5. He was 'made poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich,' 2 Cor. viii. 9. And 'by his wounds and stripes we are healed,' 1 Peter ii. 24. By his death we have life, by his shame we have glory, and so, by consequence, by his desertion we obtain communion with God, and the everlasting fruition of him.

By a wonderful exchange he taketh our evil things upon himself, that he might bestow his good things upon us, and took from us misery that he might convey to us felicity.

APPLICATION.

First, by way of information.

1. How different are they from the spirit of Christ that can brook God's absence without any remorse or complaint? Christ cried with a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' These go on securely, never observe God's accesses and recesses; when the comforts of his Spirit, and the communications of his grace are wholly suspended and withholden from them, they never lay it to heart. Stupid and insensible creatures! It is all one to them whether God go or come, whether he manifest himself propitious to them or his face be hidden from them. They take up with the vain delights of the present world. Micah showed more respect to his idols than they do to God: Judges xviii. 24, 'Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? and do you ask, What aileth thee?' When God is gone they are not troubled. The Christians wept when Paul said, 'Ye shall see my face no more,' Acts xx. 25; and will ye not mourn and lament your loss when God hideth his face and shutteth up himself in a veil and cloud of displeasure? Much of serious Christianity lies in an observation of God's coming and going, and a suitable carriage, Mat. ix. 15. A serious Christian will be affected with the loss of comfort and quickening, and lament after a withdrawn God.

2. It informeth us of the grievousness of sin. It is no easy matter to reconcile sinners to God; it cost Christ a life of sorrows, and afterwards a painful and an accursed death, and in that death, loss of actual comfort, and an amazing sense of the wrath of God. We make a mock of sin—jest and sport away our souls, but Christ found it hard work to save them and recover them to God. When you make sin a light matter, you slight the sufferings of Christ; oh, therefore, take heed you do not break with God for every trifle!

3. The greatness of our obligation to Christ, who omitted no kind of sufferings which might conduce to the expiation of sin. He exchanged his heaven for a kind of hell to do you good; the fulness of the godhead dwelt in him bodily, and therefore he had a heaven upon earth. If one could say, *Anima justi calum est*, because heaven is begun there in peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. How was it with Christ? This heaven he wanted for a while, felt no comfort, yea, he was amazed at the sense of God's wrath due to sinners; therefore it was said in the type of him, 'The pains of hell got hold upon me,' Ps. cxvi. 3. Oh! let this excite us to love Christ, that you may count nothing too dear for him.

4. The infiniteness of God's mercy, who appointed such a degree of Christ's sufferings, as in it he gives us the greatest ground of hopes to invite us the more to submit to his terms. There is nothing standeth in the way but our own impenitence and unbelief. Now God is so amply satisfied, shall we deprive ourselves of eternal blessedness? This is the worst cruelty and hatred to our own souls.