

SEVERAL DISCOURSES

TENDING TO PROMOTE PEACE AND HOLINESS
AMONG CHRISTIANS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

THREE OTHER DISTINCT SERMONS.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To the Right Honourable ARTHUR, Earl of Anglesey.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOUR,—In the learned ages of the world, it hath ever been somewhat difficult to suit books to the patronage of the learned, judicious, and impartial, such as they know you are who know you. And when such pieces are prepared, and ready to be sent abroad, it is not easy to make choice of a patron worthy of such a treatise. This presented to your lordship, worthy of a good, hath found out the best, patron ; and like the incomparable ‘ History of Thuanus,’ happy in its author and manner of writing, and in its patron to whom dedicated, fails only in the pen that dedicates it. The things it treateth of express much of your honour’s sentiments, wishes, value, and endeavours to keep the root of Christianity flourishing, that Christians may answer their ancient character, *vivimus, non loquimur, magna*. It savoureth of that moderation which adorns the Christian ; it does with candour represent things in which many now dissent, that it would be happy for the Church of Christ if all would, on such terms, forbear each other, bear one another’s infirmities, and show that they believe ‘ the Lord is at hand.’ Here, I think, is rightly stated what are the lesser, what are the weightier things of the law ; and here are directions which, if followed, would keep peace and love among brethren, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. The author enjoys that sight which holiness and peace, here recommended, did lead him, and will lead others unto. He is *ἐν μακαρίτοις*, and reaps the fruit of those and other his labours, which were designed to help others to happiness also. Be pleased to give the publisher leave to send this into the world, countenanced with your honour’s name and favour, which may induce some to read and consider what you approve, and the author left (as Elijah did his posthumous letter) to make the age wiser, *i.e.*, holier and more peaceable. Assured of this favour from your honour, and hoping for this effect of the work, the publisher leaves it at your lordship’s feet, craving leave to subscribe himself, my lord, your honour’s most humble and obedient servant,

H. T.

THE PREFERENCE OF DUTIES:

MORALS BEFORE RITUALS.

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.—MAT. IX. 13.

THESE words are part of Christ's plea for his converse with publicans and sinners, at which the pharisees took offence.

Three answers he maketh :—

1. From their necessity, represented in a proverbial speech : 'The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.'

2. From the end of his commission : 'I came not,' as the doctor of the church, 'to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

3. Here is a third, suggested in the words read to you, by a saying of the prophet Hosea, chap. vi. 6, where a general reason is intimated, that a ceremony of the Levitical law must not hinder a necessary duty of the moral law. Therefore his conversing with them for their edification was not unlawful nor uncomely, for all rituals must give way to morals ; and so those laws of not accompanying with a heathen, or an unclean person, were never intended to be a bar to an act of mercy or charity, especially spiritual mercy and charity. And therefore, though they held the publicans profane, and unworthy their conversation (therein also stretching the law), yet Christ, without any breach of decorum, might converse with them for their good ; for if acts of mercy and charity are to be preferred before the ceremonies of the worship of God, this act of rescuing and saving a soul is to be preferred before all these ritual restraints of conversation with those who were supposed to be unworthy or legally unclean. And it is notable, these words are brought, not only to vindicate this fact of Christ, but secretly to tax the pharisaical hypocrisy of those who place religion in rituals more than morals. Elsewhere you find Christ at this argument again on another occasion, but to the same end and purpose : Mat. xii. 7. When the pharisees frowned because the disciples plucked ears of corn for their necessity on the Sabbath-day : 'If you had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless.' So that this

one sentence is notably useful to condemn pharisaism, or, which is all one, close hypocrisy, and withal to set us right in the true religion.

In the words observe:—

1. Christ's preface.

2. The words of the prophet quoted.

Christ's preface is to be regarded: 'Go ye, learn what that meaneth.' And in the other place, 'If you had known what this meaneth.' This sheweth that it is a point which deserveth well to be studied by us—this saying of the Lord by the prophet, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.'

Where observe:—

1. The form is negative, but in the sense it is to be understood comparatively: 'I will have mercy *rather than* sacrifice.' So when Paul saith, 1 Cor. i. 17, 'Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the gospel'—not *chiefly* to baptize, but *rather* to preach the gospel; so here it is not a simple negation, but a comparative, that he approved of moral duties more than sacrifice.

2. Observe the two things compared—mercy and sacrifice. In the prophet Hosea there is another word, 'I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.' Mercy comprehendeth the duties of the second table, as the knowledge of God the duties of the first table. Now this piety towards God, and charity towards our neighbour, was more acceptable service towards God than all the rites of their external worship.

Doct. There is much to be learned from God's expressing himself in his word that he liketh mercy to them that stand in need of it, better than the offering of the richest sacrifice.

I frame the point so as it may comply with Christ's scope and purpose.

Three things especially we learn in it:—

I. The respective value and preference of duties.

II. The guise of hypocrites, as our Saviour pincheth and taxeth the pharisees often by this point.

III. The excellency of mercy.

I. I shall speak to the respective value and preference of duties, and there I shall lay down these propositions.

1. All that God commandeth must be respected, and obedience endeavoured, partly because his laws are all holy, just, and good: Rom. vii. 12, 'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good'—viz., that law by which he was convinced, and which had brought such trouble in his heart; holy, as being the copy and draught of God's holiness; just, as doing no wrong, no infringement of our just freedom; good, as profitable to direct and perfect our operations—nothing therein is in vain or useless. And partly because they are all ratified by the same authority: Exod. xx. 1, 'God spake all these words,' not *these words*, but *all these words*: 'He that said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, said also, Thou shalt not steal;' as the apostle improveth the observation: James ii. 11, 'For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.' God hath expressed his will in one thing as well as another. And partly because in conversion we have grace given to obey all: Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness.' It

is not only fitted for righteousness, but holiness ; not only for holiness, but righteousness. As the sun is placed in heaven, that he may shed abroad his influence everywhere, and nothing is hidden from his heat and light, so is grace planted in the heart, that it may diffuse itself in a uniform obedience, and that we may be holy : 1 Pet. i. 15, 'As he that hath called us is holy, in all manner of conversation.' The heart is framed to resist every sin, and to observe all the commands of God. The new creature never cometh maimed out of the birth, or wanting any part. Well, then, holiness and righteousness must ever go together, and the obedience to both tables be inseparable. We must 'serve him in holiness and righteousness all our days,' Luke i. 75 ; not in holiness only, or in righteousness only, but in both.

2. Though all are to be respected, yet all duties are not equal, nor all sins equal. A vain thought is not so heinous a crime as the killing of a man ; and to blaspheme and curse God is a greater sin than an idle word, and idolatry than stealing of a shilling. Though all God's laws stand by the same authority, yet the matter of all is not of a like moment and consequence. And therefore the sins and duties are greater and lesser, according to the importance of the law : Mat. v. 19, 'Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so to do, shall be least in the kingdom of heaven.' There are commandments which may be called the least, and there are others which may be called the greatest—*De ordine modum*, the order sheweth the weight. The fundamental article of the covenant is to have God for our God, and to prefer natural worship before instituted, the means stated before manner and time, God before man, parents before others.

3. Simple duties of the first table are greater than duties of the second. Christ himself saith, Mat. xxii. 38, that 'this is the first and great commandment.' They must needs be the greatest, because the object of them is greatest : 'God is greater than man,' as it is said, Job xxxiii. 12. To oppose a prince in person is more than to oppose his mean officer. He that sinneth against his neighbour sinneth against God, but not so immediately, 1 Cor. viii. 12. And 2dly, because this is the great bond on the heart to enforce the duty of the second, the conscience of our duty to God : because I love, or fear, or would honour God, therefore I perform my duty to man for the Lord's sake. And so we turn second table duties into first table duties ; and so alms is a sacrifice, Heb. xiii. 16 ; and so obedience to masters is obedience to God, Eph. vi. 6. And as they enforce, so they regulate ; for we are to obey them in the Lord, and so as will stand with a higher duty we owe to God : Acts iv. 19, 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.' So that these are the greatest duties. But yet this must be understood so as the comparison be rightly made ; the chief of the first table with the chief of the second, the middle with the middle, the least with the least, externals with externals ; otherwise not. Disobedience to parents is more than an irreverent speech of God ; adultery a greater sin than coldness in worship ; stealing than not giving. The people made many prayers, but their hands were full of blood, Isa. i. 15. And therefore the order must be rightly conceived : first, love to God, then love to

men; first, the worship of God, and then duty to men in our several relations; first, acts of outward worship, then acts of outward respects to men—duties of piety, and also justice and charity. Thus the circumstantial and ceremonial duties of the first table must give place to the necessary and moral duties of the second. But when the comparison is duly made in the same rank, those laws which do simply and directly respect God are to be preferred before those duties which concern men; and sins of the highest degree against the first table are greater than sins of the highest degree against the second; and in duties, the love of our neighbour must give place to the love of God; as the love of father and mother, wife, children, friends, brethren: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man hate not father and mother,' &c., 'he cannot be my disciple.' God is chief, and most worthy of respect.

4. Moral and substantial duties should chiefly be made conscience of, and ought to take place of ceremonial observances, though belonging to the first table; for so in the text is mercy preferred before sacrifices. Which is to be regarded to a double end; partly, that we may not rest in them as the better part of our duty. If men submit never so much to external institutions about religion and worship, and think to satisfy their consciences therewith, yet they will not at all be accepted and approved of God. No. He looketh more to moral obedience than positive commands concerning the externals of religion. And therefore you have morals of the first table, or the second, often compared with, and preferred above the externals of religion; as 1 Sam. xv. 22, 'Hath the Lord any delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as idolatry.' It was spoken upon the occasion of Saul's sparing Agag, and the fat of the cattle for sacrifice, when he was to destroy man and beast. At other times it is compared with duties of the second table. The moral duties of the second table are better than the ceremonial duties of the first. If we be scanty in the one and abound in the other, it is a note of a hypocrite: Rom. xiv. 17, 18, 'The kingdom of God standeth not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' If a man do these things, he shall be accepted of the Lord, and approved of men. There are two expositions of that place, both equally probable; the one more general, that righteousness is taken for all new obedience, and peace for peace of conscience, resulting from the rectitude of our actions, and joy in the Holy Ghost for supernatural comfort, which the Holy Ghost puts into our hearts, by reflecting on our privileges by Christ, and the hopes of the world to come. Now, Christianity lieth not in outward observances, but in solid godliness. The other exposition is in a more limited sense; that by righteousness, is meant just dealing; by peace, a peaceable, harmless, inoffensive sort of living; by joy in the Holy Ghost, a delight to do good to one another, not dividing from, or hating, censuring, excommunicating one another for mere rituals, but pleasing one another to edification. These morals are more acceptable to God, and approved of men, than a furious zeal for lesser things, which belong to the ritual part, or external order of religion. It is an argument of a better spirit to be more zealous for morals and substantials than

rituals; certainly without them we shall be of no account with God. And partly to¹ that, when moral duties come in competition with ceremonial, the moral duties at that time must take place of the other, and all positive commands concerning the externals of religion give way to them. The Lord never appointed the ceremonies of the first table to hinder works of mercy prescribed in the second; therefore the mercy must be done, and the sacrifice left undone: as the Sabbath is both broken and kept when there is an evident necessity of preserving the creature. When David fainted, it was a moral duty to relieve him, though there were no bread at hand but the shew-bread: 1 Sam. xxi. 4, 'There is no common bread under my hands.' And Christ urgeth that, Mat. xii. 3, 4, 'Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungered; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for them which were with him, but only for the priests?' In an extraordinary case of necessity, the shew-bread is as common bread. Now the reason is plain, because positives bind only in certain cases, but we are everlastingly obliged to things moral. Therefore externals must give way both to obedience and mercy. Internal acts of worship are never dispensed with.

5. Sacrifices come under a double consideration, as they relate to Christ, the substance of them all, or as external performances rested in by that people.

[1.] In the first consideration, their gospel lay much in sacrifices, and the main duties of godliness were exercised about them, as brokenness of heart: Ps. li. 17, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' And faith in Christ, Heb. ix. 13, 14, 'For if the blood of bulls and 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 consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?' And covenanting with God, Ps. l. 5, 'Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice;' and Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'

[2.] In the second consideration, the outward bare offering, considered in itself, without faith and repentance, so God disclaimeth it: Isa. i. 11, 'Bring no more vain oblations;' and Isa. lxvi. 2, 3, 'He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.' Their great confidence was in their sacrifices. God, therefore, sheweth how loathsome these things were to him, without that disposition of soul which should accompany them; being such persons as those were, he would take no offering at their hands. The Lord in all ages is uniform and like himself, in approving and enjoining duty, and in disliking sin. Morals are always prized by him before externals, and an impartial respect to necessary duties was more to him than the

¹ Qu. 'too'?—ED.

greatest pomp of outward worship. It was so then, and it is so now. Pride, and malice, and envy, are greater evils than ceremonial uncleanness, and to fear God and work righteousness a greater duty than the best sacrifices. The performance of external duties is not, and never was, a sufficient testimony of true piety ; nay, without the love of God and men, and a uniform obedience to his holy will, is mere hypocrisy.

6. When the breach of a ceremonial precept bringeth with it the transgression of a moral precept, and is (without any absolute necessity) imposed in neglect and contempt of the law of God, then we are to run all hazards, rather than to transgress in the smallest externals ; because though the matter enjoined be but small, yet the contempt of God is a great sin, and our sincerity and obedience to God is a great matter. As for instance, when Antiochus pressed the Jews to eat swine's flesh, which in case of great extremity no question they might do, yet when he pressed them out of contempt of the law, they chose rather to be tortured to death than to yield to it. And for this they are registered martyrs : Heb. xi. 35, ' They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might receive a better resurrection.' There is a plain allusion to the story in the book of the Maccabees, concerning Eleazar, and the woman with her seven sons, so cruelly tortured. But these commands were contrary to the laws of God. Should they have said, ' God will have mercy, and not sacrifice' ? No ; in such a case God will have sacrifice, and not mercy. Though often advised to yield, they would not abate a jot of their zeal. For though the case be but in externals, yet there is a renunciation of our relation and obedience to God's law. So Daniel opening his windows, and praying three times a day, as he was wont to do, Dan. vi. 10. That circumstance might have been forborne, you will think, in a case of such imminent peril of life. No ; he would neither forbear praying nor opening his windows ; he had wont to do so before, and without dishonouring God and renouncing his profession, he could not forbear to do so now. The promise of audience, made to Solomon at the dedication of the temple, required this ceremony as an effect of faith : 1 Kings viii. 42, 43, ' When they shall pray towards this house, then hear thou in heaven.' And David saith, Ps. v. 7, ' In thy fear I will worship towards thy holy temple.' The temple did shadow forth the body of our Lord Christ, the mediator, in whom only our prayers and services are accepted with the Father, which Solomon respected in looking towards the temple. But the chief reason is, the necessity of profession, and open profession too, against this impious law, contrived by the malice of his enemies to make him afraid. Now, to show he was not frightened from his duty, he openeth his windows, and would not forego any circumstance of his duty to God. I might instance in circumcision (as urged by the false apostles), as necessary to our justification : Gal. v. 2-4, ' Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law : Christ is become of none effect unto you. Whosoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace.' Such is the difference when God calleth us to the profession of a lesser truth. Therefore the case may be such that externals may bear great weight.

7. If the externals of God's worship instituted by himself must give place to mercy, then externals of human institution ought much more to give place to mercy. Sacrifices were of God's institution, and a way of expressing their obedience and thankfulness in his worship; yet God saith, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.' And twice is this applied by Christ—to mercy towards the souls of men in the text, and mercy concerning the bodies of men, Mat. xii., to defend the disciples rubbing the ears of corn, because they fainted for hunger. Then by like reason, where the urging of externals may cross mercy to the souls of men, by depriving them of the means of edification, and the gifts of a lively ministry, or crossing mercy to the bodies of men, by depriving them and their families of their necessary support and maintenance, in such a case they should 'learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.' And the peace and edification of the church is more valuable than that of a private man. In all external positive institutions, the apostles often urge charity to the souls of men, for which Christ died, that we neither wound them with sorrow or sin, as the sure rule to guide us, either in practising or forbearing our liberty: Rom. xiv. 15, 'Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.' So 1 Cor. viii. 11, 'And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died;' that is, the scandalous abuse of this knowledge. In short, if any great damage to the souls or bodies, scandal or inconvenience, should come upon urging these externals, surely they should be forborne; for if it be the will and pleasure of the King of kings and Lord of lords that matters commanded by his affirmative precepts should be forborne for charity's sake, men should be persuaded to remit of the rigour of their impositions in this kind, though the things imposed were indifferent, and the practice of them in some cases a duty; yet if it would destroy charity, we are to leave our prayers, public and private, forsake a sermon to save the life of our neighbour; nay, to quench the fire burning his house; nay, to help his cattle out of the ditch. But I will prosecute this no further.

Let me now make some use of what hath been said.

1. Let us take heed that we be not of the number of them that are serious and zealous in some things, but not in all. Partial zeal hath always been the note of hypocrites; as the pharisees were earnest for externals, but neglected justice and charity. Saul is an instance of partial zeal in destroying the Gibeonites and sparing the Amalekites: 2 Sam. xxi. 2, 'Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.' He was expressly commanded to root out the Amalekites, but he spared Agag out of seeming pity; but useth barbarous cruelty in seeking to root out the Gibeonites, who were to be preserved by oath and covenant; and this he is said to do in his zeal. Not a true zeal, surely, as aiming at God's glory; for it tended much to his dishonour to have them destroyed, who were new proselytes, and professing religion, and had put themselves under God's protection; but a preposterous hypocritical zeal, of aiming, as he pretended, at the welfare of the commonwealth of Israel: his main intent was popular applause, and to gratify them who envied the Gentiles should be incorporated into God's people. An hypocrite's conscience is not uniform,

but brought upon the stage for a turn. I shall give you another instance in Jehu, mighty zealous in destroying the idolatry of Baal, which was the idolatry of the house of Ahab ; but not only cold and indifferent, but resolute against the destroying the calves of Dan and Bethel, which was the idolatry of Jeroboam : 2 Kings x. 28, 29, ' Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. Howbeit, from the sins of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from them, to wit, the golden calves in Dan and Bethel.' Reasons of state persuaded the one, and dissuaded the other. His interest lay in ruining the house of Ahab, and in taking care that the tribes might not revert to the house of David. Thus you see men zealous in some things may grievously sin in others. Therefore, my beloved, be you careful to regard all God's commands in their place ; piety in its place, justice in its place, mercy in its place. The Jews, after they had smarted in Babylon, were zealous against idols, but robbed God of his dues, never took care to restore the riches of the temple. Therefore the apostle taxeth this partiality of zeal : Rom. ii. 22, ' Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege ?' The latter prophets tax them much for that crime. The Jewish form still is hatred of idolatry, insomuch that they think that all the plagues that come upon them is for the idolatry of their fathers, especially in the sin of the golden calf in the wilderness ; and translate the scene of their repentance far enough from themselves, that they may not see their present sins, both in breaking the moral law and despising Christ. And every party is observed to have their form ; one special commandment which they stick unto, which they are zealous for, whilst they neglect the rest. The reproaches of our enemies, saith the pharisee, are only for the fourth commandment,¹ but neglect the rest ; zealous for the Sabbath, but unconscionable all the week after. Oh, let there be no occasion for this ! Others seem to make little reckoning of other commandments, and insist only upon the fifth, obedience to superiors. The charge is sometimes carried between the third and sixth² commandment ; they will not swear, but will lie, and slander their neighbours. I mention these things to show what need we have to be uniform in our obedience unto God.

I will mention but one motive. They that do not obey all, will not long obey any, but where their interest or inclinations require it, will break all : as Herod did many things, but one command stuck with him—his Herodias, and that bringeth him to murder God's prophet, Mark vi. 20. One sin keepeth possession for Satan, and that one lust and corruption may undo all. A bird tied by the leg may make some show of escape ; so do many think themselves at liberty, but the fowler hath them fast enough.

2. Let us not rest in outward duties of worship, and place our zeal there, for that is an ill spirit that doth so, it is the badge of pharisaism : they keep a fair correspondence with God in the outward duties of his worship, but in other things deny their subjection to him ; the main reason is, because externals of worship are more easy than the denial of lusts. The sensual nature of man is such, that it is loth to be

¹ Qu. ' The reproaches of our enemies saith, the pharisees are only for, &c.'?—ED.

² Qu. ' Ninth' ?—ED.

crossed, which produceth profaneness. Wherefore do men ingulf themselves in all manner of sensuality, but because they are loth to deny their natural appetites and desires, and to row against the stream of flesh and blood, and so to walk in the way of his own heart, and the sight of his eyes? Ecces. xi. 9. If nature must be crossed, it shall be crossed only for a little, and in some slight manner; they will give God some outward thing, which lieth remote from the subjection of the heart to him, therefore be zealous for externals; and this produceth hypocrisy, gross hypocrisy, and dissembling, whereby we deceive others, and get a good name among others, by a zeal and fervency for God's outward institutions. And this close hypocrisy or partiality of obedience, is that whereby we deceive ourselves, exceeding in external actions and duties, while we neglect those substantials wherein the heart and life of religion most lieth: such are the love of God, contempt of the world, mortification of the flesh, the heavenly mind and holy constitution of the soul, firmly set to please God in all things.

Once more; that this deceit may be more strong, men are apt to exceed in outward observances, or by-laws of their own; and this produceth superstition, either *negative*, in condemning some outward things which God never condemned, as those ordinances of men which the apostle speaketh of, Col. ii. 21, 'Touch not, taste not, handle not;' or *positive*, in doing many things as duties, and crying them up as special acts and helps of religion, which God never instituted to that end and purpose: Mark vii. 7, 8, 'Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' The spirit and genius of superstition lieth in this—neglecting many things which God commandeth, but multiplying bonds and chains of their own making. Sacrifices enough! God shall have anything for the sin of their souls, Micah vi. 6, 7. Thus these three great evils, profaneness, hypocrisy, and superstition, do all grow upon the same stem and root. First, men must have an easy religion, where the flesh is not crossed, but no mortifying of lusts, no exercising ourselves to godliness. They can deny themselves in parting with a sacrifice, but the weighty things of piety, justice, and mercy are neglected. God shall have prayers enough, hearing enough, if the humour and temper of the body will suit with it. They can fast and gash themselves like Baal's priests; whip their bodies, but spare their sins; but the heart is not subdued to God. They can part with anything better than their lusts, and disturb the present ease of the body, by attending on long and tedious duties, rather than any solid and serious piety.

II. The next lesson which we learn is, the guise of hypocrites; for our Lord intimateth that these pharisees had great need to learn the importance of that truth, as being extremely faulty: 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.'

1. The first thing notable in hypocrites is a partial zeal; they have not an uniform conscience; are very exact in some things, but exceedingly defective and faulty in others. The good conscience is entire and universal: Heb. xiii. 18, 'We trust that we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.' The sincere purpose and intention of his heart was to direct his life according to the will of God in all things. Though every one hath his failings, yet the will

and constant endeavour of a sincere heart is to govern himself universally according to the will of God in all points of duty, whether they concern God or man : as it is said of Zachary and Elizabeth, Luke i. 6, That they ‘walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless,’ The renewed conscience doth approve all ; and the renewed will, which is the imperial power in the soul, the first mover and principle of all moral actions, is bent and inclined to obey all ; and the new life is spent in striving to comply with all. But it is not so with hypocrites. They pick and choose out the easiest part in religion, and lay out all their zeal there, but let other things go : in some duties that are of easy digestion, and nourish their disease rather than cure their soul, none so zealous as they, none so partial as they. Now, a partial zeal for small things, with a plain neglect of the rest, is direct pharisaism ; all for sacrifice, nothing for mercy. Therefore every one of us should take heed of halving and dividing with God : if we make conscience of piety, let us also make conscience of justice ; if of justice, let us also make conscience of mercy. It is harder to renounce one sin wherein we delight, than a greater which we do not equally affect. A man is wedded to some special lusts, and is loth to hear of a divorce from them. We have our tender and sore places in the conscience, which we are loth should be touched. But if we be sincere with God we will keep ourselves from all, even from our own iniquity, Ps. xviii. 23 ; such as is most incident to us by temper, or custom of life, or course of our interests. To baulk or break with God, out of private reasons of pleasure, honour, or profit, or any corrupt interest, is to prefer these things before God, and to set up another chief good in our hearts, and to prefer it before his favour. Thus in general.

2. They place all their godliness and righteousness in outward observances or external discipline, and so their religion is more in the flesh and in the letter than in heart and spirit ; as the pharisees rested in outward worship only, or some external rules, without the inward and real duties either of the first or second table. Mat. xxiii. 25, they ‘cleanse the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess ;’ and ver. 28, ‘Ye appear outwardly righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.’ And everywhere they are represented as painted tombs without, but had much hidden uncleanness and corruption within. There was an outward formality and show of religion, when they denied the power thereof. They should join obedience to God and love to their neighbour with their outward sacrifices ; but these things were of little value and esteem with them. Now, what sacrifices were to them, that external ordinances are to us ; and what their rituals were, the same is the mode and garb of profession among us. And, therefore, external profession, or the performance of external duties according to our way, is not a sufficient testimony of true godliness. For Christ saith, Mat. v. 20, ‘Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ Their righteousness was an outside righteousness, without that inward constitution of soul which doth belong to a renewed heart, and yet carried on in such a way, and applauded by men, that

the Jews had a saying, That if but two men out of all the world went to heaven, the one should be a scribe and the other a pharisee. O Christians! it is one thing to approve ourselves to God, who searcheth the heart, and another thing to approve ourselves to men, who look only to the outside and fair appearance without. A renewed heart, that is unfeignedly set to please God in all things, is more than all the pomp of external duties. And, therefore, we should study to give evidence of this by making conscience of obedience, as well inwardly as outwardly, growing in holiness all the days of our lives. This will be comfortable to us, and this will be approved of God hereafter, even such an holiness as is manifested in all the parts of our conversation, in outward carriage and secret practice, common affairs, and religious duties; in the worship of God, and charity and justice to men: Phil. iii. 3, 'We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh.' When there is a serious bent, and the true spiritual affections of a renewed heart towards God and man, and we do not rest in outward duties, but are still growing in internal grace, faith, hope, and love, and are still purifying the heart and life, that we may constantly glorify God, and do good to men, this is that which is over and above the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees: our duty is to serve God in the spirit, and to bring the inward man in subjection to him, without which externals are of little worth.

3. They were more in love with ceremonies than with substance. Sacrifices, which belonged to the ceremonies of the law, were in high esteem with them; but godliness, justice, and mercy were of little regard. And as outward things were preferred before inward, so the lesser things before the weighty: as to their duties, tithing mint, and anise, and cummin; but they have omitted the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, faith. 'These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone,' Mat. xxiii. 23. Formality and hypocrisy maketh men wise about that which is least to purpose. They make a business about ceremonies, but neglect the substance of religion. They enlarged their phylacteries, which were scrolls of parchment on which the law was written, but took no care of having the law of God written upon their hearts. Hypocrisy is an odd, trifling zeal, which runneth out upon little things. So for avoiding sin, Mat. xxiii. 24, 'They strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.' More scrupulous in a little sin than a great; in small sins very scrupulous, in greater matters very adventurous. And because this is one of the main things here intended, I shall give you instances and reasons.

[1.] Instances to prove that hypocrites have such an odd conscience that straineth greatly at a small thing. We have them everywhere out of the word of God. Herod's making conscience of his oath, but not of shedding innocent blood: 'The king was sorry: nevertheless, for his oath's sake,' &c., Mat. xiv. 9, he caused John the Baptist to be beheaded. A sinner is holden in bonds which he might lawfully break; rather than Herod will break his rash oath John shall lose his head. Of such an odd complexion is the conscience of carnal men. So the Jews, when Judas laid down the hire of his

treason, and cast the money at their feet, Mat. xxvii. 6, 7, 'It is not lawful,' said they, 'to put it into the treasury, because it is the price of blood;' pretending to be afraid to offend in the least things, when they had offended in the greater. They boggled not at betraying innocent blood, and yet they would not meddle with the gain when it was thrown back to them. Another instance of the like conscience is John xviii. 28, 'Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the judgment-hall, and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover.' They were careful to avoid legal pollution, and yet they were at the same time seeking the life of the Lord of glory. Just such another fit of conscience cometh upon them a little after: John xix. 31, They went to Pilate, and desired that the bodies might not hang upon the cross on the Sabbath-day, lest their great feast should be defiled. And thus you see that through formality and custom men may be strictly bound in conscience to perform the duties of ceremonial or external worship, whose consciences notwithstanding never scruple to violate the most weighty precepts of the law. Just of this nature was that solemn case of conscience, Zech. vii. 1, 2, about the keeping of their fasts, when the prophet telleth them they had higher matters to mind, the executing of judgment and showing mercy, and breaking off their oppressions, ver. 10. The Lord would not answer their cases about the fasts, some of which were needless and superfluous; but would have them break off their known sins. Hitherto may be reduced the harlot in the Proverbs, that enticed the young man to adultery, and yet she had her peace-offerings: 'I have peace-offerings with me this day,' Prov. vii. 14, with the 18th; made conscience of her sacrifices, but not of her honesty and chastity. Yea, also, we may reckon to this rank of conscience the instance of Bathsheba. Even the children of God have much hypocrisy, and an odd kind of conscience, when they give way to wilful and heinous sin. The passage is, 2 Sam. xi. 4, 'David took her, and committed adultery with her, for she was purified from her uncleanness.' That uncleanness was ceremonial only; but in the meantime she was committing a moral uncleanness, from which she was not so careful to keep herself. Well, then, the consciences of men being of such a make, well might God say, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;' substance, and not ceremony. And we have all need to take heed to ourselves that we do not boggle and startle at a shadow, when in the meantime we are stupid and senseless in sins of another nature and deeper dye, and preserve a tenderness in lesser things, when we give way to injustice and oppression.

[2.] The reasons why hypocrites never find their consciences awake so much as in matters ceremonial. I shall give these two:—

First, Because these are of easiest digestion, and will sooner satisfy the conscience. Slight duties suit best with a heart that is unwilling to come under the power of religion. Conscience is like the stomach, which naturally desireth to fill itself; and when it cannot digest solid food, it sucketh nothing but wind. They that place their confidence in their own righteousness, presently fly to their external shows. The right stating of the duties of the law, according to their due weight,

would convince them of their mistake. Therefore, that the ell may be no longer than the cloth, they confine their obedience to external observations, and so make their religion as commodious for themselves as they can. Adultery is nothing to eating flesh in Lent, or breaking some external rule. The apostle saith, 'Going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to the righteousness of God,' Rom. x. 3. Not to the way of solid righteousness and broken-hearted acceptance of Christ, but an external appearance of duty is most for their interest.

Secondly, To put the better pretence upon their vile practices, therefore they must have some external ceremonies to countenance them. Thus the pharisees, to countenance their oppressions, 'for a pretence make long prayers,' Mat. xxiii. 14. That made them be trusted by the destitute widows, whom they deceived. As Jezebel would have the formality of a fast, for the better colour of her impiety in destroying Naboth. In days of fasts, they were wont to inquire after heinous offenders, to execute the law upon them, as you may see Num. xv. 7, 8, and Ps. cvi. 30, so to stop God's wrath. So some expound that, Joel i. 14, 'Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders;' that is, call a court who may inquire into offenders, that they may be punished and reformed. So Jezebel calls a fast, for the better pretence of a court to take cognisance of Naboth's sin.

4. They make conscience, not only of externals instituted by God, but mostly of those that are devised by themselves. This very abstinence from converse with publicans was a thing not forbidden by the law, but an institution of their own; because of their frequent converse with heathens, they looked upon them as a polluted sort of men, and unworthy of their converse. So that this helpeth us to another character of hypocrites; they are zealous for human traditions, but transgressors of divine commands; God's precepts are little regarded; and so prefer their own institutions before the laws of God. So Mat. xv. 3, 'By your traditions ye transgress the commands of God;' namely, by holding that if a man had devoted his estate to God, he might choose whether he would relieve his parents. Men are mightily in love with their own customs, and place much religion in man's injunctions, and care not how they loosen or weaken the obligation of God's law by their impositions. The pharisees' great fault was, they would outdo the law in externals; and then, when they had set their post by God's post, they were more zealous for man's inventions than for God's ordinances; and this zeal is shown either by imposing upon themselves or others—imposing upon their own consciences when they lie in chains of their own making; on others when they make their own practice the rule of others: Mat. ix. 14, 'The pharisees fast, John's disciples fast, thy disciples fast not.' To this head we may reduce Saul's rash restraining the people by his injunction and oath, 1 Sam. xiv. 32, with ver. 38. The people had gotten a great victory, and Saul, out of his hypocritical zeal, commandeth them to fast till evening. Now what was the issue? The people, through faintness, could not pursue the enemy; Jonathan, that heard nothing of this curse and oath, was in danger of his life; and the people, being

hunger-starved, for greediness did eat the flesh and the blood together, contrary to God's law, Gen. ix. 4; Lev. xvii. 13, 14. Mark there: though hunger could not force to transgress Saul's commandment for fear of death, yet it forced them to break God's express commandment in eating the blood, which was so expressly forbidden. And at night, when God answered him not, Saul thought somewhat was in the matter; he goeth to cast lots, and the lot had found out Jonathan. Saul never thinketh of the breach of God's law—first by himself, in imposing a rash and sinful oath; or of the people's sin, in eating the blood with the flesh; and presumeth it must needs be the breach of that oath which he had imposed; and so, like a hypocrite, preferreth his own groundless command before the law of God, and of punishing this with rigour when the other is never spoken of. I have brought this story to show you how zealous men are for their own impositions on themselves and others, and how easily they can dispense with God's laws to comply with their own; and how drunkenness, whoredom, and fornication do not seem such odious crimes as violating man's customs and institutions and private rules of their own.

5. Hypocrites have a conceit of their own righteousness, and a disdain of others. This was the very case in the text; they were angry because Christ entered into the house of Matthew, a publican, and did eat meat there, though he had converted him. And elsewhere it is made the characteristic note of the pharisees: Luke xviii. 9, 'They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.' Men that fly to externals are soon puffed up, and nothing humbleth so much as a sound sense of religion; and a solemn exercising ourselves to godliness maketh us see and loathe ourselves and pity others. I find the pharisees enemies ever to the freeness of God's grace to sinners and the work of repentance, and that the bringing of poor sinners to salvation was the great eyesore. They call Christ a wine-bibber and a friend of publicans and sinners, because of his social and free, but sanctified, converse with all sorts of men, Mat. xi. 18. He would not take such a strict form as John did, because he would not seem to justify their pharisaical rigours. So again, Luke xv. 2, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;' because he went to them as a physician to heal their souls. Christ refused not familiarity with the poorest and worst, as was needful for their cure, and would not observe the humour of proud pharisaical separation, by the parables of the lost sheep and the lost groat, but confuteth it; sheweth that this is the spirit of the elder brother who envied the prodigal's return; and telleth them in another place that 'Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before them,' Mat. xxi. 31; pleadeth the cause of the woman against Simon the pharisee, Luke vii. 39. 'If this man had been a prophet, he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touched him,' Luke vii. 47: Christ telleth him, 'She had much forgiven her, for she loved much.' Well, then, a penitent, broken-hearted sense of our own being indebted to grace, and tender compassion towards others that yet go astray, discovereth the true spirit of the gospel. But to stand aloof from others by a foolish singularity,

Isa. lxxv. 5, which say, 'Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.' Some, though impure and profane, counted all others unholy and unclean but themselves. This inclosing spirit is the spirit of pharisaism; an outside strictness, without that faith, love, charity, meekness, usefulness, and humility, which is the very soul and life of Christianity. Usually gifts and outward strictness puff up men with a vain conceit of their own righteousness, and a censuring and despising others. This one text sheweth us both the spirit of pharisaism and the spirit of Christianity. The pharisees, who abounded in external observances, censured Christ for his free converse, disdained these penitent people whom he invited to a better life. But now true religion maketh men humble and lowly in their own eyes, by acquainting them with the desert of sin and their own misery, and maketh men pitiful and compassionate towards others, more ready to help than to censure them, and to use all ways and means to do them good. But when men would shine alone in the repute of holiness, they are envious to those who penitently return to their duty, as those servants who had wrought all the day envied those that came in at the last hour, Mat. xx. 12, or as the elder brother envied the prodigal, or Simon the pharisee repined at Mary Magdalene's¹ observance of Christ. They esteem much of their own works, merits, sufferings, and righteousness. Oh, take heed of this spirit!

[1.] The use of this branch is to press us to regard internals more than externals, and the substantials more than the ceremonials of worship, and a broken-hearted, thankful sense of our Redeemer's love before a legal righteousness. Inward worship is love, fear, and trust; outward worship is prayer, praise, hearing, reading. Outward worship is not a duty at all times, but inward worship is a duty at all times; for we should always love God, and delight in God, and trust in God. Outward worship may be omitted for a work of mercy, and in case of invincible necessities; but inward worship may never be omitted, never dispensed with. We always owe love and renewed obedience to God, and must depend upon him and delight in him. Outward worship may be counterfeited; and external worship, without holiness, is highly displeasing to God, and never pleasing but when it is in conjunction with it. Hypocrites may abound in externals, but hypocrites will not delight themselves in the Lord, nor heartily devote themselves to him, so as to serve, please, and glorify him: the inward graces cannot be counterfeited, but the outward expression may.

[2.] Be more careful of the substantials than of the ceremonials of religion, and to mind the power of godliness more than the form. The substantials of religion are the love of God and our neighbour. The circumstantialia are those ways of worship which God hath appointed, whereby we are visibly to express our love to him. Now, our main care should be, in the first place, to be entirely devoted and subject to God. That was Job's character, 'one that feared God and eschewed evil,' Job i. 11. To do that we do out of love to him; obeying his laws as our rule, and depending upon his rewards as our happiness. And as to men, let us be faithful, and walk holily in our

¹ There is no good reason for believing that the woman alluded to was Mary Magdalene.—ED.

places, callings, and relations, being just and kind unto all, but having an exceeding dear love for our fellow-saints and everlasting companions. This is more pleasing to God than the costliest sacrifices, than all our flocks and herds, or any outward thing that we do for him. I take notice of those words of God to Solomon, when he was building him a magnificent temple, 1 Kings vi. 11, 12, 'And the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying, Concerning this house which thou art building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them, then will I perform my word to thee, which I spake to David thy father.' God hath more respect to Solomon's faithful obedience than to that glorious building. So far do morals exceed ceremonials in religion.

[3.] That you prefer a broken-hearted, thankful sense of our Redeemer's love, before legal and conceited righteousness of our own. Christ's love to sinners is that which the pharisees mainly stumbled at. An external show and fair pretence of a good life, which had no bottom of regeneration, was the superficial righteousness of the pharisees. Nicodemus, who had been of that sect, wondered when that was pressed upon him, John iii. 4, 5. An outward conformity, which was more in show than in substance, in form and fashion than in power, was their religion; abstaining from gross sins, as murder and adultery, but not purifying the heart from lusts. Murder they made conscience of, but not of envy, malice, and hatred; theft, but not covetousness and close extortion; adultery, but not wantonness or looking upon a woman to lust after her, as you may see at large, Mat. v. Thus Christ presseth us to exceed the pharisees, who turned all obedience into an empty formality, wherein they puffed up themselves as mere men, and so had never been at the market of free grace. All their wares were their own, and their righteousness of their own spinning, and therein stood upon their own bottom, without seeking the reconciling and renewing grace of the Redeemer: Luke xviii., The proud pharisee pleadeth his own merits rather than God's grace, but the publican pleaded mercy. It was long ere Paul was brought to count all but dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Phil. iii. 7-9. But on the other side, a Christian, though he maketh progress in holiness, yet, from first to last, cherisheth a broken-hearted sense of his own wants, and a thankful remembrance of his Redeemer's love, who is all in all with him, both for justification and sanctification. Before pardon, the sinner is weakened and humbled with a sense of his lost condition, and then there is a constant watchfulness, with repentance and brokenness of heart, which followeth pardon; 'loving much, because much is forgiven,' Luke vii. 47; and loathing himself, in his own sight, because of his vileness and sinfulness, after God is reconciled to him, Ezek. xvi. 63. This is the frame of heart which suiteth with the gospel state.

III. I come to the third thing—the value of mercy. I shall not speak of it at large, but only with respect to this scripture.

1. It is better than sacrifice. To sacrifice is to serve God, but to show mercy is to be like God: Luke vi. 36, 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful.' Now, conformity to God is more noble than subjection to God; it hath more of perfection and

blessedness in it especially, than a particular external mode and way of subjection to God.

2. As it is preferred before sacrifice, so it is preferred before the external observation of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the great institution conducing to the enlivening of other duties; mercy, not only to the souls of men as here, or bodies of men, but mercy to the bodies of the beasts: to help a beast out of a pit is a Sabbath-day's work, Mat. xii. 11, 12.

3. It is more than gospel externals of worship. The apostle had spoken of being 'not hearers of the word only, but doers also,' James i. 22. Then saith, verse 27, 'Pure religion, and undefiled before God, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world.' Is this religion, to come to church, to hear the strictest preachers? Doth the apostle reckon this another part of religion? No; but to 'visit the fatherless and widows.' They who are truly religious have such a deep sense of God's mercy to them that they are changed into the divine nature, that they cannot but pity the miserable and afflicted. Now, the ordinances of the gospel are rational, not so carnal and servile as the ordinances under the law.

4. It is more excellent than all the gifts of the gospel. The gifts of the gospel were glorious things—gifts of tongues, gifts of healing, gifts of knowledge and utterance: 1 Cor. xii. 31, 'Covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet I show you a more excellent way.' What is that? Love, charity, mercy. Though abilities are excellent things, to be able to edify and instruct others, yet no way to be compared with the grace of charity, and the performing all our duties to our brethren out of love to God.

5. I cannot say it is above the graces of the gospel—faith and love to God; yet this I can say, that those graces are not real unless accompanied with charity: 1 John iv. 20, 'If a man say he loveth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for if a man hateth his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' He speaketh there of love to Christ, ver. 19, 'We love him because he loved us first.' There may be a great deal of hypocrisy in professing and pretending love to Christ; and so he doth, certainly, who doth malign and persecute Christians, or not show mercy to them in their distresses. We daily converse with men, meet with objects of charity, whom we should pity; but if we do not this, which is the more easy, we will not do that which is more difficult.

6. It is the qualification of finding mercy: Mat. v. 7, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Compassion to other men's bodies and souls gives this hope and confidence of finding mercy with the Lord, and that is all our hope.

It will be inquired into at the day of judgment: Mat. xxv. 35–41, 'For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick or in prison,

and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Oh, then, let us make conscience of this duty more than ever we have done.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION.

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.—
PHIL. III. 3.

AMONG those that entertain thoughts of religion there ever have been and will be many contests who are the true church and people of God. The lazy place their plea and claim in external observations; the serious look to the vitals and heart of religion, and cannot satisfy themselves in an outward form without the life and power. This was the very difference between the true Christians and a certain sort of persons who took upon them to be the circumcision. The Jews are often called 'the circumcision,' therefore Christ is said to be 'a minister of the circumcision,' as being sent to the people that were to be circumcised, Rom. xv. 8. And Peter is called 'the apostle of the circumcision,' Gal. ii. 7, 8, as being appointed to deal with that people. Now these Judaizing Christians, who had a zeal for the ceremonies of the law, did falsely boast themselves to be the only people of God and the true circumcision. This was the difference between them: who were to be accounted the true circumcision, the Jewish zealots, who placed their justification in the ceremonies of the law, or those who adhered to Christ only, and looked for the mercy of God through him? 'We are the circumcision' say they, excluding the other and better sort of Christians. The one had the form, and the other the effect and power; the one were circumcised outwardly, the other spiritually. The apostle judgeth for the latter; the former were *κατατομή*, 'the concision,' who, instead of circumcising themselves, did cut asunder the church of God; but the sound believers were *περιτομή*, 'the circumcision' indeed, as being circumcised by the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by Christ, Col. ii. 11. They were the true children of Abraham, who did indeed perform that for which circumcision was intended, 'for we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'

In the words we have a threefold description of the true circumcision: how they stand affected to God, Christ, self.

- I. They worship God in the spirit.
- II. They rejoice in Christ Jesus.
- III. They have no confidence in the flesh.

I. They worship God in the spirit. This clause may be interpreted :—

1. In opposition to the legal ordinances. So it is taken, John iv. 23, 24, ‘But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.’ The Jewish worship is in a sense called carnal, the Christian spiritual: Heb. vii. 16, ‘A carnal commandment;’ Heb. ix. 10, ‘Carnal ordinances imposed on them till the time of reformation;’ and ‘shadows,’ Heb. x. 1. Now the Lord would have a spiritual worship, and the truth of what was in these shadows, these external forms, he allowed (instituted in the infancy of the church), so that they ‘worship God in the spirit’ is, they have embraced the true worship of the gospel, and serve God, not by the carnal rites of the law, but by the pure rational worship of the gospel. This is part of the sense.

2. It implieth worshipping God with the inward and spiritual affections of a renewed heart: Heb. xii. 28, ‘Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.’ Worship flowing from grace, engaging the heart in God’s service, is that which God prizeth; therefore a Christian should not rest in an external form: ‘God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit,’ Rom. i. 9.

3. It doth also imply the assistance and continual influence of the Holy Spirit: Eph. vi. 18, ‘Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;’ and Jude, ver. 20, ‘Praying in the Holy Ghost.’

The *doctrine* is this: That a true Christian is known by his worship, or is one that doth worship God in the spirit.

Here I shall show you :—

1. What is worship.

2. Why a true Christian—(1.) doth worship; (2.) why in the spirit.

1. What is worship? It is either internal or external. The internal consisteth in the love and reverence we owe to God; the external in those offices and duties by which our honour and respect to God is signified and expressed.

[1.] Internal. The soul and life of our worship lieth in faith, and reverence, and delight in God above all other things: Ps. ii. 11, ‘Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling;’ such a delight as will become the greatness and goodness of God. Worship hath its rise and foundation in the heart of the worshipper; there it must begin. In our high thoughts and esteem of God especially two things—love and trust.

(1.) Love: Deut. vi. 5, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.’ We worship God when we give him such a love as is superlative and transcendental, far above the love that we give to any other thing, that so our respect to other things may stoop and give way to our respect to God.

(2.) The other affection whereby we express our esteem of God is trust, which is the other foundation of worship: Ps. lxii. 8, ‘Trust in

the Lord at all times, pour out your hearts before him.' Delightful adhesion to God, and an entire dependence upon him; if either fail or be intermitted, our worship faileth. If delight: Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' Isa. xliii. 22, 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.' They that love God and delight in him cannot be long out of his company; they take all opportunities and occasions of being with God. So dependence and trust: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;' James i. 6, 7, 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.' Dependence begets observance: they that distrust God's promises will not long keep his precepts. If we look for all from him, we will often come to him and take all out of his hands, be careful that we do not offend him and displease him.

[2.] External. In those offices and duties by which our honour and respect to God is signified and expressed—as by invocation, thanksgiving, praise, obedience. God will be owned both in heart and life, in all these prescribed duties by which our affections towards him are acted. If God did not call for outward worship, why did he appoint the ordinances of preaching, praying, singing psalms, baptism, and the Lord's Supper? God, that made the whole man, body and soul, must be worshipped of the whole man; therefore, besides the inward affections, there must be external actions; in short, we are said to worship God either with respect to the duties which are more directly to be performed to God, or in our whole conversation.

(1.) With respect to the duties which imply our solemn converse with God, and are more directly to be performed towards him—such as the word, prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and sacraments—surely these must be attended upon, because they are special acts of love to God and trust in him. And these duties are the ways wherein God hath promised to meet with his people, and appointed us to expect his grace: Exod. xx. 24, 'In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and bless thee;' and Mark iv. 24, it is a rule of commerce between us and God, 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given.'

(2.) In our whole conversation: Luke i. 74, 75, 'That we should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.' A Christian's life is a constant hymn to God, or a continued act of worship; ever behaving himself as in the sight of God, and directing all things as to his glory. He turneth second table duties into first: James i. 27, 'Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world;' Heb. xiii. 16, 'To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased;' Eph. v. 21, 22, 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' Now a true Christian maketh conscience of all this; as of internal worship, so external; as of solemn and sacred acts, so of a constant awfulness of God.

2. Secondly, The reasons.

1st, Why a true Christian doth worship God.

2dly, Why in the spirit.

1st, For the worship itself.

[1.] Because they have a deep sense of his being and excellency impressed upon their hearts.

(1.) His being. These two notions live and die together: that God is, and that he ought to be worshipped and served, Heb. xi. 6; the one immediately floweth from the other. The first commandment is, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me;' the second, 'Thou shalt not worship a graven image.' If God be, worship is certainly due to him: they that have no worship are as if they had no God. The psalmist proveth atheism by that: Ps. xiv. 1, 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;' and ver. 4, 'They call not upon God.'

(2.) His excellency. They have a clearer sight of God than others have, and are more acquainted with him than others are; and, therefore, are more prone to worship. When God had proclaimed his name, and manifested himself to Moses, Exod. xxxiv. 8, 'He made haste, and bowed himself to the earth, and worshipped.' None so ready and forward: Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.'

[2.] Because they have a principle within them which inclineth them to God: their hearts are carried to him, as light bodies are carried upward. There is such a grace as godliness, 2 Pet. i. 6, and distinct in the notion from righteousness and holiness: 1 Tim. vi. 11, 'Follow after righteousness, godliness;' 2 Pet. iii. 11, 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' What is the notion then of it? It is *tendentia mentis in Deum*—an impression left upon their hearts, which causeth a bent and tendency towards God, as the fountain of their mercies, the joy of their souls, and the centre of their rest. There is such an inclination—in some stronger, in others more remiss; but in all that are made partakers of a divine nature in some good degree, so as ordinarily to prevail over the inclinations of the flesh. As holiness noteth purity of life, so godliness an inclination to God.

[3.] Because of their relations to God, which they own. God pleadeth his right: Mal. i. 6, 'If I be a father, where is mine honour? if I be a master, where is my fear?' A father must have honour, and a master must have fear; and God, who is the common parent and absolute master of all, must have both. A worship and honour in which reverence and fear is mixed with love and joy; or, as the owning of a king implieth submission to his government, so the owning of a God adoration and worship.

2dly, Why in the spirit?

[1.] Because worship without the spirit is like a body without the soul; it is but the carcase of a duty. The heart must be the principal and chief agent in this business: Mat. xv. 8, 'This people draweth nigh to me with their mouths, and honoureth me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.' There is no love to God, rather an habitual aversion from him.

[2.] External worship is but a means to the internal; as prayer, hearing, reading, receiving, tend to promote love, trust, heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, mortification, purity of life and conversation. Now, as the means are only valuable with respect to their end, so are these duties of hearing, reading, singing. Diligence in the use of means is good, but those acts that are conversant about the end are better,—such as the love of God, and delight and trust in God; for *finis est nobilior mediis*. Nay, amongst the internal acts, as they are means to one another, so the nearer respect they have to the last end, the more noble they are; as faith is more noble than bare knowledge, because knowledge tendeth to faith, Ps. ix. 10; love than faith, because faith tendeth to love, Gal. v. 6; 1 Cor. xiii. 13. Faith causeth love, and serveth as the bellows to enkindle this holy fire; and in love, desire maketh way for delight, as its noblest act. And accordingly must all things be valued as they suit the great end, which is the enjoying of God.

[3.] A man doth not partake of the gospel blessing till he doth serve God in the spirit; that is, till he be made partaker of the regenerating grace and actual influence of the Holy Spirit.

(1.) Of his regenerating grace: Rom. vii. 6, 'That we should serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.' New life is the principle of evangelical obedience; and when we are renewed by the Holy Ghost, we walk in newness of conversation. The gospel is a ministry of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 8. It not only requireth duty, but giveth power to perform it. The letter of the law requireth, but giveth no principle or inclination to do it; that is from regenerating grace, or the law written upon our hearts: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of Spirit, is spirit;' that is, suited, inclined, disposed, fitted for a spiritual life.

(2.) Actual influence. He still worketh in us what is pleasing in God's sight; helpeth to mortify corruption: Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' To perfect holiness, Heb. xiii. 21, that so we may serve God in all purity of life. We cannot get, nor keep, nor act, nor increase grace of ourselves, if forsaken by the Spirit of grace; the foulest sins would become our pleasure, and the most unquestionable duties our burden. If he withdraw his quickening influences, you can do nothing.

Use 1. It reproveth those that either do not worship God, or by halves, or not worship him in the Spirit.

1. It disproveth their confidence that do not worship God. There are an irreligious sort of men that neither call upon him in public or in private, in the family or in the closet, but wholly forget the God that made them, and at whose expense they are maintained and kept.

[1.] Let me reason with you as men. Wherefore had you reasonable souls, but to praise, and honour, and glorify your Creator and Preserver? If you believe there is a God, why do you not call upon him? The neglect of his worship argueth a doubting of his being. If there be such a supreme Lord, to whom you must one day give an account, how dare you live without him in the world? All the creatures glorify him, Ps. cxlv. 10; they passively, but you have a heart and a tongue to glorify him actually. Man is the mouth of the crea-

tion, to return to God the praise of all that wisdom, glory, and power which is seen in the things that are made. Now, you should make one among the worshippers of God.

[2.] Let me reason with you as Christians. Are you a Christian, and have such advantages to know more of God, and will you be dumb and tongue-tied in his praise? Have you the discovery of the wonders of his love in your redemption by Christ, and do you see no cause to own and acknowledge him? Have you no necessities to bring to the throne of grace? In Christianity, you know his particular providence and redemption by Christ, and should you eat, and drink, and trade, and sleep, and never think of God? Have you no pardon to sue out, no grace that you stand in need of, that you should live like a brute beast, go on in the circle of trade, business, comforts, and never think of God? You profess you know him, but in your works you deny him, and sin doubly, both against the light of reason and Christianity. All that are not avowed atheists must have some worship.

2. It cutteth off their confidence that worship him by halves. They are of many sorts.

[1.] Some worship him in public, but never in private and secret; though Christ hath given us direction to enter into our closets, Mat. vi. 6. And surely every Christian should make conscience of secret duties. There are many disputes about praying in families, though those that take their daily bread should seek God together; but there can be no dispute about praying in secret, for the precept that requireth prayer first falleth upon single persons before it falleth upon families and churches: 1 Thes. v. 17, 'Pray without ceasing.' This cannot concern families and churches; they are done at stated times, when they can conveniently meet; but every man in secret is to be often with God. Christ was often alone: Mark i. 35, 'He went out into a solitary place, and there prayed.' Surely Christ had not such need to pray as we have, nor such need of retirement, his love to God being always fervent, and so in no danger of distraction. God poured out the Spirit that we might go apart and mourn over soul-distempers, Zech. xii. 10-14. Now, God's precious gifts are not given in vain. So, Acts x. 2, Cornelius 'prayed to God alway.' Therefore, certainly, secret prayer is a necessary duty of God's worship, to be observed by all that acknowledge God to be God, and the world to be ruled by his providence, or themselves to have any need of his grace and pardon, or hope for anything from him in the world to come. Therefore, if you have any sense of religion, or think you have any need of particular commerce with God, you should make conscience of secret prayer.

[2.] Others that make conscience of external worship, prayer, hearing, reading, singing of psalms, but not of internal worship, faith, love, and hope. The external forms were appointed for the acting or increasing of internal grace; and so they superficially are conversant about the means, and never mind the end. External worship is sensible and easily done, but internal worship is difficult. External worship may procure us esteem with men; but internal, acceptance with God. External worship satisfieth blind conscience, but doth not better the heart. External worship may puff us up with a vain confidence,

but internal worship maketh us lament spiritual defects. We have not that purity of heart, that deep sense of the world to come, that absolute dependence upon God, which may quiet our souls in all exigencies. Surely they are better Christians that have the effect of the ordinances than they that have only the formality of them. The external duty may procure us toil and wearisomeness to the flesh, but the internal worship bringeth us comfort and peace. The more faith in Christ, and love to God, and lively hope of eternal life, the more is the soul comforted. Therefore, if you will always lick the glass, and never taste the honey, go on in a track of duties, but you will have no comfort in them. In short, they that go on in external duties may be said in some sense to serve God, but they do not seek after him. In pretence they make God the object of their worship, for they do not worship an idol; but they do not make him the end of their worship. A man maketh God the end of his worship when he will not go away from God without God; when he looketh to this, that his delight in God be quickened, his dependence upon God strengthened, his hatred of sin increased, and by every address to God is made more like God.

[3.] It reproveth and disproveth those that put on a garb of devotion when ministering before the Lord, but are slight and vain in their ordinary conversation. A man should be in some measure such out of duty as he giveth out himself to be in duty; for his whole life should be, as it were, a continued act of worship: Prov. xxiii. 17, 'Let not thy heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.' We should still live in a dependence upon God, and in subjection to him: Ps. xvi. 8, 'I have set the Lord always before me: he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' In point of reverence, and in point of dependence, because we are in danger to miscarry, both by the delights of sense and the terrors of sense. If a reverence of and a dependence on the great God do still possess our hearts, we shall carry ourselves more soberly as to the comforts of the world, and not be easily discouraged and daunted with the fears of the world. This is our preservative, and maketh us true and faithful to our great end.

3. Those that do not serve God in the spirit. You should worship God so as it may look like worship and service performed to God, and due to God. It is spiritual worship God requireth, and is ever pleased withal. He 'seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth,' John iv. 23; and this is most agreeable to his nature: John iv. 24, 'God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' When hearts wander, when affections do not answer expressions, is this like service and worship done to an all-seeing and all-knowing spirit? Is there any stamp of God upon the duty, of his majesty, goodness, and great power?

Use 2. For the comfort of good Christians. Here is their carriage towards God briefly set down—they 'worship God in the spirit.' A Christian is described by his proper act, *worship*; and by the proper object thereof, *God*; and by the proper part and seat thereof, *in the spirit*. Do you worship him with reverence, and with delight and affection, with a trust, hope, and confidence?

1. With reverence. Considering God's majesty and our own vileness. The majesty of God: Mal. i. 14, 'For I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts.' Slight worship argueth lessening thoughts of God. Do you know to whom you speak? It is a contempt of God if you think anything will serve the turn; you have mean thoughts of him, and do not consider him as you ought to do. So our vileness: Gen. xviii. 27, 'Who am I, that am but dust and ashes, that I should speak unto God?'—dust as to the baseness of his original, and ashes by the desert of sin. In our nearer approaches to God, thus should we think of ourselves.

2. With delight and affection, as our reconciled father in Christ. So he is to us as the well-spring of all grace and goodness. The great work of the gospel is to bring us to God as a father, Gal. iv. 6. God as a judge, by the spirit of bondage, driveth us to Christ; but Christ, by the spirit of adoption, bringeth us back again to God as a father. This is the evangelical way of worshipping, that in a child-like manner we may come to God.

3. With trust, hope, and confidence. He knoweth all our wants, can relieve all our necessities: Ps. lvii. 2, 'I will cry unto God most high, who performeth all things for me.' Worship would be a cold formality if we had to do with one that knew us not, or had not sufficiency and power to help us. But God is omniscient and all-sufficient, and hath promised to hear and help us in our straits; he knoweth our necessities when we know them not.

II. We come now to the second character: *And rejoice in Christ Jesus.*

Thence observe:—

Doct. That the great work of a Christian is a rejoicing in Christ Jesus, or a thankful sense of our Redeemer's mercy.

In opening this point I shall use this method:—

1st, Show you what is this rejoicing in Christ.

2dly, I shall prove that Christ is matter of true rejoicing in his person, offices, benefits.

3dly, That Christians are not sound and sincere in their profession, unless they do keep up this rejoicing in Christ.

First, What is this rejoicing?—(καυχόμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). The original word implieth such a degree of joy as amounts to glorification or boasting, or such an exultation of mind as breaketh out into some sensible expression of it. There are in it three things:—

1. An apprehension of the good and benefit which we have by Christ; for otherwise how can we rejoice and glory in him? 1 Cor. i. 30, 31, 'But of him ye are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption; that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' Christ is all that our whole rejoicing may be in him, who hath enlightened us with the knowledge of the gospel, and showed us the way of salvation, and is the author of our justification and sanctification, and of our deliverance from all calamities, and from death itself. These benefits are the cause of our rejoicing—namely, the promises of the gospel, sealed by his death, and the graces conveyed to us by his Spirit. We rejoice and glory in him, as the only and all-sufficient

Saviour. They that gloried in circumcision gloried in their entrance into the legal covenant; they became debtors to the law, but Christ hath ratified it in the new covenant by his blood; therefore here is more abundant cause of rejoicing.

2. Due affections of contentment, joy, love, exultation of heart, that followeth thereupon. A blessing ourselves in our portion, that this great happiness is fallen to our share, offered to us, at least, if not possessed by us. The very knowledge of Christianity breedeth joy: Acts viii. 8, 'And there was great joy in that city,' that is, upon the tendering of the gospel; much more when we believe in Christ, and embrace his religion, and resolve to become his disciples. They received his word gladly, Acts ii. 41. His doctrine must be welcomed with the heart, with all love and thankfulness. It is said of the jailor, Acts xvi. 34, that he 'rejoiced, believing in God, and all his house.' He was but newly recovered out of the suburbs of hell, ready to kill himself but just before; so that a man would think it were easier to fetch water out of a flint, or a spark of fire out of the bottom of the sea, than to expect or find joy in such a heart; yea, though still in danger of life for treating those as guests whom he should have kept as prisoners, yet he rejoiced when acquainted with salvation by Christ. More especially should we rejoice when the comfort is sealed up to our consciences: Rom. v. 11, 'Not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' The eunuch, when he was baptized, he 'went on his way rejoicing,' Acts viii. 39.

3. An expression of it, by an open profession of Christ's name, both in word and deed, whatever it costs us. They are said to rejoice in Christ Jesus who in those times could profess his name, though with hazard and self-denial. As the Thessalonians, who received the word with much affliction, and much assurance and joy in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thes. i. 6. And it is expressed by the parable of the man that found the true treasure, and for joy thereof sold all that he had to buy the field, Mat. xiii. 44. They are willing to lose all other contentments and satisfactions for this; Christ is enough. They needed this joy to encourage them against the trials which they then underwent for Christ's sake and the gospel's sake.

Secondly, That Christ is matter of true rejoicing, for they are fools that rejoice in baubles and trifles. A Christian's joy may be owned and justified. When Christ's birth was celebrated by angels, it is said, Luke ii. 10, 'Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy.' Here is joy, and great joy in salvation by Christ. And Mary: Luke i. 46, 47, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour.' Surely there is no cause of joy wanting in God, and in God coming as a Saviour. In short, in Christianity, all is fitted to fill our hearts with delight and joy.

1. The wonderful mysteries of our redemption by Christ. Thereby, [1.] A way is found out for our reconciliation with God, and how that dreadful controversy may be taken up, and heaven and earth may kiss each other, 2 Cor. v. 19. Surely this is glad tidings of great joy to self-condemned sinners, who stood always in fear of the wrath of God and the flames of hell. What joy is it to a condemned man,

that is ready every day to be taken away to execution, to hear that his peace is made, that pardon may be had, if he will seek it and sue it out!

[2.] A distinct relation of a defeat of the great enemies of our salvation—death, hell, the devil, and the world. He hath not only made our peace with the Father, by the blood of his cross, but vanquished our spiritual enemies, and triumphed over them, Col. ii. 14, 15. Long enough might we have lain in prison before the utmost farthing had been paid, or done anything to procure our deliverance, if our compassionate Redeemer had not taken the work in hand: had he turned us to any creature, we had been helpless. It was he purchased grace to overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh; that quickened you when you were dead in sin; that put Satan out of office, and ‘delivered us from the present evil world,’ Gal. i. 4. And is not this matter of rejoicing to us?

[3.] That hereby he hath not only abolished death, but brought life and resurrection to light, 2 Tim. i. 10. By entering into that other world, after his sufferings, he hath given us a visible demonstration of the reality of the world to come, and in his gospel discovered a blessedness to us, which satiateth the heart of man and salveth the great sore of the whole creation. If God had made nothing richer than the world, the heart of man would have been as leviathan in a little pool.

2. In the promises of Christ there is matter of joy. In the general, God is your God, and that is more than to have all the world to be yours: compare Gen. xvii. 7, ‘I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee,’ with Ps. cxliv. 15, ‘Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.’ We have an eternal and all-sufficient God to live upon, and from whom to derive our joy and comfort; a God infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness to be our portion. And where is matter of joy and comfort, if not in God? Behold the difference between carnal men and the children of God; the world is their portion, and God is ours; and who is better provided for? More especially we are told, 1 Tim. iv. 8, that ‘Godliness hath the promises of this life, and that which is to come.’ Heaven and earth are laid at the feet of godliness; what would you more? Surely we have full consolation offered to us in the promises of the gospel; he can want nothing to his comfort who hath an interest in them. To instance, in the lowest blessings, those which concern this life: God is our God, that can cure all diseases, overcome all enemies, supply all wants, deliver in all dangers, and will do it so far as is for our good; and desires of anything beyond this are not to be satisfied, but mortified, Ps. lxxxiv. 11. But then for the more excellent promises of the new covenant, which concern another world, such as the pardoning of our sins, the healing our natures, and the glorifying of our persons: 2 Pet. i. 4, ‘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.’ The pardon of all our sins, which are the great trouble and burden of the creatures. Who will rejoice like the pardoned sinner,

who is discharged of his debt, eased of his burthen, and hath his filth covered? Ps. xxxii. 1, 'Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' Oh, the blessedness of the man! He is like one fetched back from execution. Then the taking away of the stony heart, and the giving of an holy and heavenly heart. Oh, what matter of joy is this, to have all things necessary to life and godliness! What is the trouble of a gracious heart, but the relics of corruption? Rom. vii. 24. Paul groaneth sorely, but yet blesseth God for his hopes by Christ, ver. 25. Renewing grace is dearly bought, and plentifully bestowed, Titus iii. 5, 6; and graciously offered to those that will seek after it: Prov. i. 23, 'Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.' And this promise to be fulfilled by a divine power, 2 Peter i. 3. Oh, what a comfort is the Redeemer's grace to a soul that hath been long exercised in subduing sin! It is true it groans while it is a-doing, yet the very groans of the sick show that life and health is sweet. Healing, renewing grace maketh other things sweet; as your whole duty to God, it maketh it become your delight. But the great promise is eternal life: 1 John ii. 25, 'And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.' That is a matter of joy indeed. What! to live for ever with God! the forethought of it reviveth us; the foretaste of it is a kind of heaven upon earth, 1 Peter i. 8. The certain hope of it will swallow up all grief and sorrow, Rom. v. 2, 3. So that there is no question but that in the promises of Christ there is matter of great joy.

3. The enjoyments of Christianity are very pleasing. I add this to show you, that it is not all in expectation, if we consider not only what we shall be, but what we are. For the present:—

[1.] We have peace of conscience, Rom. v. 1; Mat. xi. 29; Phil. iv. 7. Rest for our souls is anxiously sought after in other things, but only found in Christ's religion, and living according to the precepts and institutions thereof. As Noah's dove found not a place whereon to rest the sole of her foot, so we flutter up and down, but never have any firm peace of heart and conscience, till we submit to Christ, and take his counsel.

[2.] A sense of the love of God: Rom. v. 5, 'Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given unto us;' and 1 Peter ii. 3, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.'

[3.] God's presence with us, and our communion with him: 1 John i. 3, 4, 'And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, that your joy may be full;' and John viii. 29.

[4.] Access to God, with assurance of welcome and audience: John xvi. 24, 'Whatsoever ye ask in my name, ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.'

[5.] The foretastes of the life to come, Rom. viii. 23, and 2 Cor. iii. 5. So that all is to stir up this delight and joy in the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The precepts of Christ show that we have matter of rejoicing in him. What are the great duties required? To love God! Now what pain is it to delight in the Lord as our all-sufficient portion? To be mindful of him, and meditate of his excellencies and benefits: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' Is it any toilsome thing to come in a childlike manner and

unbosom ourselves to him, and beg the renewed testimonies of his love to us, especially when set awork by the Holy Ghost? Gal. iv. 6. To believe in Christ is difficult, but pleasant; to consider the Lord Jesus as the suitable remedy for the lapsed estate of mankind, both as to his work with God and us, Heb. iii. 1. He came to destroy sin and misery. Whenever we reflect upon Christ, what do we find but ample grounds of joy? John xiv. 2, 'Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me;' that is, to get off our trouble, consider we have an all-sufficient God, and an all-sufficient mediator: Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Repentance requireth sorrow for sin, only as it tendeth to joy and comfort, Mat. v. 5. It is a tormenting, but a curing sorrow. The word of God taketh care that a penitent, who hath foully miscarried, should not be swallowed up of over-much grief, 2 Cor. ii. 7. In the general, repentance and mortification are our physic to expel the noxious humours that would bring us, not only to death, but to damnation, and to keep the soul in due plight and health. And then, for self-government, we are to bridle our passions and appetites: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' The bridling our passions, it is but forbidding us to be miserable, and throw out everything that would disquiet the soul. Christ's great care was that the reasonable creature might live in peace and holy security, therefore hath discharged our cares, and sorrows, and fears: our cares, that they might not distract our minds: Phil. iv. 6, 'Be careful for nothing;' and 1 Peter v. 7, 'Cast all your care upon the Lord.' These prohibitions show you the goodness of Christ. He hath made it unlawful for you to be troubled, and to perplex your minds with anxious and distrustful thoughts. Oh! what pleasant lives we might live if we could entirely cast ourselves into the arms of God, and refer all things to the wisdom and powerful conduct of his providence! The scripture is as plentiful also in forbidding sorrow: 1 Thes. iv. 13, 'Sorrow not as those that are without hope.' Dejection and anguish of spirit is your sin. So for fear: Isa. xli. 10, 'Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God;' Heb. xiii. 6, 'So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.' What should a Christian fear? Dangers by the way?—God is his helper. To be cast into hell when he goeth out of the world?—Christ hath showed him how to flee from wrath to come; he feareth it with a fear of caution, so as to shun it, but not with a fear of perplexity, so as to disquiet and perplex his soul, for Jesus hath delivered him from wrath to come, 1 Thes. i. 10. Christianity is as contrary to sadness and misery, as life to death, and light to darkness. For the other, the crucifying and bridling of our lusts, which carry us to the good things of this world, why, that is troublesome, to be debarred of the delights which nature affects; but here are no rigorous exactions, but such as are agreeable to the reasonable nature. Christ hath forbidden us no pleasure but what may be a sin or a snare to us; he would not have man to degenerate and turn beast. All Christ's restraints are but necessary cautions for our safety. Is it burdensome to a man to keep out of danger's way, and to avoid

such things as are destructive to his soul? If a friend will take out of our hands the knife with which we would not only cut our fingers but our throats, is he to be blamed? or is he your enemy who forbiddeth you to drink poison? Forbidden fruit costs dear in the issue.

5. For those duties which concern our neighbour. To love all men, to do good to all men, it is a blessed and godlike thing to be giving rather than receiving, Acts xx. 35. The delight of doing good is much more than the cost; it is to be as earthly gods among our neighbours. This work rewardeth itself, because it is such a contentment and satisfaction to our minds. For justice: To do as we would be done to; what more pleasant? We would have others bound by these laws, why not ourselves? It is horrible to require one measure of dealing from them to us, and use a quite contrary ourselves. Would men hate, defraud, oppress others, and expect nothing but kind and righteous dealing from them? this is a gross partiality. Therefore, as our interest calleth for justice, so doth our conscience, and it would be a trouble and an affront to reason not to do it. So for fidelity in our relations. These things maintain order of families, and conduce to our safety and private peace, as well as they belong to our duty to God; so that on which side soever we look, we see what matter of joy there is in Christ.

I come now to show you:—

Thirdly, The reasons why Christians are not sound and sincere in their profession unless they keep up this rejoicing in Christ.

1. We do not else give Christ his due honour, if we do not esteem him who is so excellent in himself and so beneficial to us, even to a degree of rejoicing. The magnifying of Christ was intended by God in the whole business of our redemption and deliverance, that we might esteem him, delight in him, count all things dung and dross that we might gain him. Now we do not comply with this end, but have mean thoughts of his grace, if we be not affected with joy at it.

It argueth a double defect:—

[1.] That we are not sensible of our great misery without him; nor—

[2.] Affected with the great love he hath showed in our deliverance, and the felicity accruing to us thereby.

[1.] We are not duly sensible of our great misery without him. Alas! what could we have done without his passion and intercession? If he had not died for sinners, what had you to answer to the terrors of the law, the accusations of your consciences, the fears of hell, and approaching damnation? How could you look God in the face, or think one comfortable thought of him? Had we wept out our eyes, and prayed out our hearts, and never committed sin again, this would not have made God satisfaction for sin past: paying new debts doth not quit old scores: long enough might we have lain in our blood ere we could have found out a ransom which God would accept; besides him there is no Saviour. And then for his intercession: If he did not hide your nakedness and procure you a daily pardon, you would not be an hour longer out of hell. If he did not bring you to God, you could have no comfortable access to him; your prayers would be cast back as dung in your faces, if the merit of his sacrifice did not make

them accepted. And shall all this be told you, and owned by you for truth, and will you not rejoice that God hath found a ransom and provided an intercessor for you? Surely it cannot be imagined that you are sensible of your case if you be not thankful for your remedy.

[2.] You are not affected with the great love which Christ hath showed in your deliverance, nor the felicity accruing to you thereby. It is said, Eph. iii. 19, 'That you may know the love of God, which passeth knowledge.' Before he had pressed them to make it their study to comprehend the height, length, and breadth; and when they have all done, the love of Christ passeth knowledge. Christ would pose men and angels with an heap of wonders in delivering us from misery and sin. Now should not we rejoice and make our boast of this? Surely we vilify and bring down the price of these wonders of love, if we entertain them with cold thoughts, and without some considerable acts of joy and thankfulness. Shall angels wonder, and we, the parties interested, not rejoice? Certainly we are not affected with the great felicity accruing to us. Felicity cannot be sought after without the highest affections and endeavours. Now, if we can rejoice in trifles, and not rejoice in the love of God, how can we be said to mind these things?

2. A man's joy distinguisheth him. There is a seeking joy and a complacent joy: Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.' It is good to observe what it is that putteth gladness into our hearts: the love of God, and his goodness in Christ. Every man is discovered by his complacency or displacency: Ps. iv. 7, 'Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased;' Rom. viii. 5, 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.' To rejoice in the creatures, as accommodating or pleasing the flesh, is the joy of the carnal; to rejoice in outward ordinances and privileges, without other things, is the joy of the hypocrite and common professors. Let us carry it a little farther. The devils and damned are out of all hope and possibility of joy; the angels and glorified saints rejoice in the full fruition of God: there is *gaudium vite* and *gaudium patrie*; there is the joy of the way, and the joy of our home at our journey's end. The latter is set forth, Ps. xvi. 11, 'In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' The other is in Christ, and the use of his healing and recovering methods, and the desires and hopes of the glory to come. This is the joy, or well-pleasedness of mind, which is proper to us in our journey: 1 Pet. i. 8, 'In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' The comfort of travellers differeth from that which a man hath in heaven: it is a joy that he hath as he is going home; and therefore how should the serious Christian be described, but by his rejoicing in Christ Jesus?

Use 1. To reprove those that cannot keep up their rejoicing in Christ Jesus as soon as they are mated with any calamity or affliction in the world. Is not grace better than any natural comfort taken from us? Heb. xii. 11, 'No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable

fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Surely, when we have such cause of rejoicing in Christ, to be dejected with every little adversity showeth weak faith. Have you peace with God and communion with him at every turn, and shall a blasting of the creature destroy all your comfort? Have you hope of glory, and cannot you bear a disappointment in the world? Are you assured of the care of your heavenly Father, and his particular providence over you, and yet so full of grudging and repining thoughts when he retrencheth you a little and blasteth your worldly probabilities? Surely it argueth too much addictedness to present comforts and love of the ease of the flesh. Have you a due sense of the world to come, and that better and enduring substance, and yet complain so bitterly of worldly losses? Have you a God in covenant with you who hath engaged all his love, wisdom, and power, to help you, and to turn all things to your good? Rom. viii. 28. What though the trial of your faith and patience be very sore? Did you capitulate with God and bargain with him how much you would suffer the flesh to be crossed, and that in such sharp afflictions you would be excused, that your gourd should not be altogether smitten and dried up? You can bear any other cross but this; but was this excepted out of your resignation?

2. It reproveth those that cherish a carnal rejoicing. A believer should rejoice in Christ Jesus: Luke x. 19, 20, 'Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, &c. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' Rejoice not in this, that you are in dignity and honour; this is not your felicity, nor the direct way to your felicity. The higher you climb, your station is the more dangerous: they are safer that stand on the ground, than those that are on a pinnacle. Rejoice not in that you have abundance of earthly riches, but that you have a taste of higher and better things. Be not affected so deeply with lower mercies as to overlook the special mercies that accompany salvation. Rejoice not in this, that you have convenient habitations in this world, but in that you have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; in that you have comely bodies, but that you have hopes of a better resurrection, when this mortal shall put on immortality; not in the nobility of your birth, but that you are born of the Spirit: John i. 12, 13, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Rejoice not in that you have great friends to stand by you, but that in the new covenant you are made a friend of God, as Abraham was. Not in that you have costly accommodations to please the flesh: no, this may be the bane of your souls: Rom. viii. 13, 'They that live after the flesh shall die;' and Luke xvi. 25, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.' (Dives fared deliciously every day, and Lazarus was full of sores, and desirous to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.) 'Thou hast received thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.'

Use 2. Is to encourage you to rejoice in Christ Jesus. Now, because we are helpers of your joy, 2 Cor. i. 24, and God is best pleased with this frame of spirit, 1 Thes. v. 16, I shall resume the main discourse; and

I. Handle the nature of it.

II. Show you whether this joy may be without assurance.

III. Show you the spiritual profit of it.

IV. The helps or means by which it is raised in us.

I. For the nature of it. It is an act of love, begotten in us by the sense of the love of Christ, revealed in the word, and shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, whereby the soul is more affected with delight in the grace of the Redeemer than with all other things whatsoever.

In which description observe:—

1. It is *an act of love*. The acts of love are two—desire and delight. They both agree in this: that they are conversant about good, and are founded in esteem. We think it good. They differ, because desire is the motion and exercise of love, and delight the quiet and repose of it. Desire is expressed in that speech, Ps. lxxiii. 8, ‘My soul followeth hard after thee.’ A believer cannot forbear to seek after God. Desire of union keepeth us up in the pursuit of him. Delight is expressed in that form of speech, Ps. xvi. 5, 6, ‘The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup. The lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place; yea, I have a goodly heritage.’ He hath all his joy, and pleasure, and contentment in God. Desire supposeth some want or absence of the valued object; delight, some kind of enjoyment. Either he is ours, or might be ours if we would ourselves; for the offer is cause of joy, as well as the enjoyment. If our desires have reached the lovely object, it is cause of joy, or if it be within our reach; as when Christ and his benefits are offered to us, and left upon our choice. And therefore it is said, Jonah ii. 8, ‘They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies.’ *Their own*, though not possessed by them, yet they are offered to them: they might have been their own, if they did not exclude themselves. The object is in a sort present, and brought home to us in the offers of the gospel.

2. It is an act of love *begotten in us by the sense of the love of Christ*. For love only begetteth love: 1 John iv. 19, ‘We love him, because he loved us first.’ The object of love is goodness. Now, we loved God in Christ, for the goodness that is in him, the goodness that floweth from him, and the goodness we expect from him; all these attract our love.

[1.] The goodness that is in him, moral and beneficial. Moral, which is his holiness: Ps. cxix. 140, ‘Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.’ If we love his law for the purity thereof, then certainly we must love God. How else can we study to imitate him? for we imitate only that which we love and delight in as good. Then for his beneficial goodness, Ps. c. 5, ‘For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations;’ and Ps. cxix. 68, ‘Thou art good, and doest good.’

[2.] The goodness that floweth from him; not only in our creation, but our redemption by Christ, which is the stupendous instance of his

goodness to man : Titus iii. 4, ' After the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared,' &c. (In the creation there was *φιλανγγλία* ; in redemption, *φιλανθρωπία*.) That God found a ransom for us, and so great as his only-begotten Son, this was love and goodness indeed.

[3.] The goodness we expect from him, both in this world and the next. Here reconciliation and remission of sins, which is a blessing that doth much draw the heart of man to delight in Christ ; for she loved much to whom much was forgiven, Luke vii. 47. We keep off from a condemning God, but draw nigh to a pardoning God. Therefore the apostle saith, Heb. vii. 19, The bringing in of this better hope by the gospel doth cause us to draw nigh to God. Being at peace with God, and reconciled to him, we may have access with confidence and boldness to the throne of grace ; are no more at distance with God, looking upon him as a consuming fire. The gospel giveth us liberty to come to him, and expect the mercy and bounty of God, through Jesus Christ. So in the next world eternal life and glory, which is our great reward, merited by Christ : Mat. v. 12, ' Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' This is a solid, lasting, satisfying, substantial good. Worldly joys are but seeming, they appear and vanish in a moment, every blast of temptation scattereth them. Well, then, offers of pardon and life by Christ are the matters of this joy, as they free us from the greatest miseries, and bring us to the enjoyment of the truest happiness. If you ask me, then, Why is a Christian described rather by rejoicing in Christ than by rejoicing in the pardon of sins and eternal blessedness ? I answer, Because Christ is the author and procurer of these things to us ; and by our joy we express not only our esteem of these benefits, but our gratitude and thankfulness for the mercy and bounty of God, and the great love of our Redeemer.

3. The description sheweth how the sense of this goodness is begotten in us. The love of Christ is *revealed in the word and shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost* ; and I add, *believed by faith, and improved by meditation.*

[1.] It is revealed in the gospel, or word of salvation which is sent to us. Therefore it is said, Acts xiii. 48, ' When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God ; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Surely the mind of man, which is naturally discomforted and weakened, and strangely haunted with doubts and fears about the pardon of sin and eternal life, is mightily revived and encouraged with these glad tidings of this salvation dispensed to us by a sure covenant, Heb. vi. 18. And if the Gentiles that heard these things were glad, proportionably we should be glad, for the gospel should never be as stale news to sinners, or as a jest often told. Our necessities are as deep as theirs, and the covenant standeth as firm to us as it did to them ; therefore if we have the heart of a guilty man, it should be as welcome to us.

[2.] It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. So much is asserted by the apostle : Rom. v. 5, ' The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' Our dry reason cannot give such a lively sense of these comforts as

the revelation of the Holy Ghost. And this is the difference between a believing by tradition and believing by inspiration. Believing by tradition giveth us but cold thoughts of these mysteries, but believing by inspiration warmeth the heart, and reviveth it with an unspeakable joy, and is called 'tasting the good word,' which is the privilege of those who are enlightened by the Spirit, Heb. vi. 4; and a tasting that the Lord is gracious, 1 Peter ii. 3; which much differeth from the common reflection upon those things which flesh and blood may give us, or the bare reports of men stir up in us. The Spirit's light is lovely, and ravisheth and transporteth the soul; and where it is permanent and rooted, it effectually changeth the soul. Some are altogether careless, not affected at all with these things, as the habituated worldly sinner, 1 Cor. ii. 14. They are folly to him; for spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. Some are to a degree affected by the common work of the Spirit, Heb. vi. 4-6; but it is not rooted, it is not predominate¹, so as to control other affections and delights; they have a rejoicing in the offers of pardon and life, but it is a joy that leaveth some darling sin still predominant. But there is a third sort that have such a taste of these things that they are renewed and changed by it, Heb. iii. 6. Now, then, if you would have this rejoicing in Christ Jesus, you must apply yourselves to Christ, in the use of the appointed means, for the renewing of your natures; for love and delight are never forced, nor will be drawn forth by bare commands and threatenings, yea, and not by the proposal of promises, though the enjoyments be never so great and glorious. This may a little stir us, and this is the matter of joy, but not the cause of joy. But this joy proceedeth partly from the inclination when the heart is suited, and partly from the attractive goodness of the object; and both are powerfully done by the Holy Spirit, as the heart is renewed, and the object is most effectually represented by him, Eph. i. 17, 18. And this we must wait for.

[3.] It is *received and believed by faith*. This is often told us in the Scripture: 1 Peter i. 18, 'In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;' and Rom. xv. 13, 'The God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing.' We cannot be affected with the great things Christ hath done and purchased for us till we believe them. There is in faith three things—*assent, consent, and affiance*.

(1.) *Assent*, or a firm and certain belief of the truth of the gospel concerning Christ as the only sufficient Saviour, by whom alone God will give us the pardon of sins and eternal life: John iv. 42, 'We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world;' and John vi. 69, 'We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.' When we are verily persuaded of this, as we are of anything that appeareth true to us, this stirreth up joy. Others have but a hearsay knowledge, not a believing assent. Surely Christ is a delectable object; what hindereth, then, but that we rejoice in him? Nothing but want of faith; for if this be true, we so necessitous, and he so all-sufficient a remedy, why are we not so affected with these things as the worth of them doth

¹ That is, 'predominant.'—ED.

deserve? Nothing can be rationally said but that we are not soundly persuaded of the truth of it.

(2.) A *consent*. This grace is dispensed by a covenant which bindeth mutually, assureth us of happiness, and requireth duty from us. Therefore an unfeigned consent, or a readiness to fulfil those terms expressed in the promise, is required of us, or a resolution to repent and obey the gospel. Christ hath offices and relations that imply our comfort, and other offices and relations which imply our duty; or rather, the same do both. He is our teacher and king, as well as our priest; and we must submit to be ruled and taught by him, as well as depend upon the merit of his sacrifice and intercession: Heb. v. 9, 'And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.' And they are so taught the truth that is in Jesus, that they put off the old man, and put on the new, Eph. iv. 20, 21. True believers must be scholars, daily learning somewhat from Christ; yea, his priesthood implieth duty, dependence, humble addresses; a broken-hearted coming to God by him; as his kingship and prophetic office implieth privilege also. His defending and teaching us by his Spirit.

(3.) There is *affiance*, which is a reposing of our hearts, or a relying upon God promising remission of sins and eternal life for Christ's sake alone—that he will be as good as his word, while we diligently use the means ordained to this end, Rom. ii. 7. And this confidence hath an influence upon this joy, Heb. iii. 6, or a delightful sense of our Redeemer's grace.

[4.] It is *improved by meditation*; for the greatest things do not work unless we think of them, and work them into our hearts. The natural way of operation is, that objects stir up thoughts, and thoughts stir up affections: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' The more frequent and serious thoughts we have of the love of God in Christ, and the more deep and ponderous they are, the more do they blow up this holy fire into a flame. Now, for this end was the Lord's Supper instituted, where the whole gospel is applied and sealed to us, that this delight might be afresh acted and stirred in us at the Lord's Table, while our minds are taken up in considering Christ the great apostle and high priest of our confession, Heb. iii. 1. Surely it should not be an idle and fruitless contemplation; it should stir up love, and what stirreth up love stirreth up delight. I come now to the last part of the description.

[5.] The particular affection caused by this sense is mentioned: *We delight in the grace of the Redeemer more than in all other things whatsoever.*

Where—(1.) Take notice of the affection itself.

Then—(2.) The degree of it.

(1.) The affection itself, which is delight, or a well-pleasedness of mind, in the grace that is brought to us by the knowledge of Christ. This enlargeth the heart, and filleth it with a sweetness and contentment; and the vent of it is praise, for the heart being enlarged, cannot hold and contain itself: Ps. ix. 14, 'I will show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Sion; I will rejoice in thy salvation.' Joy cannot be kept within doors; it will break out in all

suitable ways of expression. The heart doth first rejoice, and then the tongue doth overflow. The heart is filled with joy, and then the tongue with thanksgiving. So Ps. xxxv. 9, 'My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in his salvation.' Nothing disposeth the heart to praise so much as this holy joy. There is no true thanksgiving if this be not at the bottom of it.

(2.) For the degree: The heart doth delight in Christ above all other things. As to the sensitive expression in the lively stirring of joy, we may to appearance be more affected with outward benefits, because fleshly objects do more work upon our fleshly senses, as carrying a greater suitableness to them. Religion is a grave, severe thing, not seen so much in actual transports, as in the habitual complacency and well-pleasedness of the mind: yet in solemn duties there may be as great ravishment of soul: Ps. lxxiii. 5, 'My soul shall be ravished as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.' When they feel the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, they are in effect transported with it, more than with all the delicacies and banquets of the world, and cannot hold from praising God. But generally it must be measured by our solid complacency and judicious esteem. What we prize most, and would least want, and would not forego for all other things; so the saints rejoice in God and Christ more than in any worldly matter whatsoever: Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;' Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches;' Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us; thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased;' Ps. lxxiii. 3, 'Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.' This is that which they love most, and keep best, and are most loth to want. This is that which giveth a value to life itself; and without which that which is most precious and desirable is little or nothing worth; and giveth them more comfort than what is most comfortable in this world; and is the most cheerful employment for their thoughts to think upon. This is delight in Christ.

II. Whether this may be had without assurance? And can those who are dark in their interest in Christ, and know not whether they have any grace or no, rejoice in him? To this I answer, Yes, certainly; for there are general grounds of rejoicing, for the gospel bringeth glad tidings to sinners, as it offereth to them a way how to escape out of their misery, and enter into the peace of God.

But more distinctly:—

1. The scripture speaketh of a twofold rejoicing in Christ—before faith and after faith. Before faith is full-grown and is but in the making, as those, Acts xiii. 48, 'When they heard this, they were glad,' &c.; and he that had found the true treasure, for joy thereof sold all that he had, Mat. xiii. 44. There was joy before the thorough consent—though introductive of it, yet antecedent to it. And the reason is, because God hath showed them the way how to free themselves from misery, and to enjoy true felicity and happiness. Now, if there may be a joy before faith, certainly before assurance. The very

offer of a remedy is comfortable when in misery. And then there is a joy after faith, as joy and peace in believing, when they take the course to get this liberty and deliverance by Christ; yet this is faith, not assurance. As a sick man, when he heareth of an able physician who hath cured many of the same disease wherewith he is oppressed, he rejoiceth, and conceiveth some hope that he may be cured also. When he hath lighted upon this physician, and beginneth to make use of his healing medicines, he is more glad, and expecteth the cure. But when he is perfectly recovered, and feeleth it, then he is glad indeed. So when a broken-hearted creature heareth the glad tidings of the gospel, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, he rejoiceth that God hath found out such a Saviour to recover the lapsed estate of mankind. But when he submitteth to Christ's healing methods, and trusts himself with his skill and fidelity, he is more comforted, and doth more intimately feel the benefit of this course in his own soul; but as he groweth more assured of his health and salvation, his comfort still increaseth, and his joy is more unspeakable and glorious. So that this joy may be without assurance, for the causes of it at first are knowledge and faith.

2. There is a joy that accompanieth seeking, even before we attain what we seek after: Ps. cv. 3, 'Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.' There is a great deal of contentment in this course, though that complacential joy which is our full reward be yet reserved for us. Yet there is a joy in seeking; better be a seeker than a wanderer. This blessed Saviour am I waiting upon! Though we have attained to little communion with him, yet it is a comfort that we are seeking farther measure. Delight and joy keepeth up our endeavours.

3. When our right is cleared, then we have more abundant joy: 2 Pet. i. 10, 11, 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, you shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be administered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Some are afar off, others not far from the kingdom of God; others make a hard shift to go to heaven through many doubts and fears, some sail into the haven of glory with full sails, with much joy and peace of soul.

III. I shall show you the spiritual profit of this joy.

1. It is such a joy as doth enlarge our heart in duty, and strengthens us in the way of God: Neh. viii. 10, 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' There is a natural deadness and dulness in holy duties, which we often find in ourselves, which cometh to pass partly from the back-bias of corruption, weakening our delight in God, and partly from the remissness of our will towards spiritual and heavenly things. Now, the most proper and kindly cure of it is this delight and rejoicing in Christ; for a man will readily do those things which he delighteth in, though toilsome and difficult. Let the heart be but affected with the grace of Christ, and our joy will soon vent itself in a thankful and delightful obedience: 1 John v. 3, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous;' Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches;' Ps. xl. 8, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea,

thy law is within my heart.' The hardest services are pleasant to one that delighteth in Christ; they are sweetened by his love, and quickened and enlivened by the sense and esteem that we have of the benefits he procureth for us. Shall we refuse to do anything for such a compassionate Saviour, who died for us to reconcile us to God, and bring us to the everlasting fruition of him? So that the life of all obedience dependeth on this joy.

2. It is our cordial to fortify us against all the calamities and infelicities of the present world, and maketh every bitter thing sweet to us, whether they be the common afflictions incident to man, or persecutions for righteousness' sake.

[1.] For the common afflictions. A Christian is never in a right frame till he hath learned contentment in all estates; that he doth not overjoy in worldly comforts, nor overgrieve for worldly losses, 1 Cor. vii. 30, but carrieth himself as one that is above the hopes and fears of the world. Now, there are many means to be used that we may get this humble and composed frame of heart; but the most constant and effectual cure of worldly sorrow is to keep our rejoicing in Jesus Christ, and to be satisfied with the fruits of his redemption. This, like the wood that was cast in at Marah to make the bitter waters sweet, doth sweeten our troubles, and supply our wants, and swallow up our griefs and infelicities; for we have that in Christ which is better than the natural comfort taken from us: Hab. iii. 17, 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' He supposeth not only some want, but an utter destitution and desolation of all things, and yet his heart was kept up by joy in God. So elsewhere, Rom. xii. 12, 'Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.' The comfort of reconciliation with God, and the hopes of heaven, do most breed patience in afflictions. And, certainly, joy is the best cure of sorrow; *contraria contrariis curantur*. Now, the joy that must be opposed to worldly sorrow is not worldly, but either spiritual or heavenly joy. Spiritual in the present fruits of Christ's death: Heb. xii. 11, 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' Heavenly; surely eternal joys will best vanquish temporal sorrows: Heb. xii. 2, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' This will enable us patiently and cheerfully to bear all things.

[2.] Persecutions. We need to be fortified against this, that we may boldly profess our faith in Christ, without any fear of sufferings, and may not faint under them, but bear them with courage and constancy. Now, this is the fruit of this rejoicing in Christ; witness these scriptures: Acts v. 41, 'They went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name;' Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye

have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' So Mat. v. 12, 'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you;' and in many other places; and 1 Peter iv. 13, 'Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with an exceeding joy;' and James i. 2, 'Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers trials.' Surely, Christ and heaven are worth something, and such trials do in part show how much we esteem him, and value him above any interest of ours.

3. It doth draw off the heart from the delights of the flesh. Not only *contraria contrariis curantur*, but *similia similibus*. Carnal pleasures put the soul out of relish with better things, and draw off the heart from God. A fleshly mind is easily blinded and enchanted with worldly vanities; therefore, it concerneth us to check our inclination to sense-pleasing and flesh-pleasing, which is so natural to us. How shall it be cured but by seeking our delight elsewhere? Every man must have some oblectation, for love cannot lie idle in the soul; either his love is taken up with the joys of sense or the joys of faith—with vain pleasures or with chaste and spiritual delights. The one spoileth the taste of the other. A spiritual mind, that is feasted with higher delights, cannot relish the garlick, and onions, and flesh-pots of Egypt: Cant. i. 4, 'We will remember thy loves more than wine.' And a brutish heart, that is wholly lost and sunk in these dreggy contentments which gratify sense, valueth not the favour of God, thinketh it canting to talk of communion with him, and the joys of hope to be fantastical expressions. They love pleasures more than God, 2 Tim. iii. 4. Now, if we would restrain and check this inclination, we should rejoice in Christ, and delight our minds and hearts in the remembrance of his love and benefits. Whatever pleasure a man doth find or imagine to find in sensual, fleshly courses, that and much more is to be had in Christ, where we rejoice at a surer and more sincere rate: Eph. v. 4, 'Not jesting, but rather giving of thanks.' Carnal mirth doth not so cheer worldlings as the remembrance of the favours and blessings we have by Christ. Keep the heart thankful and sensible of God's goodness and Christ's love, and you will not need vain delights. So Eph. v. 18, 'Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.' These are motives and marks also, for by these three things you may know whether you have this joy, yea or no.

IV. The helps or means by which this joy is raised in us.

1. A sense of sin and misery. This maketh you more sensible of the mercy of the deliverance, and to be more affected with it, as the grievousness of a disease maketh the recovery more delightful. The law condemned you, his ransom must absolve you; sin made you dead, his grace quickeneth and puts life into you. Always as our sense of misery is, so is the sense of the recovery; if one be bitter, the other is sweet. None prize and esteem Christ so much as the broken-hearted and burdened.

2. An entire confidence in Christ: for so it followeth, 'Have no confidence in the flesh.' If we have no confidence in the flesh, and look for all from the mercy and bounty of God through Christ, we shall prize him: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'Unto you therefore which believe, he

is precious ;' Phil. iii. 8, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.'

3. A constant use of the means whereby this joy may be fed and increased in us ; as the word, sacraments, and prayer, 'The word : Ps. exix. 102, 'I have not departed from thy judgments, for thou hast taught me.' Then prayer, suing out of our right : John xvi. 24, 'Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.' So for the sacraments ; baptism : Acts viii. 39, 'When they were come up out of the water, the Spirit caught away Philip, so that the eunuch saw him no more : and he went on his way rejoicing.' The Lord's Supper ; it is our spiritual refection.

4. Sincerity of obedience : 1 Cor. v. 8, 'Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleaven bread of sincerity and truth.' Practical delight is the chiefest, above that of contemplation, a more intimate sense.

We come now to the last part of a Christian's character : *And have no confidence in the flesh.* To understand it, consider there are two things called *flesh* in scripture.

1. External privileges belonging to the worldly life ; such as wealth, greatness, and worldly honour. Now to glory in these is to glory in the flesh, and to trust in these is to trust in the flesh, which should be far from Christians : Jer. ix. 23, 24, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he knoweth me, that I am the Lord,' &c. Where the prophet laboureth to beat them off from their vain confidences, that they might not rely upon their power, policy, and wealth, but a saving knowledge of and interest in God, whose goodness and faithfulness could only secure them against all evils, and procure them all manner of blessings.

2. The outward duties and performances of religion, especially the ceremonies of Moses. Those, consisting in external observances, are called flesh ; and to have confidence in the flesh is to place our confidence in external privileges and duties. For the apostle explaineth himself, ver. 4, 'Though I might also have confidence in the flesh : if any other man thinketh he may have confidence in the flesh, I more.' He was not any whit inferior to any of the Judaizing brethren in outward privileges and duties ; yea, had greater cause of glorying in the flesh than any of the pretenders among them. And then instances, in his Jewish privileges, circumcision, his family, his sect—a pharisee ; his partial obedience or external righteousness—'as to the law blameless.' To rest on these things, then, for our acceptance with God is to have confidence in the flesh. And elsewhere he saith, Gal. iii. 3, 'Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh ?' when they reverted to the ceremonies of the law. This is called flesh, because they consist in outward things. Corrupt nature is pleased with such things, and doth plead and stand for them.

Doct. That a good Christian doth not place his hope and confidence of acceptance with God in external privileges and performances.

In the first character, a Christian is described by his worship ; in the second, by his joy ; in the third, by his confidence.

In handling this point, I shall show you :—

I. What are these externals which are apt to tempt men to a vain confidence.

II. That naturally men are for a mere external way of serving God, and place their whole confidence therein.

III. Why a good Christian should have no confidence in this external conformity to God's law.

I. What are these externals in religion which are apt to tempt men to a vain confidence ? They may be referred to two heads : they are either commanded by God or invented by man—God's externals or man's externals.

1. God's externals : such as he hath instituted and appointed, either in the law of Moses or in the law of Christ. In the law of Moses, such as circumcision, with all the appendent rites. These are called, Heb. ix. 10, 'Carnal ordinances, imposed on them till the time of reformation.' These were to be observed while the institution of them was in force and stood unrepealed, which was done at the coming of Christ : John iv. 23, 24, 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' These made great trouble in the infancy of the church, for the Jews and Judaizing Christians were loth to depart from the rituals under which they were bred and brought up, though Christ fully evidenced his commission from heaven to repeal those laws, and his apostles strongly pleaded the ancient prophecies which foretold it. But these are of no more concernment to us, except to direct us how to behave ourselves in like cases.

2. There are externals in the law of Christ, such as the sacraments—baptism and the Lord's Supper ; hearing of the word, external prayer, and the like. Now the rule is that they must be used, but the outward act not rested in as a sufficient ground of our acceptance with God. Used they must be in faith and obedience, because God hath instituted them under great penalties. As circumcision, while the command was in force : Gen. xvii. 14, 'The man-child whose flesh is not circumcised shall be cut off from his people ; he hath broken my covenant ;' so baptism : Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Not want, but neglect or contempt. Therefore, all these duties must be used as means of salvation, and as expressions of the inward truth of our faith in God and obedience to him. We must not cast off ordinances, but yet they must not be rested in as sufficient grounds of our acceptance with God. While circumcision was in force, they relied on it, as it distinguished them from other nations as the genuine seed of Abraham, and so reckoned to be within the covenant. But the servants of God did always disprove¹ this vain confidence : Rom. ii. 28, 29, 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in

¹ That is, 'disapprove.'—Ed.

the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.' They rejoiced in a shadow when they wanted the thing signified, if there were no mortification of sin, or putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. But not only the apostle, but the prophet long before disproveth¹ their vain confidence: Jer. ix. 25, 26, 'Behold, the days come when I will punish them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised; Egypt and Edom, with the children of Ammon and Moab, are uncircumcised in flesh, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart.' God would proceed against wicked persons and people, circumcised as well as uncircumcised. Were those things spoken to them only, and not to us also? Surely all may learn from hence that by a bare submission to outward rites we are not approved of God, without minding the true reformation of heart and life, and expecting the pardon of our sins by Jesus Christ. You are baptized, but are you washed from your sins? You hear the word, but is it the power of God to your salvation? You frequent sacraments, but is the conscience of the bond of the holy oath into which you are entered upon your hearts? There is more required in Christianity than outward profession, whether in word or deed—namely, the conscience of your dedication to God—or else the work doth not go deep enough: 1 Cor. xiii. 3, 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' You content yourselves with your tale and number of duties, praying morning and evening, and reading so many chapters; but where is the spirit and the fruit of all that you do? They that are given to fasting think themselves very devout if they fast often, be their hearts never so full of rancour. Many huddle over many prayers, but they do not go from their heavenly Father with a heavenly mind. They give alms, but live loosely. As Michal laid a statue in David's bed, and covering it with David's apparel, made Saul's messengers believe it was David himself sick in bed; so many persons cover themselves with certain external actions belonging to religion, and the world believeth them truly sanctified and spiritual, whenas, indeed, they are but statues and apparitions of devotion to God. But this is but a vain show, a placing the means instead of the end—the subordinate instead of the ultimate end.

2. Man's externals, invented by themselves, by laws of their own, and outward observances of their own devising. Men's whole religion running out into externals, they are not contented with the forms of worship instituted by God, but add somewhat of their own, and love to bind themselves in chains of their own making: as the Jews, not being perfect as appertaining to the conscience, by the use of the instituted ceremonies of Moses, invented other things to make them more perfect.

Now, as to this, I shall only observe:—

[1.] That as the outside of worship is most minded by a carnal Christian, so the inside by a renewed Christian: Mat. xv. 8, 'This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.' Their hearts are averse from God. The carnal Christian is all for uncovering the head, and

¹ That is, 'disproveth.' —Ed.

bowing the knee, but taketh no care of the heart : Isa. lviii. 5, ' Is it such a fast that I have chosen ? a day for a man to afflict his soul ? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him ? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day unto the Lord ? ' The pharisees were zealous for washing before meat, as if it were an holy religious act, because it was one of their own traditions, Mat. xv. 2, but took no notice of inward defilement.

[2.] They are more zealous for human inventions than moral and commanded duties, Mat. xv. 3, 4—for the rudiments of the world, as the apostle calleth them, Col. ii. 8, than the unquestionable ordinances of Christ ; for a worldly religion must be supported by worldly means.

[3.] I observe, that the more external pomp there is of man's devising, the less spiritual truth ; for it gratifieth the natural corruption, which is all for the outside. Some few externals God intended for an help, but when men will be adding, they become a burden and an impediment. God did not abrogate his own ceremonies for men to appoint theirs.

II. That naturally men are merely for an external way of serving God, and place their confidence therein.

Here I shall show you :—

1. That their hearts are set upon external worship.

2. That therein they place all their confidence.

1. That naturally men's hearts are chiefly set upon external services ; and that—

[1.] Out of laziness ; externals being more easy than worshipping God in the spirit : Mat. xxiii. 23, ' They tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, but omit the weightier things of the law, τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου, judgment, mercy, faith.' Conscience is like the stomach, which naturally desireth to fill itself, and when it cannot digest solid food, filleth itself only with wind. So here, outward things are more easy, but mortifying sin, and solid godliness, is more difficult ; this the natural man cannot digest, and therefore culleth out the easier and cheaper sort of religion, which puts him to no great trouble or self-denial.

[2.] Out of their indulgence to the flesh. A man can spare anything better than his lusts, his estate, the present ease of the body, their children, anything for the sin of their souls, Micah vi. 6–8. The question is not how to satisfy justice, but how to appease conscience, while they retain their sins. They would buy out their peace with vast sums of money, mangle their flesh, like the priests of Baal, to spare the sin of their souls, do anything, endure anything, but the subduing the heart to God. The sensual nature of man is such, that he is loth to be crossed ; if he must be crossed, only a little, and but for a while ; and therefore affects an easy religion, where the flesh is not crossed, or but a little crossed. Now, slight duties performed now and then do not much trouble the flesh, where there is no mortifying of lusts, no serious godliness.

[3.] Out of pride. Man is a proud creature, and would fain establish his own righteousness, and have somewhat wherein to glory in himself, Rom. x. 3. A russet coat of our own is better than a silken

garment that is borrowed of another: Luke xviii. 9, 'Christ spake this parable against those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.' There is such a disposition in men, that if by any means they can hold up a pretence of righteousness of their own, will not pray, and wait, and consecrate, and devote themselves to God, that they may attain his righteousness, if they have anything to plead, if they have a partial righteousness, if they be not to be numbered among the worst of men: Luke xviii. 11, 'The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.' If they have an external righteousness, they will plead that, 'I fast twice in the week, I give tithe of all that I possess,' &c. A legal spirit is natural to us. Though men dare not pretend to a universal conformity to the law in a strict sense, yet, if they can make a shift to get any external conformity to the law, they are confident of divine acceptance. Yea, so sottish is their conscience, that they will catch hold of anything: Judges xvii. 13, 'Now I know God will bless me, because I have a Levite to my priest,' giving him meat and drink, and about fifty shillings per annum! So willing are we to justify ourselves, by something in ourselves, or done by ourselves. Therefore, that the ell may be no broader than the cloth, they devise a short exposition of the law, that they may entertain a large opinion of their own righteousness.

[4.] There is another reason—interest. External forms of religion draw an interest after them, therefore the apostle saith, Rom. ii. 29, 'Whose praise is not of men, but of God;' and Gal. i. 10, 'If I yet please men, I were not the servant of Christ.' And 'rudiments of the world,' Col. ii. 8. It maketh a man to be applauded and countenanced by the world. Let a man betake himself to such a religion, there are those which will back him and stand by him, and their disfavour and displeasure he shall incur if he forsake it. And where the false worshippers are the prevailing party, he runneth great hazard by contradicting such form and opinions. Therefore the heart of that man that is set on externals takes up with the religion of his country, whether true or false.

2. They place their confidence therein. Every man that hath a conscience must have something to trust unto. Now, what feedeth his confidence but the religion which he hath chosen? There are two things which detain men from God and Christ: some false imaginary happiness, and some counterfeit righteousness, wherein they please themselves. The false happiness is as their God, and the counterfeit righteousness is as their Christ and mediator, and so they are secure and senseless; and, until God open their eyes, they neither seek after another righteousness, nor trouble themselves about the way whereby they may attain it. That men set a false happiness is evident, for ever since man fell from God he ran to the creature, Jer. ii. 13, left the fountain for the cistern; and if we can make a shift to patch up a sorry happiness apart from God, we never care for him, or will not come at him, Jer. ii. 31. Our pleasure, our profit, our honour, that is our God. And if we can enjoy these things without any rubs and checks, we look no farther, and will not seek our happiness in an invisible God, nor wait to enjoy it in an invisible world. But the

second error is, that there is something instead of Christ to us, to keep the conscience quiet. Our happiness is to satisfy our desires, our righteousness to allay our fears. Now here we run to a superficial religion, or something external, which is diversified according to men's education—pagans to the *ἔργον νόμου*, Rom. ii. 15, Jews to the observances of the law, Christians to baptism, outward profession, or some strict form without the power, under which we shelter ourselves, and by which we bolster up our confidence, till God convince us of our mistakes. And so Christ and his renewing and reconciling grace is neglected and disregarded, certainly not cordially accepted as our Redeemer and Saviour.

I come now to show :—

III. Why a good Christian should have no confidence in the flesh.

1. Because till we are dead to the law we cannot live to God. Now, to be dead to the law is nothing else but to have our confidence in the flesh, or external righteousness, mortified. You hear often of being dead to sin, and dead to the world ; you must be also dead to the law, or otherwise you cannot live in Christ, and bring forth fruit unto God : Gal. ii. 19, ' For I through the law am dead to the law, that I may live unto God ; ' and Rom. vii. 4, ' By the body of Christ ye are become dead to the law ; that ye may be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.' We grow dead to the law, when thereby we understand our sinful miserable estate without Christ, and how unable we are to help ourselves. By the convincing power of the law we know our sins ; by the condemning power of the law we know the misery and curse we are subject unto ; by the irritating power of the law we find that the righteousness which the law requireth is not in us, nor can it be found in us. Now in one of those places we are said *by the law* to be dead to the law, and in the other, *by the body of Christ*. By the law itself we are said to be dead to the law, as it maketh us to despair of righteousness by that covenant. By the body of Christ (that is, by the crucified body, or death of Christ), so we are dead to the law, as we are invited to a better hope or covenant, which Christ hath established by bearing our sins on his body on the tree, or enduring the curse of the law for us. Be it by the one, or the other, or both, none will value the grace of Christ till they be dead to the law. Men will shift as long as they can patch up a sorry righteousness of their own, mingle covenants, turn one into another, make one of both, chop, change, mangle, and cut short the law of God ; do anything rather than come upon their knees and beg terms of grace in a serious and broken-hearted manner. None can partake of Christ but those that have their legal confidence mortified, who are first driven, then drawn to him. None but they who are convinced of sin fly to Christ for righteousness ; none but they who are left obnoxious to wrath and the curse prize his delivering us from wrath to come ; none but those who are made sensible of their impotency will seek after his renewing grace, but will still keep to their base shifts, mingling and blending covenants, resting in a little superficial righteousness, or half-covenant of works, or mingling a little grace with it ; are not brought in a humble, penitent, and broken-hearted manner, to sue out their pardon in the name of Christ, and so regularly to pass from covenant to covenant.

2. The superficial righteousness doth not only keep men from Christ, but set them against Christ, his way, his servants, and true interest in the world. These were dogs, evil-workers, to whom the apostle opposeth the true Christians. Usually they that are for the form, oppose the power: Gal. iv. 29, 'He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.' They that have but the form and shadow of godliness, no more than the power of nature carrieth them unto, will persecute those that have the reality and truth, —that is, the renewing and reconciling grace of Jesus Christ; partly, because the true spiritual worshippers, by their serious godliness, disgrace and condemn those that lazily rest in an empty form; and therefore they cannot endure them. At the bottom of their hearts they have an enmity and hatred against God, and vent it on his people: 1 John iii. 12, 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' Partly, because there is in them a spirit of envy and emulation; both are rivals for the favour of God. The spiritual worshippers take the right way, and the formalists the wrong way to obtain it; the first are received, the latter rejected. And they being at such great pains and costs in their wrong way, cannot endure that any should be preferred before them; witness Cain and Abel. Where carnal confidence is, there is bitterness of spirit against sincerity.

3. Because they have so much to do with God. They that look to men, may rest in an outward appearance; but one whose business lieth mainly with God, must look to the frame of his heart, that it be right set towards holiness. Now this is the course of a thorough Christian. It is God's wrath that he feareth, God's favour that is his life and happiness, God's presence into which he often cometh, God's mercy from whom he expecteth his reward, and with God he hopeth to live for ever. Now, bare externals are of no account or worth with God: John iv. 24, 'God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;' 1 Sam. xvi. 7, 'But the Lord said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart;' Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirit.' Men judge after the outward appearance, but God weigheth the spirits.

4. Because of the nature of gospel worship, which is simple, spiritual, and substantial; therefore called *spirit*, often in opposition to the ceremonies of the law, and the ministration of the spirit unto life, 2 Cor. iii. 8. The law is called *letter*, and the gospel *spirit*. Now, for a Christian to turn the ordinances of Christ into flesh, which were appointed to be the ministration of the Spirit, this is to alter the nature of things, and turn the gospel, by which is all our claim and hope, into a dead letter.

5. This confidence should not be cherished by a Christian, because it can bring no solid peace to the conscience, for the present external justiciaries are uncertain. The man that kept all these things from his youth, saith, 'What lack I yet?' Mat. xix. 20. He asketh as a man

unsatisfied; for our bondage doth not wear off with external duties, but is increased rather till we are justified in the name of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit. But suppose it satisfieth blind conscience for the present, yet afterwards, men whose hearts are not found in God's statutes, fall into sad complaints, and are involved in a maze and labyrinth of doubts and troubles, whence they know not how to extricate themselves. They have so much sense of religion as to understand their duty, and yet are so little brought under the power of it, as not to be able to make out their claim. But if this be not the case of all, when the hour of death cometh, we shall find all is but froth, 1 Cor. v. 5, 6. If we have not minded the Redeemer's grace, his whole grace, the imputation of his righteousness, and the regeneration of his Spirit, and lived in obedience to his sanctifying motions, then we shall be filled with horror and amazement.

The first use is caution. Take heed of having confidence in the flesh, of placing religion, and valuing your interest in God, by external observances; but look to this, that your hearts be upright with God in the new covenant. To this end:—

1. Take heed of a false happiness. The wisdom of the flesh, which is natural to us, doth incline us to it, James iii. 15, doth only prompt us to pleasure, profit, and honour. We set our hearts on vain delights, and are wholly carried to them, value our happiness by them. Whilst we indulge this sensual inclination, the soul careth not for God, other things are set up instead of God. The belly is god: Phil. iii. 19, 'Whose God is their belly.' Mammon is their god, Mat. vi. 24. And honour and worldly greatness is another idol which men set up, while they value the praise of men more than the praise of God, John xii. 43. Carnal self-love maketh idols, and sets up other gods instead of the true God. Now therefore make it your first work to return to God as your rightful lord and chief happiness, as your sovereign lord. If you make it your business and purpose to worship God in the spirit, you will rejoice in Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh. Spiritual worship convinceth us of defects, and you will see a need of Christ's renewing and reconciling grace. Our treasure and happiness is our god. Now therefore do you value your happiness by the favour of God, and not by worldly things?

2. In the next place, take heed of a superficial righteousness; for this is plain confidence in the flesh. This maketh you senseless and ignorant of your danger, and careless of the means of your recovery, and so your conviction and conversion is more difficult. And therefore Christ saith, that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before pharisees and self-justiciaries, Mat. xxi. 31. No condition is more dangerous than to be poor and proud; corrupt, and yet conceited and confident. The most vicious are sooner wrought upon than those that please themselves in external observances, without real internal holiness or change of heart.

This is twofold:—

1. Outward ordinances.

2. Partial morality.

1. Outward ordinances: to rest in your attendance upon and use of these. Consider how displeased God was with those that submitted

to sacraments without reformation: 1 Cor. x. 1-5, 'With many of them God was not well pleased, but they were overthrown in the wilderness.' Spiritual meat and spiritual drink could not keep them from destruction when they murmured, when they fell from Christ to idolatry, when they lusted after quails, when they tempted Christ; and will he be more favourable to you? Oh, rest not then in the outward use of the ordinances of Christ! God may vouchsafe you this favour, and yet not be well pleased with you. Many that have eaten and drunk in his presence, yet are finally rejected for their sins, Luke xiii. 26. Many prize the seal, yet tear the bond; that is, break the covenant, yet seem to value the seal of the covenant, that they may have confidence in the flesh, in the bare external performance.

2. Partial morality: those that live fairly and plausibly, but want the true principle, the spirit of Christ; the true rule, the word of God; the true end, the glory of God; that are in with one duty and out with another; fail in their duties to God or men; are much in worship, but defective in common righteousness; love friends, but cannot forgive enemies; it may be they will forgive wrongs, but make no conscience of paying debts. Now there are two arguments against these: these neither understand the law nor the gospel; not the law, its strictness, purity, and spiritual exactness; nor the gospel, which offereth a remedy only to the penitent, those who are deeply affected with the pollution of their natures, the sins of their lives, and the consequent misery; but those that are puffed up with a vain conceit of the goodness of their estate, without any brokenness of heart.

[1.] They are injurious to the law, as they curtail it and reduce it to the external work, Gal. iv. 20. Ye that desire to be under the law, hear what the law saith; if you will stand to that covenant, do you know what it is? The duty is impossible, Rom. viii. 3. The penalty is intolerable, for 'the law worketh wrath;' and it is a law of sin and death to the fallen creature, Rom. viii. 2. The curse is very dreadful and terrible. Nothing more opposite to the law than this partial righteousness. The law, well understood, would humble them.

[2.] This resting in a partial external righteousness is also opposite to the gospel, which inviteth us in a broken-hearted manner to accept Christ. He came to call sinners, not those who are righteous in their own eyes, Mat. ix. 13. It is a remedy for lost sinners, not for them that need no repentance: Luke xv. 7, 'I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.' Nothing is more opposite to the gospel than this confidence in the flesh. The woman that was a sinner was preferred before Simon a pharisee, Luke vii. 44; and the self-condemning publican before the self-justifying pharisee, Luke xviii. 13; the penitent adulteress before her accusers, John viii. The most despised sinners, repenting and believing in Christ, find more grace and place with him than those that satisfy themselves with some external conformities.

A second use is by way of examination. Are you of this temper, that you have no confidence in the flesh?

If you are:—

1. You are still kept humble and thankful; humble, with a sense of sin and deserved wrath; confessing and forsaking your sins, and glorying in Christ only, you are kept vile in your own eyes, and in a humble admiration of grace: Luke vii. 47, 'Wherefore I say unto you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven her, for she loved much,' &c. She loved much, because much was forgiven. When God is pacified, yet you loathe yourselves: Ezek. xvi. 63, 'That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.' And you ascribe all to the mercy of God and the merit of Christ; blessing God for him and imploring pardon for your best duties, our righteousness being but as filthy rags.

2. A partial outside obedience will not satisfy you. A heart that findeth rest in empty formal services certainly places confidence in the flesh. They neither look after the change of their natures, nor their reconciliation with God by Christ. They challenge God: Isa. lviii. 3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?' and Luke xviii. 12, 'I fast twice in the week, and I give tithe of all that I possess.'

3. Thankfulness or gratitude sets you a-work for God, rather than a legal conscience. Duties are performed as a thank-offering rather than a sin-offering, out of love to God rather than fear.

WHAT KIND OF PERFECTION IS ATTAINABLE IN THIS LIFE?

Let, therefore, as many as be perfect be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.—PHIL. III. 15.

THESE words are inferred out of the foregoing context, as the illative particle *therefore* sheweth.

In the words are two things:—

1. His exhortation to the strong and grown Christian: *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.*
2. His condescension to the weak: *And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*

In the former branch we have:—

1. The term by which the strong Christian is expressed: ‘As many as be perfect.’ He had said before of himself that he was not yet perfect, ver. 12. Yet now he supposeth it both of himself and others: ‘Let us therefore, as many as be perfect.’ Therefore perfection must be taken in a limited sense, to avoid the seeming contradiction.

2. The advice or counsel given, ‘Be thus minded;’ what is that? *τοῦτο φρονεῖτε*, ‘Think the same thing with me.’ What that is must be known by the foregoing context, and may be gathered from the third verse. He had spoken of some false teachers and Judaizing brethren, who gave out themselves to be patrons and defenders of the circumcision, and other ceremonies of the law, as if these things did commend them to God. Now the apostle reproveth them, and saith they were not *περιτομή*, ‘the circumcision,’ but *κατατομή*, ‘the concision,’ destroyers and renders of the church, not the true people of God, who were sometimes noted by the term *circumcision*. They are the *concision*, the cutters and dividers of the church; but we are *περιτομή*, the true *circumcision*, ‘who serve God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;’ that is, who have no confidence in any superficial righteousness, but seek our justification before God, and the renovation of our natures from Christ alone; and serve God by exercising this grace in faith, love, and hope; or who seek to Christ alone for his renewing and reconciling grace, that we may serve God in a spiritual manner, and so at length attain

the promised glory. Now this he proveth by his own instance, who had as much cause to glory in the flesh as any of them, but suffered the loss of all things, and counted all things wherein they gloried, and he might have gloried, but loss and dung, that he might obtain this grace from Christ Jesus, and at length, after a diligent, self-denying course of service and obedience, be brought home to God. Now, saith he, 'As many as be perfect, *τοῦτο φρονεῖτε*, mind this,' take care of this, and do you, with the loss of all things, press to this.

3. His condescension to the weak, who were not satisfied with the abrogation of the ceremonies of the law, though they had embraced other parts and points of Christianity: 'And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this to you.' Here—

[1.] Something is supposed, that they should not be cut off from the rest of Christians, either by the harsh censures or rigorous dealing of the strong, or the pertinacious obstinacy of the weak. The perfect, that have the truth of their side, must not condemn others; nor the weak must not condemn and censure them.

[2.] Something expressed, or the reason of this mutual condescension and forbearance. If they be sincere and humble, God will at length show them the truth.

I begin with his counsel to the strong and grown Christian; and there I shall speak, first, of the term by which they are expressed: 'Let as many of us as be perfect.'

Doct. That there is a kind of perfection attainable in this life.

I shall, first, explain the point by several distinctions.

Secondly, prove that all Christians should endeavour to be perfect.

For the first, there is a double perfection: *perfectio termini et præmii*, and *perfectio viæ seu cognitionis et sanctitatis*—a perfection of the reward, and a perfection of grace.

1. Of the reward which the saints shall have in heaven, where they are freed from all sinful weakness: 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 'When that which is perfect shall come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' In heaven there is perfect felicity and exact holiness; then the saints are glorious saints indeed, when they have neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor blemish, nor any such thing, Eph. v. 27; when 'presented faultless before the presence of his glory,' Jude 24. Now this we have not in the world; but because this we expect in the other world, we are to labour after the highest perfection in holiness here, because allowed imperfection is a disesteem of blessedness. Do we count immaculate purity and perfection in holiness to be our blessedness hereafter? and shall we shun it, and fly from it, or at least neglect it, as if it were our burden now? No surely! 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, as Christ is pure,' 1 John iii. 3. He that looketh not for a Turkish paradise, but a sinless estate, will endeavour it now, get as much as he can of it now. When you cease to grow in holiness you cease to go on any farther to salvation; you seem to be out of love with heaven and blessedness when your desires and endeavours are slaked.

2. The perfection of grace and holiness is such as the saints may attain unto in this life: Col. iv. 12, 'That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.' So we are perfect when we want none of those things which are necessary to salvation, when we study to

avoid all known sin, and address ourselves to the practice of all known duty, serving God universally and entirely.

Secondly, There is perfection legal and evangelical. Legal is un-sinful obedience; evangelical is sincere obedience: the one is where there is no sin; the other no guile, no allowed guile. The one standeth in an exact conformity to God's law, the other in a sincere endeavour to fulfil it; the one will endure the balance, the other can only endure the touchstone.

1. The legal perfection is described Gal. iii. 10, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the words of this law to do them.' A personal, perpetual perfect obedience. It supposeth a man innocent; it requireth that he should continue so; for the least offence, according to that covenant, layeth us open to a curse; as the angels, for one sin, once committed, were turned out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise. The omitting of aught we are to perform, the committing aught we are forbidden, yea, the least warping, as well as swerving, by an obliquity of heart and spirit, maketh us guilty before God. Now this is become impossible through the weakness of our flesh. Rom. viii. 3. Man is fallen already, and hath mixed principles in him, and cannot be thus exact with God.

2. Evangelical: when the heart is faithful with God, fixedly bent and set to please him in all things: 2 Kings xx. 3, 'Remember, Lord, I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.' This may be pleaded in subordination to Christ's righteousness; this perfection is consistent with weakness: 2 Chron. xv. 17, 'Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was perfect all his days;' and yet he is taxed with several infirmities. This perfection all must have: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.' What is done for God, as it must be done willingly, readily, not by constraint, but the native inclination of the soul; so perfectly, that is, with all exactness possible. As some may do many things which are good, but their hearts are not perfect with God: 2 Chron. xxv. 2, 'He did that which is right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.' Not a sincere bent of soul towards God alone. When the heart is divided between God and other things, Hosea x. 2, 'Their heart is divided;' James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' A heart against a heart; in point of faith, between God and other confidences; in point of love, between God and the vanities of the world; and God's interest is not chief, nor do we love him above all things; in point of obedience, between pleasing God and pleasing men, and pleasing God and our own vain fancies and appetites, honouring God and promoting our worldly ends; you set up a rival and partner with God. Now this perfection we must have, or else not in a state of salvation.

Thirdly, There is a perfection absolute and comparative.

1. That is, absolutely perfect to which nothing is wanting. This is in our Lord Christ, who had the Spirit without measure; this is in our rule, but not in them that follow the rule: Ps. xviii. 30, 'As for God, his way is perfect.' But that absolute perfection is not in any of the saints here upon earth, I prove by these arguments:—

[1.] Where there are many relics of flesh or carnal nature left, there a man cannot be absolutely perfect ; but so it is with all the godly, there is a double-warring working principle in them : Gal. v. 17, ' For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' And it is actually confirmed in Paul, witness his groans, Rom. vii. 24, ' Oh wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?' Mark there, the apostle speaketh of himself, not of another ; of himself, in his present renewed estate, not of his past and unconverted estate, when a pharisee. His past estate he had spoken of, ver. 9, ' Sin revived, and I died ;' but, ver. 14, ' I am carnal ;' and ver. 15, ' That which I do, I allow not ;' and ver. 18, ' How to perform that which is good, I find not.' Many things there said cannot agree to a carnal man. As, for instance, not allowing sin, ver. 15 ; hating sin, in the same verse : ' What I hate, that do I ;' so delight in the law of God, ver. 22. Again, there is a double man distinguished, ver. 17, ' It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me.' Again, he distinguisheth between him and his flesh, ver. 18 ; so between an outward and inward man, ver. 22, 23. Lastly, He giveth thanks for deliverance by Christ, all which are competent only to the regenerate. Now, these things being so, surely God's best servants are not absolutely perfect.

[2.] There are none but sometimes sin : 1 Kings viii. 46, ' For there is no man that sinneth not ;' and Eccles. vii. 20, ' There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not ;' and James iii. 2, ' In many things we offend all ;' 1 John i. 8, ' If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Therefore, no man so perfect as to be without all sin.

[3.] There is none but need the mercy of God, and ought to pray for this mercy for the pardon of their daily sins, Mat. vi. 13, as we pray for daily bread. This petition our Lord directeth us to put up, not for the sins of others, but our own. Now these arguments prove that no man hath a righteousness that is perfect, without defects. The best of God's children have innumerable frailties, which may humble them, and which should be seriously laid to heart, and watched over, every step of our way to heaven.

2. There is a comparative perfection, and that is twofold :—

[1.] When those who live under the law of Christianity are compared with other institutions.

[2.] When the professors of Christianity are compared among themselves.

[1.] When the professors of Christianity are compared with those that live under other institutions. They that submit to Christ's terms are said to be perfect, because Christianity itself is a perfection. For instance, take that one place (and the rather, that I may wrest it out of the hands of the Papists, who distinguish between evangelical precepts of necessary duty, and counsels of perfection, to establish monkery and voluntary poverty, as a more perfect state of life than that which the common sort of Christians live). Their most colourable place is Mat. xix. 21, ' Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in

heaven, and come and follow me.' Is not this a counsel of perfection? Doth not Christ call it so? Or is every one bound to give all his goods to the poor, and turn monks or anchorites? No; the meaning of the word, *If thou wilt be perfect*, is no more but this, if thou wilt ascend to that higher pitch and rule of living, to which I come to raise men, if thou wilt be a Christian. The perfection here spoken of is Christianity itself, not a heroic eminent degree of it; and the condition here required is matter of command, not counsel; only such as if we will not submit to, we are not Christians; for a man that would have the privileges of the gospel, he must submit to the duties of the gospel, or the conditions required by Christ, that is to be a perfect, thorough Christian. You will say, Must we sell all and give to the poor, in contemplation of the heavenly reward?

Ans. 1. Every man is bound to bestow goods, land, and life as God shall direct, and part with all the wealth in the world whensoever it is required of him. Now, it may be required of us directly or by consequence. Directly, by an expressed command, such as this young man had from Christ; and actually to sell our estates, and give to the poor, obligeth none, unless we have such a like command from Christ himself as this young rich man had. By consequence, when we cannot obey any particular precept of Christ without danger of being undone by it. And so it obligeth all Christ's disciples to part with all, rather than to break with Christ; for no man is a Christian unless he selleth all for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 46. And our Lord telleth us, that he that loveth anything more than him, is not worthy of him, Mat. x. 37; that is, is no Christian; so that if it be impossible to preserve our fidelity and obedience without parting with our wealth, we must impartially perform it, though it be with loss of estate and life itself; and if we do not resolve and undertake to do so, we are no Christians, and cannot be saved. In baptism, we vow to forsake the world and follow Christ, when the world cometh in competition with him. If, in a time of trial, we do not perform it, we forfeit the privileges of Christianity, and all title to blessedness. Therefore this perfection is necessary for all Christians. You esteem, prefer, choose Christ above all, resolving, whatever it cost you, to be faithful to him; it is not a high and arbitrary point in Christianity, but a necessary duty. You will say, What can the strongest Christian do more than sell all, than part with all?—*Answer*, They can do it with far greater love, readiness, and joy, than the weak Christian can do. The difference between Christians is not in the thing done, but the manner of doing. Well, then, this is to be perfect, thus must you all be perfect; for this perfection is necessarily constitutive of sincerity; you are not true Christians without it.

[2.] When compared with others of the same profession, believers are distinguished into perfect and imperfect. Though none can attain to absolute perfection of holiness, yet there are several degrees of grace, and diversities of growth among Christians, and the strong are said to be perfect in comparison of those weak ones who are raw in knowledge, or feeble and impotent in the resistance of sin. Thus the perfect are opposed to the babes in Christ; as, when he had spoken of our 'growing into a perfect man in Christ Jesus,' he presently addeth,

'That henceforth we be no more children,' Eph. iv. 13, 14. And elsewhere, when he had spoken of the 'perfect,' 1 Cor. ii. 6, who are skilful in spiritual things, he presently opposeth to them the 'babes in Christ,' chap. iii. 1. The same you may observe in Heb. v. 13, 14, 'He that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age,' *τελείοι*, 'perfect,' as in the margin. See also 1 Cor. xiv. 20, 'Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men,' 'perfect, or ripe of age.' These, and many other places, show the notion of *perfect*: it is not absolutely taken, but comparatively. Those who well and thoroughly understand Christian doctrine, and are habituated to a course of godliness, and have a confirmed faith and love to God, and this in opposition to novices and inexperienced Christians newly entered into Christ's school. Now thus we must be perfect, not always children. It is a monstrous thing, after many years' growth to be a babe still, and an infant still. This sense is of chief regard here.

3. There is a perfection of parts, and a perfection of degrees; that is growth.

[1.] Perfection of parts is when we have all things that belong to a sincere Christian, or to a state of salvation; as living creatures are perfect as soon as they are brought forth, for they have all things belonging to that creature; it is not maimed or defective in any part: thus an infant is perfect the first day of his birth, as well as a man of riper age. Thus a Christian must have the perfection of integrity, all the parts which belong to a new creature; grace to enlighten the mind, bend and incline the heart to God, govern the affections, rule the appetite; one grace added to another, that the Christian may be entire and perfect, and in no point lacking, James i. 4. What is defective in parts cannot be supplied by any after-growth. A Christian cannot be perfect in degrees unless he be perfect in parts; leave out one necessary grace and the new creature is maimed; some leave out temperance, others patience, others love, 1 Peter ii. 5, 6, 7.

[2.] There is a perfection of degrees, that is, when a thing is absolute and complete, and to which nothing is wanting, and hath attained its *ακμῇ* and highest pitch. So we are only perfect in heaven, Heb. xii. 23, 'The spirits of just men made perfect;' those spirits who are unclothed and divested of the body; in their mortal life only they were upright,¹ but in their heavenly life perfect. Here they walked with God, and endeavoured an universal obedience to him, and so made capable; but now live with God, and are admitted into a nearer communion with him than we mortals are; they are freed from all sin and temptation, they are beyond growth: corn doth not grow in the garner, but in the field. Well, then, though we be not perfect in degrees, yet we must all be perfect as to parts, we must entirely resign ourselves to God's use, without allowing any part or corner of our hearts to be possessed by any other.

4. Perfection is to be considered with respect—(1.) to our growth, or (2.) our consummation; here it is only *in fieri*, there *in facto esse*. Things are said to be done when they are begun to be done, 2

¹ That is, 'they were only upright.'—ED.

Cor. v. 17. And so they are said to be perfect who are in the way of perfection; he that is in his growing estate, increasing more unto grace and righteousness; 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image;' 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'Though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' They do seriously set upon the work. Thus perfection is taken:—

[1.] As to means. The ministry was appointed 'for the perfecting of the saints,' Eph. iv. 12. That they may be more enlightened and more sanctified; more brought to the knowledge of God and obedience of his will. There are means appointed by God for the perfecting of grace, as well as the first working of it in us: 1 Thes. iii. 10, 'That I may perfect what is lacking to your faith.'

[2.] As to the improvement of means: 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' making progress in the way of grace towards perfection, when the habit is more increased: 2 Peter i. 8, 'For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ.' And Christian practice is more uniform: 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'That as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and please God, so that ye would abound more and more.' It is not enough to have grace, but we must grow in grace; progress is always necessary, though exact perfection be not attained, so that then the heart is perfect with God, when you make it not a slight purpose only, but your constant endeavour to come up to your pattern and rule, continually striving against sin, and aiming at a higher degree of holiness.

(2.) Consummate. When after all the hazards of the present life, when at length we shall be presented to Christ, and by Christ to God. Presented to Christ: Col. i. 28, 'That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;' that is, fully complete, according to that holiness required and exemplified by Christ. And by Christ to God: Col. i. 22, 'To present you holy, and unblamable, and irreprovable in his sight.'

I now come to the reasons.

Secondly, The reasons why we must be perfect, that is, not only sincere, having all parts of a Christian, but endeavour after the highest perfection, and for the present, want nothing conducive nor necessary to salvation.

1. We have a perfect God: Mat. v. 43, 'Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.' God's perfection is our copy, and that is exact, and we are required to imitate him; and, therefore, we must not set bounds to our holiness, and say, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;' when we are come never so far, yet this is not like God. The force of this rule is not taken off, because it is limited to one perfection in the divine nature in the Evangelist Luke, for he readeth, instead of being perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, 'Be ye merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful,' Luke vi. 36—that is a special way of Christian perfection; but God's children must aim at the perfection of all virtues, not only love to enemies. As mercy is one of the divine perfections which we ought to imitate, so is holiness, veracity, and wisdom, 1 Peter i. 15, 16. Surely this direction was given in the gospel to some purpose or not: if not, then Christ spoke words in vain; if to some purpose, we are obliged to perfection; though we cannot fully ob-

tain it in this life, we must still aim at more, and come more near to it. And having God for our pattern, we should always set him before our eyes, as he is represented to us in his word, and his Son Jesus Christ, the express image of his person, to be imitated by us.

2. We have a perfect rule: Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of God is perfect;' and 2 Tim. iii. 17, 'The word of God is able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.' The strictness of the law as a rule is adopted into the covenant of grace, into the very frame and constitution of it, and so far bindeth as to allow no weaknesses and imperfections, but that we must still bewail failings, and strive after the utmost conformity to it in all things. As we have a perfect pattern, so we have a law still, that is the perfect rule of all righteousness, and therefore we should endeavour to conform to it more and more.

3. We have a perfect Redeemer: Col. ii. 10, 'Ye are complete in him.' We have all things from him, and in him, necessary to salvation. In ourselves we are empty, destitute of everything which might commend us to God, but there is a fulness in Christ to be communicated to all who, being sensible of their own emptiness, do seriously apply themselves to him; a perfect wisdom, a perfect righteousness, perfect sanctification, and supplies for our perfect glory and blessedness. He beginneth by his Spirit to renew our natures, and this grace is still of the growing hand, till all be crowned in glory; there is a complete fulness in our Mediator.

4. There is a perfect reward, or a perfect state of glory, in which there is nothing wanting, either to holiness or happiness. The scripture describeth it by our growing up into a perfect man in Christ Jesus, Eph. iv. 13. We have our infancy at our first conversion, when liable to childish ignorance and many infirmities; we have our youth and growing age, when making progress in the way of grace towards perfection; and lastly, we have our perfect manly age when we are come to our full pitch, when grace is fully perfected in glory. In scripture there is nothing said of the fading and declining time of old age. Oh! blessed will that time be, when we shall be holy and undefiled, above the reach of temptations; when believers receive all immediately from the fountain of holiness, and are filled with the fulness of all perfections. And shall we that have such hopes be lazy and negligent? No; we must press towards the mark, if we expect it as our felicity, we must prize it, and seek after it, and get more of it every day.

Use 1. Is to press and exhort you to labour after Christian perfection.

1. Motives. What you lost in Adam must be recovered in Christ, or else you dishonour your Redeemer. Now we lost in Adam innocence and perfect holiness, therefore you must seek to recover it by Christ, for certainly Christ is more able to save than Adam to destroy, Rom. v. 17. The abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness came by Jesus Christ. It is true, Christ doth his work by degrees; but if we mind it not, and lazily expect that he should make us perfect, how will it ever be? for God will not save us without us; and as far as we hope for anything, we must endeavour after it, for Christian hope is not a devout sloth, but an encouragement to diligence.

2. We pray for perfection, and therefore we must endeavour after

it, otherwise our prayers are a mockery. We pray, Mat. vi. 8, and 1 Thes. v. 23, 'The God of peace sanctify you throughout, even your whole body, soul, and spirit.' We pray for complete sanctification in hope to obtain it. Prayer is not for God's sake, but ours—a solemn binding ourselves to use the means, that we may obtain the blessings that we ask.

3. In our making covenant, we purpose to do the whole will of God; now where there is a purpose, there must be an endeavour and a progress, for otherwise it is not made with a true heart, Heb. x. 22. A man may purpose duty in a pang, which afterward he retracts in his conversation and practice; he may wish for perfection, like it in the general, not considering it as exclusive of his beloved lusts, but there he will be excused. Yea, he may sincerely purpose it, yet be faint and slack in his endeavours. Therefore, we need to be exhorted continually to be more earnest and diligent in holiness, to avoid 'all appearance of evil,' 1 Thes. v. 22. Not to allow ourselves in the omission of any known duty, James iv. 13, or the commission of any known sin, though never so near and dear to us: Ps. xviii. 23, 'I was upright before thee, and kept myself from mine iniquity.' Therefore, unless we comply with these exhortations, and set ourselves sincerely to do the whole will of God, the challenge will be brought against us which was brought against the church of Sardis, 'I have not found thy works perfect before God,' Rev. iii. 2. Your vows were good, but your practice is not answerable.

4. Consider the comfort and peace of that man who doth more and more press towards perfection: Ps. xxxvii. 37, 'Mark the perfect man, behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.' They have a sweet life, and a happy close, a tolerable passage through the world, and a comfortable passage out of the world.

For means:—

1. See that the work be begun, for there must be converting grace before there can be confirming grace, life before there be strength and growth, as there must be fire before it can be blown up; for what good will it do to blow a dead coal, to seek strength before we have life? It is as if we should give food or physic to a dead man. The secure and impenitent are not to be confirmed and strengthened, but humbled and changed. We must first choose God for our portion before we can be exhorted to cleave to God, Acts xi. 23. First, the perfection of sincerity before the perfection of growth and progress, the measures and degrees following the real being of grace in the soul.

2. If you would be perfect, the radical graces must be strengthened, which are faith, hope, and love; strong faith, fervent love, lively hope. Such a faith as realiseth the unseen glory, and giveth such a deep sense of the world to come, as that you are willing to venture all upon the hopes of it; such a hope as sets the heart upon glory to come, as present things do not greatly move us; such a love as levelleth all our actions to God's glory, and our eternal enjoyment of him, Jude 20, 21.

3. Use the means with all seriousness and good conscience. These conduce to perfect what is lacking to your faith, to root you, ground

you in love, confirm you in hope, that the thoughts of heaven may be more affecting and engaging. Now the principal means are the word, and sacraments, and prayer.

[1.] In the word you have principles of faith, obligations to love, and arguments of hope; therefore it is said, God buildeth us up by the word of his grace, Acts xx. 32.

[2.] The sacraments strengthen faith, hope, and love, as signs and seals of the love of God, through Jesus Christ, in the new covenant, that so our consolation may be more strong. They strengthen our faith and hope, as a bond or a vow: so they excite and engage our love and obedience: we bind ourselves to God anew, to pursue our everlasting hopes, whatever they cost us. Our great diseases are proneness to evil and backwardness to good: we check the one and cherish the other.

[3.] Prayer; for it is God that perfects us, 1 Peter v. 10. He must be sought to; his blessing maketh the means effectual.

4. Think much and often of your perfect blessedness, which you expect according to promise, which will quicken and excite you to more diligence. There is a time coming when the mind shall be filled with as much light, and the heart with as much love and joy, as the capacity of it is able to contain. There will be:—

[1.] A complete vision of God and Christ, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. No desire of the mind shall be unfilled or unsatisfied with the knowledge of God in Christ.

[2.] A complete possession and fruition of God. Here we are in a waiting, expecting, longing posture, but there is a plenary fruition; we are filled up with all the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 19, and 1 Cor. i. 30. God is all in all.

[3.] A complete similitude and transformation into the image of Christ, 1 John iii. 2; Ps. xvii. 15. Here grace is mingled with corruption; we are like God by the first-fruits of the Spirit, but unlike him by the remainders of corruption; but in heaven we shall be wholly like him. Here we resemble Christ, but we also resemble Adam, yea, and often show forth more of Adam than Jesus; but there we only show forth the holiness and purity of Christ, his image shineth in us without spot and blemish.

[4.] A complete delectation arising from all the rest, the vision, fruition, and likeness of God, Ps. xvi. 11. Those delights are full and perpetual: our great business will be to love what we see, and our great happiness to have what we love. This is our never-failing delight; we enter into our Master's joy, Mat. xxv. and 1 Peter iv. 13, 'That when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with an exceeding joy.' The Lord hath reserved the fulness of his people's joy until that time when sorrow will be no more.

Use 2. Are we perfect, that is, grown Christians in the way to perfection?

The notes of it are:—

1. When there is such a base esteem of worldly things, that our affections are weakened to them every day. One half of religion is dying to the world, as the other half is living to God, the mortifying of self-love, and the strengthening and increasing our love to God.

Self-love is gratified by the pleasures, honours, and profits of the world; so love to God aimeth at the enjoyment of God, when we get above the hopes and fears of the world, and the delights of sense. 'I am crucified to the world,' Gal. vi. 14, when everything is 'loss and dung' for Christ's sake.

2. When more unsatisfied with present degrees of holiness, with a constant endeavour to grow better. Our maimed and defective service is a real trouble to us; we bewail our wants and imperfections; I cannot do what I would: 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' It is the grief and shame of your hearts that you serve God no better; you are still groaning, longing, striving after greater perfection: but when you allow yourselves in your imperfections, and digest failings without remorse, you are weaklings in Christianity. A true Christian desireth the highest degree of holiness, and to be freed from everything that is sin, cannot sit down contented with any low degree of grace; it is a trouble to him that he knoweth and loveth God no more, and serveth him no better; his smallest sins are a greater burden to him than the greatest bodily wants and sufferings, Rom. vii. 23, 24.

3. Such are more swayed by love than fear. Weak Christians are most obedient when most in fear of hell; but the more we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, the more we advance towards our final estate. At first our pride and sensuality beareth sway and rule in us, and have no resistance, but now and then some frightenings and ineffectual checks from the fears of hell. Such they¹ are not converted yet. And if the sense of religion do more prevail upon us, yet our condition is more troublous than comfortable, and all our business is to escape the everlasting misery which we fear; and so we may forsake the practice of those grosser sins which breed our fears, or perform some duties that may best fortify us against them. But this religion is animated by fear alone, without the love of God and holiness, that is only preparative to religion, near the kingdom of God; but when really converted, we have the Spirit of his Son inclining us to God as a Father, Gal. iv. 6. But as yet the spirit of adoption produceth but weak effects; we differ little from a servant; it is 'perfect love casteth out fear,' 1 John iv. 18. When the soul loveth God, mindeith God, and is inclined to the ways of God, delighteth in them as they lead to God, then we are in a better progress, and more prepared for our final estate: his great motive is love, his great end is perfect love. For the present he would serve him better, because he delighteth in his ways. 'Oh, how I love thy law!' Ps. exix. 97, and ver. 140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' They are willing and ready for God; these are thoroughly settled in a Christian course.

4. The grown Christian is more humble, he seeth more of his defects than others do. Weak Christians are more liable to be puffed up than the wiser and stronger; for the more men increase in grace, whether knowledge or holiness, the more they know their emptiness, unmortifiedness, and manifold sins and failings, the more they know of the jealousy of God's holiness, of the evil of sin, of the strictness of the covenant, have a deeper sense of their obligations to God, and

¹ Qu. 'such as they who'?—ED.

have more experience of their own slippery hearts : sin is more a burden to them than ever they see ; they have more ¹ difficulties to grapple with, and all this keepeth them humble and low in their own eyes. All this is spoken to press you to look to this growth and progress which is our perfection. By the way, he that thinketh he hath grace enough to be saved, and careth for no more, dealeth more niggardly with God than he would do in the world ; if a man hath bread enough to keep him from starving, would he be content ? There is no truth where no care of growth ; if our condition be safe, it is not sure to us.

¹ Qu. ' than ever ; they see they have &c. ' !—Ed.

A PERSUASIVE TO UNITY IN THINGS INDIFFERENT.

As many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.—PHIL. III. 15.

I now come to the other part of the text:—

1. *As many as be perfect, be thus minded*: τοῦτο φρονεῖτε, think the same thing with me—that is, forsaking all other confidences, cleave to Christ alone, whatever it cost you. Mind this, take care of this, be thus affected; let us actually perform that to which circumcision was designed; let us worship God in a spiritual manner, trusting Christ as the substance of all these ceremonial shadows, depending upon him for his renewing and reconciling grace, and adhering to pure Christianity, without mingling with it the rudiments of Moses.

2. *If in anything ye be otherwise minded*, know not the abolition of the ceremonies through weakness of faith, or an affected ignorance; yet having knowledge of so many saving truths, we hope in time God will reclaim you from your error. Well then—

[1.] Here is a difference or dissent supposed: ‘thus minded,’ and ‘otherwise minded.’

[2.] Lenity expressed towards the dissenters: ‘If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this to you.’

Doct. That when God’s people are divided in opinion, all lenity and mutual forbearance should be used to prevent things from coming to an open rupture.

So sweet and mild was the discipline in the apostle’s days, that he would not compel men to do whatever he or others did conceive to be good, or to forbear what they did conceive to be evil, but, without force, leave them to God’s direction and illumination.

Here let me show you:—

1. What lenity and forbearance should be used.

2. The reasons why lenity and forbearance should be used.

1. What lenity and forbearance should be used. Let us state it in these considerations:—

[1.] There may be, and often are, differences of opinion about lesser things in the church; partly because of the different degrees of light.

All barks that sail to heaven draw not a like depth of water. And partly because of the remainders of corruption in all. Inordinate self-love is not in all alike broken and mortified, and so their particular interests have an influence upon their opinions. And partly because of the accidental prejudices of education and converse, &c.

[2.] When these differences arise, we should take care they come not to a rupture and open breach. This is the course the apostle taketh here; he doth not by and by despair of the dissenters, and reject them as heretics, but beareth with them, hoping in charity God will at length reveal their error to them by the ministry of his servants, through the powerful operation of his Spirit, and not suffer them to run on in dividing courses from the rest of his people. So should we do in like cases. Partly because when these differences of opinion breed division and separations, the church is destroyed: Gal. v. 15, 'For if ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another.' Backbitings, revilings, and reproaches make way for a total vastation of the whole church, a ruin to both parties. Partly because the whole¹ is scandalised: John xvii. 21, 'That they may all be one, that the world may believe that thou has sent me.' Divisions in the church breed atheism in the world. Partly because there are enemies which watch for our halting, and by our divisions we are laid open to them. Our Lord and Master hath told us with his own mouth, that 'a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand,' Mat. xii. 25. Never was it so well with the people of God, but besides their divisions among themselves, they had common enemies; and Nazianzen calls them 'Common Reconcilers,' because they should engage God's people to a unanimous opposition to the kingdom of Satan in the world. And partly because then mutual means of edification are hindered. As long as charity and mutual forbearance remaineth, there is hope of doing good to one another; but when men break out into opposite parties, they are prejudiced against all that light that they should receive one from another, suspecting every point as counsel from an enemy: Gal. iv. 16, 'Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?' When men are once engaged in a way of error, whosoever is an enemy to their error is counted an enemy to themselves; yea, they can hardly bear that sound doctrine which doth directly cross their opinions, but are apt to cavil at all that is said by a dissenter. And partly because when men give themselves up to separating and narrow principles, the power of godliness is lost, and all their zeal is laid out upon their petty and private opinions, and so religion is turned into a disputacity. That is the reason why the apostle doth so often tell them, Gal. vi. 15, 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;' and Gal. v. 6, 'For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love;' and 1 Cor. vii. 19, 'Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping the commandments of God.' Observe it where you will, and you shall find that separation and distance from the rest of believers, doth not befriend godliness, but undermine it. A regiment fighting apart from the rest of the army of

¹ Qu. 'the world?'—ED.

Christ, is always lost through their own peevishness ; at least, they lose great advantages of promoting the kingdom of Christ.

[3.] To prevent this open rupture, there must be all lenity used and mutual forbearance. We must not rigorously obtrude our conceits upon others, either by church-power, or private censure. It may be done either way ; sometimes by church-power, especially when it is possessed or invaded by the more self-seeking sort of Christians ; as we read in the Revelations of the beast that pushed with the horns of a lamb—that is, used church-power, and under a pretence of church-constitution destroyed them that were truly the church of Christ. And our Lord telleth us, John xvi. 2, ‘ They shall put you out of the synagogues ; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, shall think that he doth God good service.’ Putting them out of the synagogues was an abuse of ecclesiastical power : it may be so, the builders may refuse the corner-stone. On the other side, private censures may as much break the law of forbearance as public censures, when inferiors promote their differences with turbulency, heat, and animosity, and rend and tear all things, yea, themselves, from the body of Christ, and sober Christians, censuring all that dissent from them as no Christians. There is such a sin under the gospel as the gainsaying of Korah, Jude 11. The sin of Korah is and may be committed in the New Testament. The sin of Korah was invading an office that no way belonged to him, and censured his superiors, as if they took too much upon them, because all the Lord’s people were holy, and erected another ministry in their stead. He, being a Levite, would do the office of a priest as well as Aaron ; and when summoned to appear before Moses, said, ‘ We will not come,’ Num. xvi. 11, 12. Now the apostle saith, in the perishing of Korah their own doom was foretold. Again, ver. 19, ‘ These are they that separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit.’ Whence it is clear that private men, in their sphere, may rend the church. And the factions at Corinth proved it : 1 Cor. i. 12, ‘ I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos, and I am of Cephas, and I am of Christ,’—as impailing and impropriating the common salvation to themselves. Much milder was the apostle : 1 Cor. i. 2, ‘ Jesus Christ, theirs and ours.’ Now what remedy is there but lenity and mutual forbearance ? This I shall state :—

1. As to the matter of the strife. It must be considered that we must dispense this forbearance as the matter will bear. There are great disputes about toleration ; only let me tell you now, that we speak not of the toleration of the magistrate, but of the church, what things are within the latitude of allowable differences within the church. The magistrate’s concessions may be larger ; for in supernatural things, such as matters of religion are, he may bear with that which the church ought not to bear with in them that have submitted to a higher institution, or in its own members, or rather private Christians one with another. But in this limited forbearance there are extremes, and for want of right stating of things, men fight with their friends in the dark ; some think all things should be suffered ; some nothing wherein to bear with our brethren. The one sort of Christians is for imposing on their brethren all things that have gotten the vogue and the favour of authority, and that not only

on their practice, but their judgments too; and this in matters not fundamental or destructive to faith or worship, but in things controversial or doubtful among godly and peaceable men. But if it should not go so high, contending about every difference of opinion, and urging our brethren with everything we conceive to be right, is a breach of Christian love, and destroyeth the use of those differing gifts which Christ hath given to the church, and crosseth his mind in the frame of the scriptures, which are clear in soul-saving matters; in other things, especially matters of discipline and order, more dark and obscure. It is also contrary to the mild and gentle government of the apostles, who press in lesser matters a forbearance; as Paul, Rom. xiv. 1, 'The weak in faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations;' receive him, own him, but do not cast him out of the church, nor trouble him for doubtful things, but let him come to himself, for men will sooner be led than drawn.

The other extreme is of them that will have all things to be tolerated, even blasphemy and fundamental errors, as if the scriptures were uncertain in all things. No; in things absolutely necessary to salvation, it is clear, open, and plain: 'The law is a lamp, and a light,' Prov. vi. 23, and Ps. cxix. 105. And in such a case we are not to 'bid him God-speed,' 2 Epist. John 10. In such cases of damnable heresy, the law of Christian lenity holdeth not; but if we agree in the principal articles of faith, let us embrace one another with mutual love, though we differ from one another in variety of rites and ceremonies and discipline ecclesiastical. If we agree in the substantials of worship, let us go by the same rule, do the same thing: though in circumstantialia there be a difference, these are matters of lesser moment than separation, or the other¹ division of the church.

2. As to the persons contending, there is a difference. The apostle, when he persuadeth this lenity and mutual forbearance, excepts those that raise troubles in the church, and distinguisheth between erring Christians and their factious guides: Phil. iii. 2, 'Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision.' The poor seduced Christians he would have to be pitied, but the renders and cutters of the church, he would have them beware of such.

3. The forbearance itself. It is not a forbearance out of necessity, because we dare do no otherwise, but voluntary choice out of Christian pity and compassion, knowing that we need as much forbearance from God and others, for we all have our mistakes and failings; not a forbearance out of policy, till we get opportunity to suppress others: the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for us. God often layeth that restraint upon us by his providence; and it is well he doth: but it should be the restraint of grace, not a respect to our own ease, lest we create trouble to ourselves, but upon Christian reasons. No; the apostle sheweth you whence this forbearance should come: Eph. iv. 2, 3, 'With all lowliness and meekness and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

There are four graces enforce it:—

[1.] Lowliness, which is a grace and virtue, whereby a man, from

¹ Qu. 'utter'?—ED.

the sense of his own infirmities, doth esteem but meanly and soberly of himself, and all that is his.

[2.] Meekness, whereby we are rendered tractable, gentle, affable, and easy to be entreated and conversed withal, James iii. 17.

[3.] Long-suffering, which is nothing but meekness extended or continued, and not interrupted by length of time, or multiplication of offences.

[4.] Love to our Christian brother or neighbour, whereby our hearts are inclined or well-disposed towards them for their good. 'Love covereth a multitude of sins,' 1 Peter iv. 8. Maketh us bear with many things in the person loved, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 'Charity suffereth long, and is kind;' and ver. 7, 'Beareth all things, hopeth all things.' This is the forbearance we press, a forbearance out of meekness and humility and love for Christ's sake.

4. In this forbearance, both strong and weak have their part, and are much concerned, as having either of them much to do herein. Which, that we may clear to you, let us consider:—

First, What they are not to do.

1. Not to leave the truth, or to do anything against it. No; the apostle saith, 'Let as many as be perfect be thus minded;' not change truth for error. Strings in tune must not be brought down to strings out of tune, but they brought up to them.

2. Not to connive at their sin or error, for that is not love but hatred: Lev. xix. 17, 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.' To let him go unconvinced is to harden him: 2 Thes. iii. 15, 'Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.' The sins of others must not be let alone under the pretence of forbearance; and there must be no neglect of means to reclaim them from their sin, but meekly we are to hold our light to them, and use all holy means of convincing and satisfying their judgments.

Secondly, What they are to do.

1. The strong are not to deal rigorously with the weak, nor insult over them, nor pursue them with censures, but wait till God declare the truth unto them, and must promote their conviction with all gentleness and condescension. We are to feed Christ's lambs as well as his sheep, and for both we need love, John xxi. 15, 16. Among the flock of Christ there are variety of tempers and degrees of strength, both lambs and sheep. We must imitate our Lord: Isa. xl. 11, 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.' We should condescend to the weak and feeble ones, as well as consider what the strong and confirmed can bear. Though we cannot love their weakness, yet we must love the weak, and bear with the infirmities of the weak, not break the bruised reed. Infants must not be turned out of the family because they cry, and are unquiet and troublesome; though they be peevish and froward, yet we must bear it with gentleness and patience, as we do the frowardness of the sick; if they revile, we must not revile again, but must seek gently to reduce them, notwithstanding all their censures; to entertain them with contempt is to prejudice them quite against

all instruction. Job would not despise the cause of his man-servant or maid-servant when they contended with him, Job xxxi. 13.

2. The weak. But who will own this title and appellation? Because in controversies of religion, all seem to stand upon the same level, and another differeth from me as much as I do from him; their opinion is as far from mine, as mine from theirs; who then shall be accounted weak?

I answer:—

1. Our rule is plain; and as it distinguisheth error from truth, so weakness and partial Christianity from that which is more perfect and thorough. Besides, it is clear some have not the gifts of knowledge and experience that others have, nor such advantages of education and study, and helps of knowing the truth; and though they are not to captivate their understandings to the dictates of others, yet they should search and search again and again, and have double light, when they are by the seeming evidence of truth forced to differ.

2. Christianity teacheth us to think meanly of ourselves, and not to be wise in our own conceits: Phil. ii. 3, 'In lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves;' at least, we should have such a sense of our imperfections as to make us tractable and teachable.

3. If you will not own yourselves weak, do the part of the strong meekly, hold forth your light, produce your reasons to convince others; but if you have nothing to produce but your obstinacy and ignorance, surely you are not only a weak, but a perverse brother. But what are the weak to do? Not to rend and cut off themselves from the rest of Christians, or be strange to them upon every lesser dissent, nor to raise troubles by your censures, but to be humble, teachable, diligent in the use of means, to lay aside obstinate prejudices, to examine how it cometh to pass that the rest of the godly and you differ; to leave room still for the discovery of God's mind where your grounds are not clear and certain, and to count it no shame to retract that former practice which a future conviction disproveth.

II. The reasons.

1. From the necessity, excellency, and utility of union. What more clear in the scriptures than that Christians should endeavour to be united? Christ prayed for it: John xvii. 21–23, 'That they all may be one, that they may be one as we are one, that they may be perfect in one.' And the apostle enforceth it by the most vehement intreaties that can be used: Phil. ii. 1, 2, 'If therefore there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercy, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind.' Who can withstand such an adjuration and powerful beseechings as these, that if ever they found any comfort by his ministry, and ever had any hope by Christ, ever any influence of the Spirit, ever any pity and compassion over souls, that they would look after unity in judgment, love, and affection, and lay aside their differences, and carnal emulations? Again, they caution us against those that cause divisions: Rom. xvi. 17, 18, 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and

avoid them ; for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.' They press unity upon us by very cogent arguments, that carry the highest reason with them : Eph. iv. 4-6, ' There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.'

Seven uniting considerations are there heaped up together :—

[1.] There is one body of Christ, whereof all are members. The whole church maketh but one body, knit by faith to Christ, their head, and by the bond of love among themselves ; and the meanest Christian is a member in this body. Now it is unnatural if the members of the same body should tear and destroy one another, and that the body of Christ should be rent and torn ; and woe be to them by whom it is so !

[2.] This body is animated by one Spirit ; that if any be a member of this body, it is necessary that he have the Spirit of God abiding in him, to renew and quicken him. Now, this one and the self-same Spirit, as the apostle calleth him, 1 Cor. xii. 11, worketh in all the saints. If his gifts be various, they proceed from the same author, and they are variously dispensed, to preserve society and communion, that one may not say to another, ' I have no need of thee.' However, there is but one new nature in all the sanctified.

[3.] One hope of glory. We are all joint-heirs of the same kingdom, we all expect one end and happiness, where we shall meet and live together for ever. Now those that shall meet and live together in glory hereafter, should live together in peace and concord here.

[4.] There is 'one Lord,' one Mediator and blessed Saviour. Now, shall the servants of one Master fall at odds with themselves, neglect their Master's work committed to them, beat their fellow-servants, and eat and drink with the drunken ?

[5.] 'One faith,' *fides quæ creditur* : he meaneth the doctrine of faith in the gospel. We agree in the same fundamental truths of the gospel as the only object of saving faith, and shall we strive about things of less importance and moment ? There is but one gospel, which is the seed of our new birth, the rule of our faith and lives, the foundation of our hope, the food of our souls.

[6.] 'One baptism,' that is, the same new covenant sealed and confirmed by baptism ; and when our Father's testament is clear, do we quarrel about petty and mean things ?

[7.] 'One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.' We have one common God and Father, whose eminency is above all creatures, whose presence and powerful providence runneth through all creatures ; but his special presence, by the gracious operations of his Holy Spirit, is in the regenerate. Surely this is a strong bond of union, to be one in God. He is the common Father of all believers, through Jesus Christ. Some are weak, some strong, some rich, some poor, but they have all an equal interest in God. Now, for us, who are so many ways one, to be rent in pieces, how sad is that ! All these places, and many more, show how every Christian should, as far as it is possible, be an esteemer and promoter

of unity among brethren, and not only make conscience of purity, but of unity also, which, next to purity, is the great badge of Christianity.

2. From the consideration of our mutual frailties, who have all in part a corrupt will, guided by a blind mind. Now, as the apostle saith of the high priest, who is taken from men, Heb. v. 2, that he is 'one that can have compassion of the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, for that he is compassed about with infirmities;' this should be verified in every one of us. One sinner ought to have compassion of another. The word is *μετριοπαθεῖν δυνάμενος*, can reasonably bear with the ignorance of brethren, because of the common relation: Gal. vi. 1, 'Ye which are spiritual, restore him with meekness;' so 'him that is weak, receive,' Rom. xiv. 1. The apostles, being immediately inspired, were more infallible than we are.

[1.] Oh, do but consider what we were, and what we are: 'For we ourselves were sometimes foolish and disobedient,' Titus iii. 3. Did not we all sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death? Were we not all ignorant of the ways of God, and the things which belong to our peace? Hath God merely by his grace brought us to the knowledge of his truth? and shall we condemn and disdain our weak brother, or insult over him, and determine and judge rashly of him? 'Who maketh thee to differ?' 1 Cor. iv. 7.

[2.] What we are—weak creatures, not infallible. Now after we are light in the Lord, we have our errors in knowledge and practice, some more, some less, according to the degree of our growth, Ps. xix. 12. God revealeth to his saints all necessary truth, but not every particular truth, out of wise dispensation.

3. From the consideration of the probability of divine illumination.

[1.] This illumination cometh from God only. It is he that powerfully revealeth it, and setteth the heart in the belief of it: Acts xvi. 4, and 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7, 'I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.' The best means may be disappointed, till God co-operate with them. Let us, then, with patience, use the means, and refer the issue to God: 2 Tim. ii. 25, 'In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if, peradventure, God will give them repentance unto life.' If we seek to force men to our opinion, before men are convinced, that is a tyranny which will do little good; it may make hypocrites, but it will never make real converts.

[2.] This illumination is given by God by degrees. The apostle prayeth for the converted Ephesians, that 'God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation,' Eph. i. 17. They had it before, but he meaneth a greater measure. Therefore, weak Christians are not to be discouraged though they see not as far as others. Some see more, some less, according to the state and condition wherein God will employ them. Some need more light than others, as ministers more than people, governors more than inferiors; but all have sufficient. Some at first see men walking like trees, Mark viii. 24, 25, but afterwards the light groweth more clear and more distinct. In short, he doth not reveal his mind to his children all alike, nor all at once, but here a little and there a little, as narrow-mouthed vessels can take it in.

[3.] Those who are not for the present, may be afterwards instructed in the truth. The apostle proceedeth in the hopes of that:—

(1.) Upon the supposition that they were already converted to the Christian faith, and were sincere in the belief and profession of it. Those that belong to God will one time or other be enlightened in the knowledge of all necessary truths: 'For God that hath begun a good work, will perfect it,' Phil. i. 6. If the saints at first conversion, when they were called from darkness to light, did not hinder illumination then, and the knowledge of those many soul-saving truths which God revealed to them then, so as to recover them from a partial error, we may presume that God will give them a further understanding of the way of salvation, though now under some error; as Aquila and Priscilla expounded to Apollos the way of God more perfectly, Acts xviii. 26.

(2.) Upon the supposition that they were humble and tractable: Ps. xxv. 9, 'The meek he will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way.' They lie open to information; but if men be puffed up with self-conceits, there is more hopes of a carnal fool than of them, that is, a sensual and brutish man.

(3.) That they will not neglect any means of study and prayer. Study—for we must dig for knowledge as for silver (Prov. ii. 4)—not only cry for it, but dig for it in the mines of knowledge; common and obvious apprehensions lead us into error. And then prayer: Ps. cxix. 18, 'Lord open mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.' God must take away the veil. Now, then, upon prayer to God, and applying themselves to the use of holy means, God will show them they are deceived. If you study and not pray, it is just with God to leave you to your prejudices; if you pray and neglect means, you must not think that God will extraordinarily inspire you, for he revealeth truth by his blessing on ordinary means.

(4.) Upon suspicion that they continue in the communion of the church: Eph. iv. 15, 'Speaking the truth in love.' While we keep unity and keep love, others have greater hopes to convince, they to be convinced; and so both, while they divide not, by this mutual condescension, may the better wait for this illumination; but in their separation, their errors are confirmed while they hear but one side, nothing to undeceive them, but all to root them in their errors.

(5.) He supposeth that they walked orderly according to their light. Now if God hath begun to enlighten them in other things, he will discover more truths to them, John vii. 17; upon the whole, deal tenderly with them and tolerate them, till they be taught of God.

(6.) As to the nature of his confidence, 'God shall reveal.' There is a twofold confidence, a confidence of faith grounded on a promise, and a confidence of charity grounded on appearance and probability, 1 Cor. xiii. 7. We hope the best, though the event doth not always follow; the former is on the forementioned grounds, the latter on appearance. The appearance of them; so Gal. v. 10, 'I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be no otherwise minded; for he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment whoever he be.' This confidence was grounded on charity, that through the Lord's grace they should be reclaimed from their error, and brought to embrace the truth. We are not to despair of the recovery of any, but

in charity to hope the best of all men, as long as they are curable. Thus for the third reason.

4. Fourth reason, from the temper of those that are perfect. A grounded Christian beareth with the infirmities he seeth in others, and pitieth and helpeth them, and prayeth for them more than the weak, who are usually most censorious and addicted to the interest of their party and faction in the world, and make a bustle about opinions rather than solid godliness; but the grown Christian is most under the power of love and a heavenly mind, and so loveth God and his neighbour, is most sensible of his own frailty, hath a greater zeal for the welfare of his church and interest in the world, and seeth farther than others do.

Use is to press us to this lenity and forbearance to one another.

To this end take these considerations:—

1. Consider in how many things we agree, and in how few we differ. There is a threefold unity; in mind, and heart, and scope.

In mind: Rom. xv. 5, 6, 'Now the God of patience and consolation grant that you be like-minded one towards another, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God.'

In heart: Acts iv. 32, 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.'

As to the scope, Rom. xv. 5-7. Now as to the way, it is either the general way of faith and holiness, for all that shall be saved are of one mind as to the substantials of faith and worship: Jer. xxxii. 39, 'I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever.' But there may be a different practice as to some lesser things; should we for these break with one another?

2. Take more notice of their graces than of their infirmities. Is there no good thing found in them? Rev. ii. 6, 'But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans.' See also ver. 2 and 5. He beginneth and endeth with their commendation, though in the middle of the epistle he reproveth them for their decay; he taketh more notice of what is right than what is wrong. We reflect upon the evil of every party, but do not consider the good.

3. Remember how open the enforcements to love and unity are, and how much the grounds of separation lie in the dark, and are in a doubtful case, but union is the safest part.

4. Think of God's love and forbearance towards us before we received the light of his truth, and were brought to the obedience of his will; as God dealt with the Israelites, so with every one of us: Acts xiii. 18, 'He suffered their manners in the wilderness.' If we had been dealt with rigorously, we had been cut off from the number of God's people, had such stumbling-blocks and prejudices laid in our way, that we should never have been converted to God.

5. This forbearance cannot in reason be expected from others to ourselves, if we be not ready to repay it to others. There is no man which hath not infirmities of his own which call for forbearance, James iii. 2. In the general, every man is obliged to do as he would be done unto, Mat. vii. 12. So in particular, he is reprov'd when he had his own debt forgiven him, yet took his fellow-servant by the throat and showed him no mercy, Mat. xviii. 28. We have all our failings and mistakes; usually God punisheth censures with censures,

Mat. vii. 1, injuries with injuries. Paul, that stoned Stephen, was himself stoned at Lystra. So he punisheth separations with separations; they are endless, as circles in the water beget one another.

6. Consider how dangerous it is to reject any whom Christ will own for his. Will Christ admit him to heaven, and will you think him unfit for your communion here upon earth? Despise not the weak brother, for God hath received him, Rom. xiv. 3. The Gentile believer must not despise the scrupulous Jewish believer, and cast out of his communion the Gentile Christian; if God hath admitted him into his family, shall we exclude him? So Mat. xviii. 6, 'Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea.' Now what greater offence than to cast them off from the privileges of the Christian church, either by public or private censures which are causeless or unwarrantable, at least no way grounded on necessary things?

7. As we must not on our part give offence or occasion the divisions, so we must not take offence when it is given by others; for charity, as it provoketh not, so it 'is not easily provoked,' 1 Cor. xiii. 5. So likewise if a rent be made by others, we must do what we can to heal it. If an angry brother call us bastard, yet let us own him as a brother and a child of the family: for 'Blessed are the peacemakers,' Mat. v. 9. The world censureth us for compliers and daubers, but God counteth us his genuine and true children.

8. Our endeavours after unity among the professors of Christianity ought to be earnest and constant: Eph. iv. 3, '*Endeavouring* to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' I add this partly because many make fair pretences of peace and union, which their practice contradicteth; all cry out of the divisions, but every one keepeth them up; and partly, because when it is endeavoured we shall find difficulties and disappointments, but we must not rest in some careless endeavours, nor grow weary though we meet not with present success; and partly because the instruments of so great a good are usually sacrificed to the wrath of both parties. We must be content to digest affronts, reproaches, censures, and injuries, and love them that hate us: 2 Cor. xii. 15, 'Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am beloved of you.'

NOT TO BE OFFENDED IN CHRIST, THE READY WAY TO BLESSEDNESS.

And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.—MAT. XI. 6.

THESE words are the conclusion of Christ's answer to John's disciples, who were sent from him in prison to inquire if Christ were the true Messiah, or they must look for another. This message was not sent for his own satisfaction, but theirs; not his own, for he had before openly owned Christ as such, John i. 29, but theirs: they are offended in Christ out of respect to their master. For answer Christ referreth them to his works, whether they were not such as the prophets foretold were to be performed by the Messiah.

Two things he urgeth :—

First, His miracles.

Secondly, His preaching the gospel.

First, His miracles. 'The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' This was foretold: Isa. xxxv. 5, 6, 'Then the eyes of the blind shall be open, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.' And then for his setting afoot the gospel, compare Isa. lxi. 1, with Luke iv. 18. Isa. lxi. 1, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening the prison to them that are bound.' Luke iv. 18, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' And Luke iv. 21, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.' This is here expressed, 'The poor have the gospel preached to them'—(πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται) 'The poor are evangelised'—have not only the promises of the gospel offered to them, but the impression and power of it is left upon their hearts. By *the poor* may be meant the humble-minded, or persons of the meanest and lowest condition—the humble-minded, or such as were affected with their sin and misery. The proud resist and stand out against the gospel, but the broken-hearted thankfully accepted glad tidings

of this salvation. The Messiah was to preach to 'the poor,' Luke iv. 18. But in Isa. lxi. 1, it is 'the meek.' The gospel doth affect the poor needy soul, so as to put a stamp of grace upon it. They that are sensible of their sin and misery are the proper objects of this dispensation; or else it may be meant of persons of the meanest and lowest condition. The Christian church was made up of such at first: James ii. 5, 'Hearken, my beloved brethren; hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?' and 1 Cor. i. 26, 'For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' Christ did not then call the eminent and great, but the obscure and despised of the world, lest religion should seem to owe its growth and progress rather to the power of the world than to the evidence of the truth. Now these are said to be evangelised, that is, to have a good share in the blessed message, they above others being wrought upon and affected with it. To be evangelised implieth grace on God's part, and on theirs a willing reception of the impression of it, so as to be changed by it. The poor are all to be gospelled; those whose poverty is sanctified to make way for brokenness of heart, which is not said to exclude the rich from all benefit; some were called then, though not many. Grace, where it prevails in the heart, puts rich and poor on the same level. It humbleth the rich, and exalteth the poor, James i. 9, 10. It teacheth the one to abound, the other to be abased, Phil. iv. 12. Poverty and riches do as they are used. Now, saith Christ, tell John the things that ye hear and see; let him expound the characters of the Messiah as they lie in the Old Testament; and if they be verified in me, see what application and inference you ought to make. Therefore he dismisseth them with this conclusion: 'And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.'

In which words observe:—

1. The privilege: *And blessed is he*: it is meant of our supreme blessedness.

2. The qualification: *Whosoever is not offended in me*. Where observe—1. It is negatively expressed: *not offended*. 2. There is a universal negative: *whosoever is not*. But are all those who are not offended at Christ saved? I answer, No; you must look upon this conclusion as annexed to the last clause of the former verse,—'The poor have the gospel preached unto them: and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.' To be offended is to be scandalised, or kept from owning Christ as the true Messiah: all are happy and blessed so far as they are evangelised, and miserable so far as scandalised. When the kingdom of heaven is brought to us, nothing can bar us from entering into it but our being offended in Christ. But if we be not scandalised so as to hinder our being evangelised, then we are in a happy and blessed condition; that is, blessed so far as the impediment of our blessedness is removed; and indeed, that is all the blessedness we can attain unto in this life. Thus blessedness is ascribed to pardon of sins, Ps. xxxii. 1, because that taketh away the legal impediment. Blessedness is ascribed to sanctification, Ps. cxix. 1, 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way,' because that removeth the

moral incapacity, and so is a forerunner of eternal happiness: and here it is ascribed to not being offended in Christ when he is sufficiently revealed to us, as it removeth the impediment of our faith, which is always some offence and dislike that we take at Christ and the ways of God.

The point that I shall insist on is this:—

That whosoever, being invited to embrace the gospel, is not offended in Christ, is in the ready way to true blessedness.

In the prosecution of this point I shall use this method:—

First, To show you what it is to be offended in Christ.

Secondly, Upon what occasions men were then offended.

Thirdly, Whether this sin were proper to that age only, or we may now be guilty.

Fourthly, I shall show you the kinds of this sin.

Fifthly, How it is true that those which escape this sin are in the ready way to salvation.

First, What it is to be offended in Christ.

I answer—To be offended in Christ is to be offended because of Christ; something in him which we dislike, which is a hindrance to our receiving and owning him in that quality wherein he appeared in the world, and offereth himself to us—namely, as our Lord and Saviour. *Σκάνδαλον*, in the natural sense of it, signifieth either any obstacle or hindrance laid in a man's way, by which the passenger is detained or stopped: peculiarly it is put for those sharp stakes which they were wont to stick in the ground in the ancient way of warring, to wound the feet and legs of their enemies in their pursuit of them, against which they used greaves of brass: most usually *σκανδαλον* signifieth a stone or block in the way, at which a man is apt to stumble and fall. So 1 Peter ii. 8, 'Unto them which believe, Christ is precious; but a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them that stumble thereat.' A rock with respect to those that travel by sea, a stone of stumbling with respect to those that travel by land. So it is used here, 'Who are not scandalised at Christ.' In this expression there is something expressed and something supposed.

1. It supposeth some offer and revelation made to us, that grace is brought home to us, and salvation offered to us. Jews and professing Christians are more properly said to be offended in Christ than heathens who never heard nor sought after him, 1 Cor. i. 23: 'We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness.' They stumble who, being invited to come to him, dislike and are displeased with something in him; or being on their way, are upon some occasion and temptations laid aside and prejudiced, and either stumble or fall in the way undertaken by them, or have no heart to go forward, but either directly retire or faint.

2. It expresseth or implieth such an offence, that either they are kept off from Christ, or else drawn away from him.

[1.] Some are kept off by their carnal prejudices, or offence they take at somewhat of Christ, and so continue in their unbelief; thus Christ is said to be a rock of offence to 'the disobedient,' 1 Peter ii. 8, that is, the impenitent and unbelieving world, who, out of indulgence to their lusts, slight an offered Saviour.

[2.] Others are drawn from him, as those that had carnal expectation when they were disappointed: John vi. 66, 'From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.' This is the offence, when we are either discouraged *from*, or *in* the ways of godliness.

I now come to show you:—

Secondly, Upon what occasions were men then offended in Christ. They were displeased with his person, sufferings, doctrine.

1. His person. They were somewhat alarmed with his miracles, and the wisdom of his gracious speeches, but how to reconcile this with the meanness of his person they were at a loss. Sometimes his birth and breeding were a distaste to them: Mat. xiii. 55, 56, 'Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, Joses, Simon, Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him.' So Mark vi. 3, 'Is not this the carpenter, brought up in the same trade with Joseph?' Thus upon the consideration of his mean and known beginning they forsook him. Sometimes they quarrelled at his country, not where he was born, but bred. He was born in Bethlehem, but bred in Nazareth, which was in Galilee, and Galilee, as they conceived, was looked upon by God as a mean and despicable place: John vii. 52, 'Art thou of Galilee? (speaking to Nicodemus), search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.' This was the common conceit, for Jonah was of that country. So John vii. 41, when some said, 'This is the Christ,' others said, 'Shall Christ come out of Galilee?' That country was under a reproach. Nay, a good man was possessed with this prejudice: John i. 46, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? And Philip saith, Come and see.' Trial would make him of another mind. But many good people are led away with common prejudice, and so overlook things and persons of the chiefest regard, &c. Sometimes they were offended at the meanness of his followers: John vii. 48, 'Have any of the rulers and pharisees believed in him? But this people, that knoweth not the law, are cursed;' that is, the rabble are ready to follow any false teacher, and such ones follow him.

2. They were offended at his doctrine, the mysteriousness of it, as when he had spoken of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, they could not tell what to make of it. If it signified anything, it signified his death, and that was a point not to be touched upon in the hearing of them that expected a glorious, pompous Messiah, that should subjugate other nations to them. Therefore Christ saith, 'Doth this offend you?' John vi. 61. Yea, the offence was so great, that 'many of his disciples went backward, and walked no more with him,' ver. 66. Sometimes they were offended at the holiness of it, as when he pressed the pharisees, who were altogether for external observances, to look after an inward cleansing: Mat. xv. 12, 'Knowest thou not that the pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?' This was a great distaste to them to hear that a man is defiled by sin, and not at all by meats, and that the washing of the heart is the chief thing.

3. The great stumbling-block of all was his sufferings. This offended good and bad. The good: Mat. xxvi. 31, 'All of you

shall be offended because of me this night. For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. And Peter saith, 'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended,' ver. 33. The bad: This was the great stumbling-block to the Jews: 1 Cor. i. 23, 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block.' By this they fed their obstinacy and prejudice. They could not believe that he that was crucified as a malefactor was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world.

Thirdly, Was it not proper to that age only? I answer, No; we also may be prejudiced, and guilty of this sin of being offended in Christ. You will say, What danger is there of that now, since Christ is publicly owned, and Christianity in fashion, and the world run into the church?

I shall show you:—

1. That there is danger still.

2. What is likely to offend since Christ's exaltation.

1. There is danger still:—

[1.] Because though the name of Christ be had in honour, yet the stricter profession and practice of godliness is under reproach, and the nominal hateth the serious Christian, though both own the same Bible, believe the same creed, and are baptized with one and the same baptism into the same profession. Those that are false to their religion will malign and scorn those that are true to it, and live up to the power of it. As there is no commerce between the living and the dead, so no true friendship between the carnal and the heavenly. Among the outside Christians, it will be matter of reproach to be serious and diligent; and they that are so, will be accounted more precise and nice than wise. No wonder if they slight you, who first slight God, and Christ, and their own salvation.

[2.] It may happen that the stricter sort of Christians are the poorer sort; and such as carry no great port and appearance in the world; and so, though they be precious in the eyes of God, yet they may be despised by men. Strictness of religion is many times looked upon by some as too mean a thing for persons of their rank and quality; and so whilst the poor receive the gospel, they, to keep up their greatness, go the broad way to hell; these are offended in Christ. In Salvian's time, *Quantus in Christiano populo honor Christi est, ubi religio ignobilem facit; Coguntur esse mali ne viles habeantur*,—religion makes them base, and men are compelled to be evil, that they may not be scorned and disgraced. Now we should resolve to be more vile for God, 2 Sam. vi. 22.

[3.] Though men be not distasted against Christianity in whole, yet in part; though they be not offended in Christ altogether, yet they take offence at some of his ways, wherein his glory and interest is concerned. In the age that we live in, many of those things that fall within the conscience and compass of our duty may be under a cloud and disesteem. Now they that have received light about these things should not be offended though the generality of the world decry and oppose them. Christ gets up by degrees; and where the main of religion is received, yet all the parts and branches of it are not

received, which must be required in their place; and though we are not always bound to the positive profession of lesser things, yet we are bound negatively; we must do nothing against the truth, 2 Cor. xiii. 8. We must not renounce a truth because it is run down by a vulgar prejudice, but in all meekness of wisdom own the better way. Such constancy of mind is expected from a good man, who consults with conscience rather than interest.

[4.] The world may not be able to bear the owning of these truths; and therefore, those who set them afoot may be disgraced, afflicted, and reproachfully used; but the knowledge of a hated truth is a greater argument of God's favour than the prosperity of the world: Prov. iii. 32, 'Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways; for the froward is an abomination unto the Lord, but his secret is with the righteous.'

[5.] There is no man in the world but, if he run up his refusal of Christ, or his impenitency and unbelief, to its proper principle, he will find it to be some offence or dislike, either because of the inward constitution of his mind, or the external state of religion in the world. Either he cannot bring his heart to suit with the strictness, purity, and self-denial of Christ's religion, or Christ's religion to suit with his heart. As the young man, Mark x. 22, 'He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions.' Or else, if both suit, the world liketh not the match; so that it cometh to this point, that he must be an enemy to God or the world: James iv. 4, 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God! Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.'

2. What is likely to offend, since Christ's exaltation of his person in heaven, and his religion in the world?

[1.] The many calamities which attend the profession of it. John, who was his forerunner, was now in prison when Christ spake these words; and Christ foretelleth grievous troubles and afflictions: Mat. xxiv. 10, 'And then many shall be offended.' And he foretelleth us that we may not be offended: John xvi. 1, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended;' that is, scandalised by the hazards which attend Christ's service, or take occasion to alienate themselves from him. Yet all will not do: Mat. xiii. 21, 'When persecution ariseth for the word, by and by he is offended.' A man is offended when he findeth that which he did not look for. Many promise themselves ease and peace in Christianity; and when it falleth out otherwise, they dislike what they formerly seemed to prize.

[2.] They may take offence at Christ's doctrine, at the purity, the self-denial, the simplicity, the mysteriousness of it.

(1.) The purity of it. To holy men this is an argument of love: Ps. cxix. 140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' But to the carnal of dislike and offence: John iii. 20, 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light; neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' They have somewhat to conceal, somewhat which they are loth to part with. And so, lest they should be found faulty, and engaged to reform themselves, they cannot endure

the light of the gospel, and are offended at Christ's strict doctrine, as sore eyes are at the brightness of the sun. This light is not only shining, but scorching.

(2.) The mortification and self-denial of it. Mortification respects our lusts, and self-denial our interest. Our worldly interests are the baits of our carnal desires or lusts. Now, to crucify the flesh or deny the world are both distasteful to flesh and blood; and, therefore, they are apt to say, 'This is an hard saying;' and 'What strange doctrine is this?' 1 Peter iv. 4, 'They think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot.' It is matter of great admiration that others should abandon their course of life. The sweetness of Christ's service is wholly hidden from them; therefore they hate that religion which they do profess, and all that are serious in it. They think strange God should plant desires in them which he would not have to be satisfied. But they do not distinguish between what nature craveth and corruption lusteth after. That the inordinancy is from themselves, and therefore have a secret dislike of Christ in their souls, because they would do what they list, not what they ought. They would not be fettered by any of his laws, or look upon that fruit as forbidden which corrupt nature hath a longing unto, as if all necessary restraint were a kind of prison to them.

(3.) The simplicity and plainness of the gospel, void of human wisdom and excellency of words. It is a plain thing teaching the way how sinners may return to God and blessedness. This doctrine is clad in the simple attire of a vulgar style; and this was the offence of the Gentiles, who would be gratified with eloquence and profound knowledge: 1 Cor. i. 22, 'The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom;' that is, the Jews, who were trained up in extraordinary dispensations, they would have miracles and prodigies from heaven. The Gentiles look for profound philosophy in the gospel, and scorn it because they find it not there. Their offence was because they found not matter of dispute, but practice; for they were altogether bred up in the uncertain debates of their philosophers. But little did these mind that there was a sublimity of wisdom in this plain doctrine (1 Cor. ii. 6, 'We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world,' &c.), as discovering the true way of easing the conscience, and the nature of true happiness, which were the two things about which the wisest and profoundest of them spent all their thoughts and speculations. Nor did they mind this: that laws would lose their authority, if not delivered in a plain style; nor would our duty so clearly be stated by man's reason as by God's authority. When it is to be found out by man's reason it is left more to the uncertainty of dispute. Bare nature is a hard book to study in, nor are the lessons of it so easily found out. While the wise men of the world were debating about felicity and happiness, practical godliness died upon their hands, and men strove rather to be witty than good, and so delivered things more coldly, and not with that life and power and authority for the reclaiming and reducing man to his duty to God; like the curious wits of our age, who delight to speak finely, rather than successfully, in the matters of religion.

(4.) The mysteriousness of it above all natural reason. The devil

playeth on all hands ; sometimes the doctrine of the gospel is too plain, sometimes too mystical. It cannot enter into their hearts to conceive how God should be distinguished into three persons, how God should become man, and the like ; and therefore scoffing atheists, such as are rife in the latter days, question all ; and having lost the light of their reason, yet retain the pride of their reason, and are objecting all the difficulties they can think of against the truth of the word of God, and are apt to say, as Nicodemus, John iii. 9, ‘ How can these things be ? ’ Till they see a reason for everything they will not own it. Indeed, we must see a reason why we believe everything, and that is, divine revelation contained in the word of God ; but we cannot always see a reason of everything which we do believe, for many things are mysteries, and we receive them as we do pills, not chew, but swallow them ; we take them upon the credit of the revealer : to chew produceth a loathsome ejection ; to swallow, a wholesome remedy. Believing in the common notion of it is a receiving a truth upon the trust of another ; so it differeth from knowing, for then we reason of ourselves ; and divine faith is a receiving such things as God hath revealed, because he hath revealed them. Then our first inquiry is, Whether these things be so or so ? not how they can be so ? Therefore we begin at the wrong end if we inquire first, How can this be ? In many cases, *constat de re*, the thing is evident in scripture ; but, *non constat de modo*, how it can be is beyond our reach. Now, when we should believe, we dispute and cavil, rather than inquire. If anything be not plainly revealed by God, you may reject it without sin ; but if it be, you must not contradict all that you cannot comprehend—the Trinity of the persons in the unity of the divine essence, or how a virgin should conceive, or how a God can become man. It is sufficient that all this is revealed in scripture, which carrieth its own evidence in its forehead, and shineth by its own light, and hath the seal and statup of God upon it. In short, to believe is not to receive a thing in its own evidence, but upon the credit of the testifier. If you will not credit it unless the thing be evident in itself, you do not believe Christ, but your own reason ; and instead of being thankful for the revelation, you quarrel with his truth, because it is somewhat above your capacity. You should captivate your understandings to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5.

I now come to show you :—

Fourthly, The kinds of this sin of being offended in Christ. Three distinctions I shall give you :—

1. There is an offence with contempt, and an offence with discouragement.

[1.] The offence with contempt is when we are prejudiced against, or turn from the faith ; either never embrace it, or quite forsake it. Contempt produceth unbelief and disobedience. They are so given over to their sinful courses that they cannot be persuaded to relinquish them : John iii. 19, ‘ This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.’ Nothing will gain them to submit to Christ’s healing methods ; they think he seeketh their loss and hurt rather than their benefit, because he would reclaim them from their lusts. These

reject all admonitions, and remain obstinate and impenitent in their sins.

[2.] The offence with discouragement : when men are staggered in their hope and obedience. Troubles are distasteful to the flesh, which seeketh its own ease. Some are discouraged in a greater, some in a lesser degree : Heb. xii. 3, 'Lest ye wax weary, and faint in your minds.' Weariness is a lesser degree of deficiency, faintness a greater. These terms are translated from the body to the mind.

2. There is an offence of ignorance and an offence of malice and opposition.

[1.] The offence of ignorance and weakness : when men are carried with a blind zeal. 'I verily thought that I ought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth,' saith Paul, Acts xxvi. 9. Men of a superstitious conscience are like a blind horse, full of mettle, but ever and anon stumbling. But this is more pardonable : 1 Tim. i. 13, 'Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious ; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.'

[2.] There is the offence of malice and opposition, when men err, not only in their minds, but in their hearts ; do not know, and do not desire to know ; they would not know what they know, and are willingly ignorant ; *nolentes audire, quod auditum damnare non possunt*, &c. (Tertul. in Apol.) They have not a mind to know that which they have not a mind to do. They would not know the truth because they have a mind to hate it. This is spoken of, Acts xiii. 45, 'They were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.' This is malice ; men first hate, then persecute and oppose the truth. Conviction choked with prejudices breaketh out into rage against that way they were convinced of, or the light of which they cannot rationally withstand. Herod taketh offence against John the Baptist, whom he formerly liked, and then beheadeth him. Light resisted, or not kindly used, maketh a man turn devil, that he may the more deface all feelings of conscience. This is the malignity of revolvers, Hosea v. 5 ; they will hear nothing to the contrary.

3. There is a total and there is a partial offence. The total offence is when men will give Christ no place in their hearts, but remain in their infidelity : John viii. 24, 'Because ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.' When they will take no warning, they shall perish for despising the remedy. The partial offence is, when they do not receive all of Christ, though they may be sound in the main ; these are those that the apostle speaks of, that they are 'saved as by fire,' 1 Cor. iii. 15. Some doctrine or practice, wherein they allow themselves, may prove false and unchristian ; yet the man may be mercifully dealt with by Christ, and freed from having his portion with unbelievers ; yet it goeth hard with him, as one involved in a common fire hardly escapeth out of it ; their salvation is more difficult. In short, every one is more happy, as he is less apt to be offended in Christ ; but they are most unhappy that are most offended in him.

I now come to show you—

Fifthly, How it is true that those that escape this sin are in the ready way to salvation.

To this I answer—

1. The negative includeth the positive, and must be thus explained : He that is not offended, but evangelised, hath the power and virtue of the gospel stamped upon his heart : ‘Blessed is he.’ Among them that are offended, some forsake and fall off from Christ, others never come at him. But these believe so as to be changed and converted. Nothing hindereth them when Christ hath gained their liking and esteem ; for this esteem that we speak of now is not a simple speculative approbation (for that may be, and no change follow : Rom. ii. 18, ‘Thou approvest the things that are excellent’), but a practical comparative approbation : all things considered, Christ is best for their turns. Always a change followeth this esteem : Phil. iii. 8, ‘I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.’ And till we have this esteem, there is some secret offence that we take at Christ, either at his person, doctrine, precepts, or the bad entertainment they have in the world ; and for the contrariety of our affections, Christ and we do not close with full complacency and delight.

2. This esteem produceth a uniform obedience ; for they that thus esteem Christ will study to please him. Delight in our master breedeth delight in our work : Col. i. 10, ‘That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God ;’ and 1 Thes. ii. 12, ‘That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.’ The only way to know whether we be more or less offended in Christ, is to compare our conversation and practice with his precepts. His benefits commend themselves to our affections, his precepts to our consciences ; the one sweeten the other. We have such a good master, we can never do enough for him. If we like Christ, nothing will be grievous that he giveth us in charge : 1 John v. 3, ‘His commandments are not grievous.’

3. When we are not offended in Christ we are the better fortified against temptations to apostasy. They are of three sorts—errors, scandals, persecutions.

[1.] Errors. Many are drawn away with vain pretences, ‘But we have an unction from the holy one, and know all things,’ 1 John ii. 20. But they are an offence, not only of seduction, but contristation : Rom. xvi. 17, ‘Mark them which cause errors and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.’ These are wens of Christ’s mystical body, not parts. Errors in the church breed atheism in the world. Many question the ways of God, and give over all religion ; because there are so many differences and sects, therefore they think nothing certain. Certainly God saw this discipline to be fittest for his people ; he hath told us there must be errors ; he would not have us to take up religion upon trust, without the pains of study and prayer. Lazy men would fain give laws to heaven, and teach God how to govern the affairs of the world ; they would have all things clear and plain, that there should be no doubt about it. But the Lord, in his wise providence, seeth it fit to permit these things, ‘That they which are approved may be made manifest.’ To excuse the trouble of a search, study, and prayer, men would have all things

agreed, else they take offence at religion, and that is one means to draw them off, even after profession. The canonists say, *Non fuisset discretus Dominus Deus, nisi unum constituerit universalem judicem*. This was their blasphemy, that God was not discreet and wise, unless he had appointed one universal and infallible interpreter. This is men's natural thoughts; the Jews say that Christ was not the true Messiah. Why? Because if he had been, he would not have come in such a way as to leave any of his countrymen in doubt, but would so plainly have discovered himself that all might know him. So many think religion is but a fancy, and so fall off to atheism and scepticism at last, and irresolution in religion, because there are so many sects and divisions, and all upholding it with plausible pretences. And to excuse laziness or prejudice, men pretend want of certainty; but God's word is plain to all that will do his will, John vii. 17.

[2.] The scandalous and evil practices of professors. These do not only infect but offend many, and cause them to stumble at religion, or fall into a dislike of the way of salvation. Scandal is far more dangerous than persecution. In persecution, though many be discouraged, yet others are gained to a liking of religion. There are many that have been gained by the patience, courage, and constancy of the martyrs, but never any were gained by the scandalous falls of professors. Persecutions do only work upon our heart, which may be allayed by proposal of the crown of life; but by scandalous actions, how many settle into a resolved hardness of heart! In crosses and persecutions many men may have a secret liking of the truth, and a purpose to own it in better times; but by this kind of scandal, men grow into an open and professed dislike thereof. In persecutions there is not a dislike of religion itself, but of the hard terms upon which it must be received; but by scandals men dislike religion itself, and nourish a base and vile opinion thereof in their hearts, and so they grow loose and fall off. And this mischief doth not only prevail with the lighter sort of Christians, but many times those which have had some taste, it makes them fly off exceedingly: Mat. xviii. 7, 'There will be offences, but woe unto them by whom they come.' Christ hath told us all will not walk up to the religion they own; but a man that is not offended in Christ will not be offended at the disorders of those that profess his way: 1 John ii. 10, 'He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.' All things that offend will not be taken away till the reapers come: Mat. xiii. 41, 'The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.' In the meantime he that loveth Christ, and loveth his brother, dareth not reason from some to all, from persons to the religion; for religion is not to be judged by the persons that profess it, but the persons by the religion. These things must ever be distinguished: the rule and the practice, the form and the power. The form, manner, or model of truth may be complete, though the virtue of this religion doth not prevail over all those that come under the profession of it. It is against all reason that the excellency of Christ should stand to the courtesy of man's obedience. The art is not to be judged by the bungling of the artist; and then

for the other, the love of the brethren will not permit them that they should judge of all the rest by a few, and those the worser part. This is, as if a man should judge of a street by the sink or kennel, or throw away the whole cluster or bunch of grapes for one or two rotten ones. Shall the apostles be judged of by Judas? or the good angels by the bad? or Abraham's family by Ishmael? If some make shipwreck of a good conscience, others keep up the honour and majesty of religion, as well as they disgrace it.

[3.] The troublesome poverty and mean outside of those that profess the gospel, and their many troubles and calamities; as in Christ's time the grandees and learned rabbis did not own Christ. 'Have any of the pharisees or rulers believed in him?' that is, persons of eminence and place. Celsus, the heathen, maketh the objection, Should a few mariners (meaning fishermen) prescribe to the world? But God never intended that truth should be known by pomp, nor condemned or disallowed for troubles that accompany it. The drift of Christianity is to take us off from the hopes and fears of the present world; therefore he that liketh Christ and his promises is not likely to be separated from him by persecution, Rom. viii. 37. He is held to him, not only by the head, but by the heart.

Now the use that we should make of this is caution. Take heed of being offended in Christ. I shall show you:—

1. Who are in danger of it.
2. The heinousness of it.
3. What we should do to avoid it.

1. Who are in danger of it? I answer—

[1.] All such as are hardened in malice and opposition against those that profess godliness, and have a male talent¹ against strictness, and are glad when it meeteth with any trouble or disgrace. The clearest evidence will not convince these men. Such were the froward obstinate Jews, who were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way, Acts xix. 9. Again, there are some that are more moderate, but are discouraged in their first attempts of a godly life, and so give over through despondency. The bullock is most unruly at the first yoking; the fire at first kindling casts forth most smoke. This they cannot bear, therefore give it over as hopeless. And then partly the insincere, whose league with their lusts was never dissolved. And again, weak Christians, who are not fortified and rooted in the love of God, and the faith and hope of the gospel.

2. I shall show you the heinousness of it.

[1.] It is unreasonable. Whatsoever hindereth any man from coming to Christ or embracing the gospel, it is an offence not given but taken. There is nothing in Christ to make us stumble and be offended at him:—Jer. ii. 5, 'What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?'—but everything that may draw our desire or delight towards him; yet by men's blindness and ignorance it is very frequent: Luke xix. 42, 'They do not know the things which belong to their peace in this their day.'

[2.] It is very natural. We are apt to set stumbling-blocks in our

¹ An almost obsolete word, meaning ill-will.—ED.

own way, and matter of offence before our own feet; and take up every obvious pretence to excuse ourselves to ourselves from hearkening to the offers of the gospel. Flesh and blood will stumble in God's plainest ways: Hosea xiv. 9, 'The ways of the Lord are right; the just shall walk therein, but the transgressors shall fall in them.' They will count every molehill a mountain, and be offended at everything which concerneth God, and their duty and obedience to him.

[3.] A prejudicate opinion and malice is always apt to pick quarrels at truth and goodness: Acts xvii. 5, 6, 'The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason, and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These which have turned the world upside down are come hither also.' So chap. xviii. 6, 'They opposed themselves and blasphemed.'

[4.] It is a dangerous sin. If we continue to be offended in Christ, Christ will be offended at us at the last day. We get nothing by dashing against the corner-stone; we hurt not Christ but ourselves: Mat. xxi. 44, 'Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.'

3. What shall we do to avoid it?

[1.] Get a clear understanding, or a zeal according to knowledge: Rom. x. 2, and John ix. 39, 'For judgment I am come into the world, that they which see not might see, and they which see might be made blind.' This will be the effect of my coming, that the ignorant will be enlightened, and learned men will not see the things before their eyes; they were hardened and left to their own prejudices.

[2.] Get a good measure to mete things withal. The Jews were offended in Christ, because they were leavened with a notion of a pompous Messiah; and so judged of all things concerning Christ as they suited with that conceit. So John vii. 24, 'Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.' We judge according to appearance, but judge not righteous judgment. This is no good measure, but an idol of our hearts. Many are in an evil way, but yet want not their pretences. As the tradition of the elders, Mat. xix. 2; and succession, John viii. 33; the novelty of Christ's doctrine: Mark i. 27, 'What new doctrine is this?' The vile abject condition of Christ and his disciples. They never enter into the merits of the cause, but determine it by prejudicate opinions. A good measure, therefore, is necessary. There is *mensura mensurans*, and *mensura mensurata*, a measure measuring, and the measure that is measured. The measure that is measured is an upright unbiassed mind.

[3.] Labour to get a mortified heart. They are most apt to be scandalised that have a carnal bias upon their hearts, a contrariety of affections to the gospel, Luke xvi. 14; John v. 44; xii. 42, 43; who are leavened with covetousness, jealousy of reputation, fear of disgrace, and the like.

[4.] Get a fervent love: Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.' It is want of a true and hearty love that maketh us so easy and apt to take offence.

A second use that we make of it is this,—Be sure to take heed of prejudices against practical godliness.

1. Some take prejudice against the necessity of regeneration. But surely there is a necessity of fitting us anew to the use and end for which we were made. For the use see Eph. ii. 10, and for the end John iii. from the 3d to the 5th verse.

2. Another prejudice is the difficulty of a godly life : Mat. xix. 25, ‘With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’ Use will make it easy ; at first it is most hard and tedious.

3. Another prejudice is the persecutions which attend it. God will have his servants and graces tried. They that go to sea must look for wind and waves, but in the haven we shall have rest. In heaven we shall enjoy full and eternal rest.

WISDOM IS JUSTIFIED OF HER CHILDREN.

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.—MAT. XI. 18, 19.

IN this context Christ had likened the people of the generation in which he lived to boys playing in the streets, and personating (as children are given to imitate what they have seen in elder persons) sometimes festivities, acting the part of a musician, but their fellows danced not; sometimes funerals, acting the part of the mourning women who were to weep for the dead, cry, Ah, my brother! but they upbraided their fellows, that they would do nothing as they should, neither follow them in their mirth nor sadness. So the people of that generation, whatsoever messages God sent unto them, they accepted them not and obeyed them not. Some great exceptions they had still to the messengers employed. One kind of exception they have to John, and the quite contrary to Jesus; and so they are not pleased, neither full nor fasting, as we say. Their censure of John was that he was an hypochondriac, or a frantic fellow; the devil was in him that he was so austere. But Christ, that was gentle and affable, they censure him as a loose person, or favourer of such. 'For John came neither eating and drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, A man gluttonous, and a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.'

In the words three things are observable:—

1. The different form and course of life wherein John and Christ appeared.

2. Their censures both of John and Jesus.

3. The receiving of the gospel by the unprejudiced.

1. The different course of life wherein John and Christ appeared. 'John came neither eating nor drinking;' that is, lived in a strict austere course of life, not after the ordinary diet of men; for we read he had his raiment of camels' hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey. But the Son of man came eating and drinking; that is, using the ordinary diet of men, and eating promiscuously with all company, in a more free use of the creatures, taking the fare as he found it, and conversing with all sorts

of men in a familiar course of life ; sometimes with publicans, as Zaccheus ; sometimes with pharisees, as Simon, Luke vii. He observed no such abstinency, but ate meats indifferently. Sometimes he had nothing but barley-bread and water ; sometimes he was at feasts, and using wine, and conversed with men indifferently.

2. Their censures both of John and Jesus. John 'hath a devil ;' that is, he is a person possessed, out of his wits : for the Jews ascribed all distempers to the devil. And of Christ their censure was that he was 'a glutton, and a friend of publicans and sinners.'

3. The receiving of the gospel by the unprejudiced, 'but wisdom is justified of her children.' This last clause needeth opening, that we may know what is wisdom, who are her children, and how they justify it.

[1.] By wisdom is meant the doctrine of the gospel, called elsewhere, 'The counsel of God,' as appeareth by the parallel place, Luke vii. 29, 30, 'And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves.' The gospel is called wisdom, because it is the result of God's eternal wisdom. The doctrine of Christ crucified is called, 'the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. i. 24 ; and again, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 'the wisdom of God in a mystery.'

[2.] The children of wisdom are the professors of it. It is an Hebraism ; as 'children of wrath,' 'children of light,' 'children of this world,' &c.—the professors and followers of the gospel. Wisdom hath her children : all are not alike indisposed ; some are begotten to God by the doctrine of grace.

[3.] Justified. As this is opposed to crimination, so to justify is the work of an advocate. As it is opposed to condemnation, so it is the work of a judge. Wisdom's children will bear witness to their faith, or the doctrine of God, by their profession and godly life and ready obedience, and exalt it as much as others decry it, and every way manifest that they hold it for good and right.

Many points might be observed hence, as—

1. That God sendeth forth his servants with divers dispositions ; some more austere in life, others more social in their carriage ; some sad and mournful, others cheerful and pleasant ; some more thundering in doctrine, others more gently inducing people to repentance. Since God maketh use of variety of gifts and tempers, let us observe this wisdom, not bring all to the law of some admired instance and example. As there is a difference of stomachs, some for meats baked or roasted, others for boiled, so God fits his servants severally to do good, as the persons they are to treat with need.

2. That men are qualified according to the dispensation wherein God useth them. John, as a preacher of repentance, was austere ; Christ, as a giver of pardon, mild and affable. John was to come in the spirit and power of Elias, and therefore to imitate him in his course of life. He was sent forth to raise and awaken a sleepy world besotted in security. But Christ, who was to come with the glad tidings of salvation, and to call sinners to grace and pardon, chose to appear in a meek, sweet, and social way of converse, that his benignity

in drawing the most grievous sinners to himself might thereby be manifested.

3. That men are apt to complain, quarrel, and except against what is done by God, and whatsoever methods are used to reduce them to a sense of their duty. Both John and Jesus were sent by God, but men have ever somewhat to say: John is too rough and austere, and Christ too sociable and familiar with sinners. They dislike the severity of the one, and the free converse of the other. So in other cases, old men, they say, dote, young men are too rash; some they find fault with because they are so facile and easy; with others, because they are obscure and deep. People are always unsatisfied.

4. That neither the severity of the law, nor the glad tidings of salvation, will of themselves work upon men, unless God set in by his Spirit: for both the dispensation of John and Jesus was without its effect.

5. Though some obstinately refuse the gospel, yet others accept of it, and live accordingly. Wisdom hath her children, who justify and defend her ways as much as others impugn and oppose them, Acts xvii. 34. God seldom lighteth a candle but he hath some lost groat to seek.

All these points might be profitably insisted on, but I shall make use of this text to give you this observation:—

That Jesus Christ, when he came to set up the gospel, did not tie himself to a wilderness-life of austerity in total abstinence from common meat and wine, as John the Baptist did, and as they thought that he that professed extraordinary sanctity should have done.

In the prosecution of this point I shall use this method:—

1. I shall show you that the censures of the two things disliked in Christ were not just.

2. Give you the reasons why he lived and chose this form and sort of life.

3. The profitable observations that we may build thereon.

1. That the censures of the two things disliked in Christ were not just. The two things disliked in Christ were:—

[1.] His diet.

[2.] His company.

[1.] His diet. He ‘came eating and drinking:’ he did eat and drink as other men, but with great piety, and with great temperance and sobriety. His piety was remarkable: John vi. 11, ‘And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed them among the disciples;’ and ver. 23, ‘Nigh unto the place where they had eaten bread, after the Lord gave thanks.’ All our refreshments should be sanctified; they are great mercies, though ordinary. They come down from heaven, and direct us to seek the blessing thence, from whence we have the comforts themselves. Though we have but slender provisions, we should be thankful; Christ gave thanks for five barley-loaves and two fishes. Mark, here he doth not mention the miracle, but the thanksgiving. Christ had expressed himself in such a way as made deep impression on the standers-by, and would fully convince us that the blessing of all enjoyments is in God’s hand.

His temperance and sobriety is observable; five barley-loaves and two fishes were carried about, as the standing provision for himself and family, Luke ix. 13. Christ's provision is such as may teach sobriety and contentment with a mean condition unto all. At another time he beggeth a draught of water to quench his thirst, John iv. 7. And therefore the exceptions against his diet were not just.

[2.] Against his company. They accused him of eating with publicans and sinners in the text. So Luke xv. 2, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;' because He went to them as a physician to heal their souls, Luke v. 30. He conversed with the meanest, and refused not familiarity with the poorest and worst, as was needful for their cure. The pharisees thought it to be against all decorum that he would speak and converse with all sorts of people, publicans and harlots not excepted; but Christ coming to save all sorts of people, it was necessary that he should converse with all sorts of people.

2. The reasons why he lived and chose this sort of life.

[1.] Because he would not place religion in outward austerities and observances. Men superstitiously appoint to themselves unnecessary tasks, and forbid themselves many lawful things, and this they call by the name of holiness. When Satan, who is usually a libertine, pretendeth to be a saint, he will be stricter than Christ himself; as the pharisees were in the choice of their company and outward observances. Christ foresaw this spirit would be working in the world: 'Touch not, taste not, handle not, after the commandments and doctrines of men,' Col. ii. 21, 22. That men were apt to place religion in a simple abstinence from the common comforts of life, under a pretence of more than ordinary mortification: neither eat, nor taste, nor touch. Over-doing in externals is usually an undoing in religion: the quaker's spirit and the monkish spirit is an apocryphal and bastard sort of holiness, a spirit that suiteth not with the temper of the gospel and the example of Christ.

[2.] Christ would live a strict, but sociable and charitable life, and did not observe the laws of proud pharisaical separation, but spent his time in doing good, and healing all manner of bodily diseases, and instructing the souls of men upon all occasions. There is a disposition in men, by a foolish singularity, to stand aloof from others. The prophet toucheth it, Isa. lxxv. 5, 'They said, stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou.' Some then, though impure and profane, would seem holier than others, and counted all unclean and polluted beside themselves. This spirit rested in the pharisees in Christ's time: Luke v. 30, 'The scribes and pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?' So Luke vii. 39, 'If this man had been a prophet, he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.' And afterwards the whole people of the Jews were possessed with this spirit, and would not endure that any should converse with the Gentiles, as fearing to be defiled by them. Now Jesus Christ would not countenance this inclosing spirit; coming to do good to all, he would converse with all.

3. Jesus Christ coming into the world, as to redeem us to God, so

to set us an example, would take up that course of life which was most imitable by all sorts of persons, and calculated, as for the honour of God, so for the benefit of human society. He intended his religion not only for recluses and votaries, but for men of all conditions, professions, and employments, and therefore would not fright us from religion by affected austerities, but invite us to it by a sanctified converse with all kind of companies; and no man now can excuse himself, saying that he cannot imitate the form of Christ's living, since it is competent to all kind of persons, even those who are not shut up, but whose callings engage them to be abroad in the world; for it is religion that puts us upon the discharge of all duties to God and man. The sum of it is comprised in the love of God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves. We love all, even enemies, with that common love which is due to humanity, and all that fear God with a special love. Now this may be exercised in the shop better than in the cloister and solitudes, and wherever we go we may go about doing good; and this may be done by all sorts of persons, princes and peasants, noblemen or tradesmen, as well as ministers and people of a more retired life.

[4.] Coming into the world, to set up the kingdom of God, it was fit his form of life should suit with the nature of that kingdom. John Baptist telleth them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand;' and Christ himself, that the kingdom of God was come, and was among them. Now what is the nature of this kingdom of God? The apostle telleth you that 'The kingdom of God standeth not in meat and drink, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17. There are two expositions of that place, and both equally probable; the one more general, the other more limited and restrained to the context: more general, that righteousness is taken for all new obedience, and peace for peace of conscience, resulting from the rectitude of our actions; and joy in the Holy Ghost, for that supernatural comfort which the Holy Ghost puts into our hearts, by reflecting upon our privileges in Christ, and the hopes of the world to come. Now Christianity consists not in eating, or not eating such or such meats, or such kind of observances, but in solid godliness, or in the practice of Christian graces and virtues. The more limited sense is, that by righteousness is meant just dealings; by peace, a peaceable, harmless, inoffensive sort of living; by joy in the Holy Ghost, a delight to do good to one another; to advance and build up one another in godliness, not dividing, hating, excommunicating, censuring one another for lesser things and mere rituals, but pleasing our neighbour to edification: Rom. xv. 2, and 1 Cor. x. 31-33, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God: give no offence, neither to Jews nor Gentiles, nor to the church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.' This meek, holy, charitable converse to the glory of God, without offence and scandal, is that which promoteth God's kingdom; and this would Christ teach us in his own form and course of life, conversing in a sanctified manner with all sorts of persons to their profit and benefit.

[5.] Because Christ would not gratify human wisdom: as he would

not gratify sense by choosing a pompous life, so he would not gratify human wisdom by choosing an austere life. There are two sorts of men in the world who are not of God—the men of the world and the saints of this world. The men of the world are brutish sensualists, who are all for pomp and glory. Christ would not gratify these, but came meek and poor, to teach us humility, self-denial, and contentation: Mat. xi. 29, ‘Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.’ He did not bustle in the world for respect and honour; his complaints of his enemies, and his answers to them, were full of meekness, and stood not to abase himself for the Father’s glory and men’s good: so he did not gratify the men of the world. The saints of this world are such as are strict in outward observances, in eating or not eating, in marrying or not marrying, in forbearing such company, in such a number and tale of devotions, in abstaining from such lawiul things; these things the apostle saith ‘have a show of wisdom,’ Col. ii. 23. The world is mightily taken with bodily exercise and outward strictness. As the men of the world love to pamper the body, so the saints of this world needlessly afflict and dishonour the body; this hath a show, and nothing but a show: but Christ would not gratify these neither. He used a free, but a holy life, and so was censured and traduced as a wine-bibber and a glutton, to teach his followers to be contented to be ‘judged according to men in the flesh, and live to God in the spirit,’ 1 Peter iv. 6. He came to preach, and to give inward regeneration and renovation. To show the proper way of mortification, which is not by a severity of life, but by deadening the mind to the esteem of the world. That kind of life which consists in outward rigours hath some honour and reputation in the world, and maketh a fair show in the flesh; but he would teach us the life which consists in faith, holiness, sobriety, humility of mind, charity, obedience to God, joy in the spirit, and comfort of the promises, which the world liketh not so well. Outward and rigorous observances are more plausible, but the power of godliness, and a true sense of the world to come, the world hateth.

[6.] To show us the true nature of mortification, which consists not in a bare abstinence and shameful retreat from temptations, but in a spirit fortified against them; not in a monkish discontent with the world, but a holy contempt of it when we most freely use it; and in bridling and governing the appetite and desire, rather than in scrupulous refraining from the object itself; in a using of the world, but not abusing of it, 1 Cor. vii. 31; not so much scrupling the comforts of the present life, as a valuing and esteeming the comforts of a better life; prizing more the Christian vow than any by-laws of our own. The apostle telleth us, 1 Tim. iv. 8, that ‘bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable to all things.’ Abstinence from daily meats, wines, marriage, is an act of self-denial, but a very small one; for all the good it doth is to tame the members of the body, and its external motions and actions, without sanctifying the heart and inward part, as a lively faith, fear, and love of God doth. The profit of bodily exercise is little in comparison of inward piety, which is necessary to a comfortable life here, and a blessed hereafter.

Thirdly, The observations which we may build thereon.

1. We may observe the humanity, goodness, and kindness of that religion which we profess, both with respect to ourselves and others.

[1.] Ourselves. Man consists of a body and a soul, and hath respects for either, else he were unnatural. The body, indeed, we are apt to overprize, and therefore we need not a spur but a bridle for our affections to the bodily life; and therefore religion, in the precepts of it, interposeth by way of restraint rather than exhortation: Titus ii. 12, 'That we should live soberly,' &c.; and Rom. xiii. 14, 'Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Do not cherish carnal desires. The apostle telleth you, 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it,' Eph. v. 29. Our usual fault is an excessive pampering of the flesh. Some have hated their own souls, at least, by consequence and interpretation; therefore we dare not let loose the reins, and give either encouragement or allowance to men to indulge their carnal desires; yet, to avoid prejudice, we must grant what may be granted, for men are apt to think that religion is a sour thing, and abridges them of all the comforts of their lives. No; besides the rich comforts it provideth for the soul, it alloweth and forbiddeth not so much sensitive pleasure as tendeth to the holiness of the soul, and furthereth us in God's service. It rebuketh and forbiddeth nothing but what really may be a snare to us; it considereth all things, meats, drinks, marriage, wealth, honours, and dignities of the present world, as they have respect to God and a better world, and as they help and hinder us in the pleasing God and seeking immortality.

[2.] With respect to others. The spirit of our religion may be known by the example of our dearest Lord. It is not a proud, disdainful spirit, that refuseth the company of the meanest and worst, so we may do them good. He came to save sinners, and conversed with sinners. He came to redress the miseries of mankind, and went up and down doing good; though his familiarities were with the most godly, yet he disdained not the company of others. And surely his religion, where it prevaieth in the hearts of any, it causes them not only to deal justly with all, but to love all, all mankind, with a love of benevolence; it maketh us to long for the good of their souls, and desirous also to do good to the bodies of those that are in need. It is said, indeed, Prov. xxix. 27, 'An unjust man is an abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.' But we must distinguish of the hatred of abomination, and the hatred of enmity. We hate our sinful neighbour, as we must ourselves much more, in opposition to the love of complacency, but not in opposition to the love of benevolence; so we must neither hate ourselves, nor our neighbour, no, nor our enemy. The business of your lives must be, to do good to all, especially to the household of faith. God's natural image is on all men, his spiritual image on his saints; and we must love God in all his creatures, especially in his children. This is true religion, consecrated by our Lord's example.

2. We may observe, that an external holiness, which consisteth in an outside strictness, without that faith, love, charity, hope, usefulness, and activity which is the very soul and life of Christianity, usually puffeth up men with a vain conceit of their own righteousness, and a censuring and a despising of others. This text sheweth us both the

spirit of pharisaism and the spirit of Christianity. The pharisees, who abounded in outward observances, censured Christ for his free converses, and disdained those sinners whom he invited to a better life, Luke xviii. 9-12; and they were ignorant of true wisdom, which is justified, embraced, and received by all her children. Learn, then, that an unruly, fierce, censorious spirit, which is only borne up by external advantages, is not the right spirit of the gospel. True religion maketh men humble and low in their own eyes, acquainteth them with their desert, sin, and misery, and maketh them pitiful and compassionate to others, and more ready to help them than to censure them, and to use all ways and means to do them good.

3. The main observation is this,—That a free life, guided by a holy wisdom, is the most sanctified life, and bringeth most honour to God, and is most useful to others.

Here I shall show you:—

1. Wherein lieth this free life, guided by holy wisdom.

2. How it is the most sanctified life.

1. Wherein lieth this free life, guided by holy wisdom. It is said of Enoch, Gen. v. 22, That he ‘walked with God, and begat sons and daughters;’ that is, dedicated himself to God’s service, and lived in most strict holiness. And there you see the use of a conjugal life in its purity may stand with the strictest rules of holiness. So for worldly affairs, when the course of our calling engageth us in them, it is not using of the world, but over-using is the fault, 1 Cor. vii. 31. So for the comforts of this life: Ps. lxii. 10, ‘If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.’ The business is not to withdraw them away, but to withdraw the affection. So for the lawful delights, there are two extremes,—clogging and retrenching our liberty with outward burdensome observances, or abusing our liberty to wantonness: Gal. v. 13, ‘Ye are called to liberty, only use not your liberty as an occasion to the flesh.’ Corrupt nature venteth itself both ways; either by superstitious rigours, or by breaking all bonds, and enlarging itself according to the licentiousness of the flesh. Meat, drink, apparel, are in their own nature indifferent; neither must superstition work upon them, nor profaneness; and in the mean between both lieth godliness.

2. How it is the most sanctified life.

[1.] Partly because it suiteth with the example of Christ. He came, as to expiate our offences, so to give us an example: 1 Peter ii. 21, ‘Leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps;’ and 1 John ii. 6, ‘Walk as he walked.’ It is high presumption to aim at an imitation of Christ in those acts of his which he did for satisfying the Father’s justice or proving his deity; yea, it is impossible to imitate him in those. Yet in actions moral we are bound to imitate him, and in actions indifferent, not to suffer our liberty to be straitened, but to govern circumstances according to that holy wisdom. Christ retired not from the society of men, but used the greatest freedom in a holy way.

[2.] Because there is more true grace in being dead to the temptation, than to retreat from the temptation. A Christian is not to go out of the world, neither by a voluntary death, John xvii. 15, nor by an unnecessary sequestration of ourselves from business and the affairs

which God calleth us to, 1 Cor. vii. 20, 'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called;' but to be crucified to the world, Gal. vi. 14,—that is, grace to withdraw our hearts from the world, while we converse in it and with it. Many real Christians, when they hear us press mortification and deadness to the world, think they must leave their callings, or abate of their necessary activity in their callings. Alas! in the shop, a man may keep himself unspotted from the world, as well as in the closet; in a court, as well as in a cell. We read of saints in Nero's household, Phil. iv. 22. He was a great persecutor, yet some saints could live there, within his gates: there were some professors of the gospel. So Rev. ii. 13, 'I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.' In the sorest and thickest of temptations a Christian may maintain his integrity. In short, our way to heaven lieth through the world; and though, if I be left to my choice, I should choose that course of life in which there are least temptations, yet when God, by the posture of our temporal interest, or the course of our education, or the nature of my employment and usefulness, hath determined me to a life more incident to a throng of temptations, I may the better venture upon them, and must not leave my service for supposed snares. Affectation of privacy may be a slothful retreat from public business, and it is more glorious to beat an enemy than to fly from him; and grace is seen in overcoming rather than in shunning difficulties.

Well, then, learn from the whole, that true mortification consists in a change of the frame of heart; in a resolution against the baits of sense, rather than removing our presence from them; in being not of the world, though we are in the world; not in casting away our enjoyments, but in an equal mind in all conditions, James i. 9, 10: that to be poor in abundance, humble in high places, temperate and godly in the freest course of life, is to imitate the life of Christ: that then we are properly mortified, when our esteem, value, and affection is mortified: that grace showeth itself more in choice than in necessity; in an abstinence from the delights of the flesh when we have them, rather than when we want them: that we may follow our business and yet be godly: that the overcharging of the heart is the great evil that we should beware of: that we may use company, but not to partake of their sins; yea, to make them better, and to purify them by our example.

I now proceed to the last clause: *But wisdom is justified of her children.*

We have observed:—

1. The different form and course of life wherein John and Jesus appeared.

2. Their censures of both.

3. The receiving of the gospel by the unprejudiced.

In this last observe:—

[1.] The exceptive particle, *but*. Though undeserved censures are cast upon the ways of God, yet at length there is a wisdom found in them. Ignorant men mistake them, carnal men slight them, the pro-

fane snuff at them, few or none entertain them with that respect they ought to do, yet this wisdom will not want advocates.

[2.] The thing spoken of, *wisdom*. By wisdom is meant the doctrine of the gospel, called elsewhere the counsel of God, as appeareth by the parallel place, Luke vii. 29, 30, 'And all the people that heard him justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves.' The gospel method of salvation is there called the counsel of God, because it is the counsel he giveth men for their good; as here wisdom, because it is the result of God's eternal wisdom and decrees. And elsewhere the doctrine of Christ crucified is called 'the wisdom of God;' and again, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 'the wisdom of God in a mystery.'

[3.] What is said of it, or how it is used; it is *justified*. Justification is a relative word: as it is opposed to crimination, so to justify is the work of an advocate; as to condemnation, so it is the work of a judge. The children of wisdom discharge both parts, chiefly the first; they bear witness to their faith, or the doctrine of God concerning salvation by Christ, by their profession and godly life and ready obedience, and exalt it so much as others deery it, and every way manifest they hold it for good and right; only, this pleading is real, not by word but deed: *Sapientia non querit vocis testimonium sed operum*, saith Hierom. Divine wisdom is justified more by works than by a verbal plea. Wisdom's children bear her instructions, follow her directions and institutes, and with diligence observe the way of salvation prescribed by God, though others slight it; and so justify it against the exceptions and reproaches of the carnal world.

[4.] Of whom: *of her children*. The children of wisdom are the professors of it; those who are begotten by God by the word of truth, James i. 18, and are willing to attain the end by the ways and means wherein God affordeth it. These are Wisdom's children, begotten, bred up, and instructed by her; it is an Hebraism, as 'children of wrath,' 'children of light,' 'children of this world,' and the like; the professors and followers of the gospel.

The point that I shall insist on is this:—

That the wisdom of God, leading men to salvation, in the ways and means pointed out in the gospel, is and should be justified of all the sincere professors of it.

In managing this point, I shall show you:—

First, What is the wisdom of God in the way of salvation prescribed by the gospel.

Secondly, That this wisdom is despised, slighted, and contradicted by the carnal world, and why.

Thirdly, How and why it must be justified by the sincere professors of the gospel.

First, What is the wisdom of God in the way of salvation prescribed by the gospel? The sum of the gospel is this: that all those who, by true repentance and faith, do forsake the flesh, the world, and the devil, and give themselves up to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as their creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, shall find God as a father, taking them for his reconciled children, and for Christ's sake pardoning their sins, and by his Spirit giving them his grace; and, if they per-

severe in this course, will finally glorify them, and bestow upon them everlasting happiness ; but will condemn the unbelievers, impenitent, and ungodly to everlasting punishment. That this is the sum of the gospel appeareth by Mark xvi. 15, 16 : ' Go, preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned ; '—where you have all the Christian religion laid before you in one short view and prospect. It concerneth either the end or the means.

1. The end. The apostle telleth you that God ' hath brought life and immortality to light in the gospel,' 2 Tim. i. 10 ; or clearly discovered a happiness and a misery in the world to come.

2. The means. He hath pointed out a sure way for obtaining the one and avoiding the other. As to the means, Christian religion is considerable, either as to the entrance or the progress of it. Our Lord telleth us, Mat. vii. 14, ' Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.' He speaketh of a gate and a way. The gate noteth the entrance ; the way, the progress therein. In other scriptures we read of making covenant with God, and keeping covenant with God : the covenant must not only be made, but kept. So again we read of dedication and use ; of devotedness to God, and faithfulness to him ; of our purpose and progress, choice and course ; all which expressions tend to the same effect.

[1.] As to the way of entering into covenant with God, there is required :—

(1.) True repentance and faith : ' Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,' Acts xx. 21. Repentance respects God as our end, and faith respects Christ as Mediator, as the only way of returning to God, from whom we have strayed by our own folly and sin.

(2.) In the exercise of this repentance and faith, there must be a forsaking the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a giving up ourselves to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. For the former, there are three great enemies to God and us—the devil, the world, and the flesh ; reckoned up, Eph. ii. 2, 3, ' In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, after the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience : among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' There all your enemies appear abreast : the devil as the grand deceiver and principle of all wickedness ; the world with its pleasures, honours, and profits, as the bait by which the devil would deceive us, and steal away our hearts from God, and divert us from looking after the one thing necessary ; the flesh, as the corrupt inclination in us, which entertaineth and closeth with these temptations, to the neglect of God, and wrong of our own souls. This is importunate to be pleased, and is the proper internal cause of all our mischief ; for every man is enticed and drawn away by his own lusts. Now these must be renounced before we can return to God by Jesus Christ ; for, as Joshua told the Israelites, so must we say to all of you : Josh. xxiv. 23, ' Put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.'

First, There must be a renouncing of our idols before our hearts can incline unto the true God. We must be turned from Satan to God, Acts xx. 18. And the world must be renounced, Titus ii. 12: 'Denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts.' And we must not look upon ourselves as debtors to the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, Rom. viii. 10. God will have no copartners and competitors in our hearts.

And then the second part, in exercising of our faith and repentance, is giving up ourselves to God the Father, Son, and Spirit, as our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. And therefore in baptism, which is our first entrance and initiation into the Christian religion, we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Mat. xxviii. 19, which implieth a dedication and giving up ourselves to them, according to their personal relations. To the Father, as our creator, to love him, obey him, and depend upon him, and be happy in his love as dear children. To Christ as our Redeemer, to free us from the guilt of sin and the wrath of God. To the Holy Ghost, to guide and sanctify us, and comfort us with the sense of our present interest in God's love, and the hopes of future glory.

[2.] As to our progress and perseverance, which is our walking in the narrow way, three things are required; and that—

(1.) As to the enemies of God and our souls. As there is a renouncing required at first, so at length there is requisite an overcoming the devil, the world, and the flesh: Rev. ii. 7, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' We overcome the devil when we keep up our resistance, and stand out against his batteries and assaults: 1 Peter v. 8, 9, 'Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist stedfast in the faith.' We overcome the world when the terrors and allurements of it have less force and influence upon us: 1 John v. 4, 5, 'Whatsoever 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?' and Gal. vi. 14, 'But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' We overcome and subdue the flesh when we have 'crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,' Gal. v. 24; when we get the mastery over the passions and affections thereof; and though we be sometimes foiled, yet the drift and bent of our lives is for God and our salvation.

(2.) As to God, to whom we have devoted ourselves. We must love him above all, and not put him off with what the flesh can spare, or the world will allow, or the devil will suffer us to go on contentedly with; but we must serve him sincerely, 'in holiness and righteousness all our days,' Luke i. 75. The love and patient service of our Creator is our great and daily work.

(3.) As to our end. We must live in the hope of the coming of Christ and our everlasting glory: Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,' and Jude, ver. 21, 'Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.'

Well, then, as we did at first thankfully accept of our recovery by Christ, and did at first renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and consented to follow his direction, and use his means in order to our final happiness, so we must still persevere in this mind and resolution, till our glory come in hand. This is God's wisdom.

Secondly, Let us now see how this counsel of God is entertained by the carnal world. It is there despised, slighted, and contradicted. The world is a distracted world ; some neglect God's counsel and never lay it to heart : Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ?' and Mat. xxii. 5, 'But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.' Some laugh at these things, and make a holy and heavenly life the matter of their scorn and derision : Luke xvi. 14, 'The pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him ;' and Acts xvii. 32, 'Some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter ; howbeit, certain men clave unto him and believed.' There are others who fasten odious reproaches on the godly. And though the Christian religion be so holy and innocent in its design, so agreeable to the nature of God and man, so well contrived to remedy our miseries, and to secure our true and proper happiness, yet the strictness of it is distasted by the world. By the profane, who have nothing to excuse their wickedness, it is counted hypocrisy : 'As deceivers, yet true,' 2 Cor. vi. 8 ; because they cannot condemn the life, they judge the heart. By them who affect the vanities of the world, and have a passionate love for the pleasures and honours thereof ; because the generality of the world are of that mind, they brand it with the imputation of foolish singularity. And the carnal politicians, because it was never yet so well with the world, but some things which God requireth are discountenanced, they tax it of disobedience, and they counted Paul as a mover of sedition, Acts xxv. 5 ; and because the operations of grace are above the line of nature, others tax it of fanaticism and enthusiasm. Atheists, who are all for demonstrations of sense, sight, and present things, because Christianity mainly inviteth to things spiritual and heavenly, and to live upon the hopes of an unseen world that is yet to come, they judge it to be a foppery, or mere imposture, or needless superstition. Though both the hopes and precepts of religion carry a marvellous compliance with right reason, yet none of these things move them. Lastly, There are others that malign, oppose, and oppugn holiness. There is an everlasting enmity between the two seeds, as between the wolf and the lamb, the raven and the dove ; the world will love its own, and hate those that go a contrary course, John xv. 19 ; 'And as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now,' Gal. iv. 29 ; and so it will be to the end of the world. When the powers of the world give any rest, yet the carnal seed will be mocking and scoffing, and bringing God's holy ways into contempt, branding them with censures and calumnies. The reasons of this are partly because men are drunk with the delusions of the flesh, and so cannot judge of spiritual things ; partly to excuse themselves. Men will be quarrelling at religion when they have no mind to practise it, and dispute away duties when they are unwilling to perform them ; partly, they take occasion from the failings of God's

people, though there is no reason why they should do so. An art should not be condemned for the workman's want of skill ; but they do so. If Christians be serious to any degree of sadness, then religion is counted an uncomfortable thing, it mopeeth them. If there be any differences among God's people, because of their several degrees of light, oh, then there are so many sects, and factions, and controversies about religion, they suspect all, and are true to none. If any creep into the holy profession, and pollute it with their scandals, then all strictness in religion is but a pretence and imposture. If men be strict, and would avoid every ordinary failing incident to mankind, then they are more nice than wise, and this is preciseness and indiscretion. It were endless to rake in this puddle, and to reckon up all the cavils and exceptions which naughty men commence against the ways of God.

Thirdly, How and why it must be justified by the sincere professors of the gospel.

1. How?

I answer—Three ways:—

[1.] It must be approved and received by themselves. It is wisdom's children that can only justify wisdom ; they that have entertained it, felt the power and force of it in their own hearts ; yea, their very receiving is a justifying ; they show the clamourings of the world do not move them : therefore it must be approved by us before it can be recommended to others, and approved, not speculatively only, but practically, so as to resolve to follow after salvation in this way. Speculatively, they may approve it that have but *μόρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως*, Rom. ii. 18, 20 : a form of knowledge, and dishonour it in their practices, as ver. 23, 24. Men may justify religion in word, by a bare naked approbation, and soundly vindicate it from the cavils and exceptions of men ; but godly men have eyes to see the beauty and excellence of it, and have sincerely accepted it : Acts ii. 41, 'They received the word gladly.' It is good news to a poor guilty conscience to hear of a pardoning God and a merciful and faithful Redeemer, the promise of eternal life, and a sure way how to come to it. They are said to justify God that accepted his counsel, Luke vii. 29, 30. The hearts of God's children are thoroughly possessed with the reality, excellency, and blessedness of this religion ; they know and believe the infinite consequence of these things ; their faith is a kind of justifying : John iii. 33, 'He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.'

[2.] It must be professed and owned when it is vilified and in contempt and disgrace in the world. We must stand to Christ and his ways, though we stand alone, as Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 10, and not be ashamed of holiness, notwithstanding trouble and contradiction. Christ will be confessed before men, and will be ashamed before God and angels of them who are ashamed of him in the world, and refuse to own him and his ways and truths, only because they are despised and contradicted and discountenanced in the world. Pleading for religion is one of the professing acts : 2 Cor. iv. 13, 'We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken ; we also believe, and therefore speak.' As David, when sore afflicted, did confess and avow his confidence in God, so we,

heartily believing and approving the gospel, must make a bold profession of it. The sacraments were ordained for this purpose, for badges of profession. Baptism is a visible entering into covenant with God : Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; and he that believeth not shall be damned ;' where not only belief is required, but open profession. Baptism is a badge and a bond ; a badge to distinguish the worshippers of Christ from others, and a bond to bind us to open profession of the name of Christ. The Lord's Supper it is a profession of communion : 1 Cor. x. 16, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?' and ver. 18, 'Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar ?' They that did any part of the sacrifices did eat and drink with God at the altar ; and ver. 20, 21, 'I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils ; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils.' Professing communicating with Christ is not consistent with professing communicating with devils. So prayer and praise is a part of confessing : Rom. x. 10, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' The first is proved ver. 11, 'For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed ;' the second, ver. 13, 'For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Calling upon the name of the Lord in prayer and praise, it is an open professing act, by which we own God in Christ for our God. So the assembling ourselves together for public worship is a part of this profession, and must not be omitted for fear : Heb. x. 23, with 25, 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.' How ? ver. 25, 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.' These assemblies were instituted for public converse with God, testifying their union and agreement in the same faith and worship. Indeed, in lesser truths, that fall within the latitude of allowable differences in the church, profession is not always a duty, for in some cases we may have faith to ourselves ; but a denying of God, or being ashamed of him, is always a sin. When called to give an account, we are with boldness to own our profession : Acts iv. 10, 'Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole ;' and Dan. iii. 17, 18, 'If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king ; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'

[3.] This profession must be honoured, and recommended to others, by a holy conversation. But now, what kind of conversation honoureth religion ?

(1.) Such as is carried on with diligence and seriousness. As Noah, Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house ; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' They behaved themselves as those that in

earnest believed a flood, when they made such thorough preparation, which was a just reproof to the security and incredulity of the carnal world: when we do as we say, in good earnest make preparation for another world, otherwise religion is but suspected as a vain pretence and empty talk. Then we look after heaven indeed, then we believe it when we do the things that belief bindeth us unto. A carnal man that is all talk and no practice, he doth not religion so much honour in his words as he doth dishonour it in his works. He liveth down his profession, while he seemeth to cry it up: Titus i. 16, 'They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.' Contrary motions are an implicit denial of the faith, 1 Tim. v. 8; but laziness and negligence do also foment and breed atheism; and we carry on the life of godliness coldly and faintly, and so our conversations, which should be a confirmation of the gospel, prove a confutation rather. Those that are disciples in name only, the word of God cometh to them in word only. The careless practiser is as bad as he that is haunted with actual doubts about the truth of Christianity. The troubled doubter mindeth his business, but these never regard it, and do in effect say that Christ and his salvation is not worth the looking after. As it is said of the Israelites, Ps. cvi. 24, 'They despised the good land, they believed not his word.' Those that resolved to give over the pursuit of Canaan are said to doubt of his promise. So they that neglect salvation do not believe the truth of it, Heb. ii. 3, 4; and though they talk high, they secretly propagate their infidelity. The strength of our faith should appear by the diligence of our lives, the seriousness of our endeavours, and the fervour of our duties. Practices do more express the image of our minds than words. The faith that issueth out into works doth most commend itself to others: 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, 'That you may fulfil the work of faith with power; that Christ Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him.' Then is Christ glorified, when you live answerably to your profession, and do by the power of God carry on a holy life upon the encouragements of the promises of the gospel.

(2.) Such as is governed by the respects of the other world. When we are patient and joyful under the cross, and full of hope and comfort in great straits, and delight in our work, which the world hateth and discountenanceth, and hope against hope, and live in the promises: Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' Then we justify wisdom, and commend our faith to others. God was angry with Moses and Aaron: Num. xx. 12, 'Because ye believed not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel.' We are not only firmly to believe ourselves, but to sanctify him in the eyes of others; and that is done by the labour of our faith, the patience of our hope, our joyfulness and delight in God when we have but little in hand, and the readiness of our obedience even under deep sufferings. When the Thessalonians had received the word in much assurance and much affliction, and much joy in the Holy Ghost, the apostle telleth, 1 Thes. i. 5-7, They were 'ensamples to all that believed in Achaia and Macedonia,' and from them 'sounded out the word of God to other places.'

Thus we propagate our faith, and commend the truth of God to others. The life of faith is a glorious thing, but the life of sense or reason hath no glory in it, or a life carried on merely upon external probabilities. When we can condemn this world, both the good and evil things of it, in hopes of a better, and part with all that is dear to us in this world upon the conscience of our duty, then we justify wisdom.

(3.) By an exact purity and holiness, or a full conformity to all God's precepts and institutes, and by a faithful discharging all duties to God and men. Every true Christian should be a transcript of his religion: 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit.' An epistle is that wherein a man hath written his mind; our conversations should be religion exemplified, a real sermon: Phil. ii. 16, 'Holding forth the word of life.' The wax hath an impression and stamp left upon it according to what is engraven upon the seal. Then we honour religion when the impression and print of it is left upon our hearts and lives, and we are cast into this mould. More particularly, duties of relations, which are visible and easily observed, justify and honour religion: Titus ii. 10, and 1 Peter ii. 15, 'So is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' These conduce to the good of human societies, are most regarded, and make the ways of God amiable. Thus how wisdom is to be justified.

I now come to show you—

2. Why.

[1.] Because of the charge that is put upon us to testify for God, and justify his ways: Isa. xliii. 10, 'Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord.' They that are most acquainted with God can most witness for him. So wisdom's children can most justify her. They are acquainted with her promises and precepts, and have experience of the virtue and power of them in comforting and changing the heart. A report of a report is a cold thing; they that have felt somewhat in their hearts, that which they have seen and felt they can speak of. The world needeth some witnesses for God, some testimony and preparative inducement to invite them to embrace the ways of God. Miracles served for that use heretofore: Acts v. 32, 'And we are his witnesses of those things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.' And in the place of miracles, there succeeded good conversation, or the wonderful effects of his Spirit. Grace in the heart and lives of his children, this is apt to beget wonder, as miracles did, 1 Peter iv. 4. When they can renounce the lusts which most are mastered by, and grow dead to worldly interests, live in the world above the world, in the flesh contrary to the flesh. A miracle strikes a little wonderment at first, but this sinketh and soaketh to the heart. When men are so strictly holy, so ravishingly heavenly, and bear up upon the hopes and encouragements of the other world, and are so conscientious in all duties to God and man, you show that religion is not a notion or an imagination.

[2.] Wisdom deserveth to be justified by us. What is there in all the Christian religion but what is justifiable, or that we should be ashamed of? Is it the hopes of it? The hopes of it are such as are

fit to be propounded to man, sought after by all the world, but nowhere discovered with such certainty and distinctness as in the gospel. Nothing doth refine and enoble the heart so much as these hopes. The heavenly spirit, that can support itself with the hopes of an unseen glory, is the only true sublime spirit; an earthly spirit is a base spirit, so a sensual, the dregs of mankind. Amongst men, the ambitious, who aspire to crowns and kingdoms, and aim at perpetual fame by their heroic virtues and exploits, are judged persons of far greater gallantry than covetous muckworms or brutish epicures; yet they are poor, base-spirited people in their highest thoughts and designs to that noble and divine spirit which worketh in the breast of those who sincerely and heartily seek heavenly things. For what is the honour of the world to approbation with God, temporal trifles to an everlasting kingdom? Is it the way and means, the first, the terms of settling our souls in the way of faith and repentance? What more rational? Should we return to our creator's service without acknowledging our offence in straying, or humbling ourselves for our errors, and purposing for the future to live in his love and obedience? Or can we expect mercy without returning? Reason will say our case is not compassionate. Or should God quit his law without satisfaction? Or should we not own our benefactor, the person satisfying? Certainly there is nothing more reasonable. So also for new obedience. Therefore wisdom deserveth to be justified by us.

[3.] Those that condemn wisdom, yet do in some measure at the same time justify it. They condemn it with their tongues, but justify it with their consciences: they hate and fear strictness: Mark vi. 20, 'Herod feared John, because he was a just man and a holy, and observed him.' They scoff at it with their tongues, but have a fear of it in their consciences: they revile at it while they live, but what mind are they of when they come to die? Then all will speak well of a holy life, and the strictest obedience to the laws of God: Num. xxiii. 10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;' and Mat. xxv. 8, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.' Oh that they had a little of that holiness and strictness which they scoffed at, whilst they were pursuing their lusts! How will they desire to die? As carnal and careless sinners, or as mortified saints? They approve it *in thesi*, and condemn it *in hypothesi*. All the opposers and scoffers at godliness, within the pale of the visible church, have the same Bible, baptism, creed, and pretend to believe in the same God and Christ, which they own with those whom they oppose. All the difference is, the one are real Christians, the other are nominal; some profess at large, others practise what they profess; the one have a religion to talk of, the other to live by; they approve it in the form, but hate it in the power. A picture of Christ that is drawn by a painter they like, and the forbidden image of God made by a carver they will reverence and honour, and be zealous for; but the image of God framed by the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful, and described in the lives of the heavenly and the sanctified, this they scorn and scoff at.

[4.] If we do not justify religion, we justify the world. It must needs be so, for these two are opposites, the carnal world and wisdom:

the carnal world must be condemned, and religion justified, or religion will be condemned and the world justified. Some condemn the world: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' Some justify the world, as Israel justified Sodom: Ezek. xvi. 51, 'But thou hast multiplied thy abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.' Their sin seemeth more excusable; you either upbraid their security and carelessness, or countenance it by your own practice; your seriousness is a real rebuke to the carnal world; your working out your salvation in fear and trembling upbraideth their security and carelessness; your rejoicing in God condemneth their carnal delight. When you are troubled about a vain thought, and are watchful against a light word, you condemn them for their looseness and wallowing in all filthiness: but if not, you justify the world, and harden the wicked in their prejudices, and cause them to hold up their course with the greater pretence. When you are wrathful, proud, sensual, turbulent, self-seeking, you are an occasion of stumbling unto them. Cyprian, in his book *DE DUPLICI MARTYRIO*, bringeth in the heathens thus speaking:—*Ecce qui jactant se redemptos à tyrannide Sathane, qui predicant se mortuos mundo, nihilo minus vincuntur à cupiditatibus suis, quam nos quos dicunt teneri sub regno Sathane. Quid prodest illis baptismus, quid prodest Spiritus Sanctus, cujus arbitrio dicunt se temperari?* &c.—'Behold those that boast themselves to be redeemed from the tyranny of the devil, to be dead to the world, to have crucified the flesh: they are overcome by their base and brutish lusts, even as we are, whom they account to be still under the kingdom of the devil. What doth their baptism profit them? what the Holy Ghost, whose direction they profess to live by? Why should we trouble ourselves about changing our course, which is as good as theirs?' So in Salvian's time, the heathens were wont to upbraid the Christians thus: *Ubi est Catholica lex quam credunt? Ubi sunt pietatis, et castitatis exempla que discunt? Evangelia legunt et impudici sunt. Apostolos audiunt, et inebriantur, Christum sequuntur, et capiunt, &c.*—'They talk of a holy Christ, and yet are unjust, unclean, wrathful, covetous; of a meek patient Christ, and yet are rapacious and violent; of holy apostles, and yet are impure in their conversations.' Our author goeth on thus: *Sancta à Christianis fierent, si Sancta Christus docuisset; aestimari à cultoribus potest iste qui colitur, quomodo bonus magister, cujus tam malos esse videmus discipulos?*—'If their Christ were a holy, meek Christ, they would be better,' &c. And as carnal men now speak, For all their godliness and religion that they talk of, our life, and course, and dealings are as good, and honest, and justifiable as theirs.' Thus the wicked are justified in their way.

[5.] Christ will one day justify all his sincere followers before men, and angels, and devils: Luke xii. 8, 'Whosoever shall confess me, him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God.' Let us justify his ways, and he will justify us, and our faith at length shall be found to praise, and glory, and honour. Christ will then wipe off

all the aspersions which be cast upon the children of wisdom for godliness-sake, as faction, pride, singularity, hypocrisy; and that which was branded with such ignominious titles, will then be found to be the very wisdom of God.

[6.] Because of the necessity of justifying wisdom in the times we live in. It is said, 2 Peter iii. 3, 'In the last time there shall come scoffers and mockers, walking after their own lusts.' The last days shall be full of these profane scoffers. While truths were new, and the exercises of the Christian religion lovely, there was great concord and seriousness amongst the professors of the gospel, and then profane scoffers were rare and unfrequent. Before men's senses were benumbed with the customary use of religious duties, the notions of God were fresh and lively upon their hearts; but afterwards, when the profession of Christianity grew into a form and national interest, and men were rather made Christians by the chance of their birth than choice and rational convictions, then the church was much pestered with this kind of cattle. Especially now are they rife among us, who live in the dregs of Christianity, when men are grown weary of the name of Christ, and the ancient severity and strictness is much lost, and the memory of those miracles and wonderful effects by which our religion was confirmed is almost worn out, or else questioned by men of subtle wits and a prostituted conscience. Therefore now mockers and men of atheistical spirits swarm everywhere, and it concerneth wisdom's children to justify it, and to maintain its former vigour and power.

The use that we may make is double:—

1. To the enemies of wisdom. Judge not of a holy life, and those that profess it, at a distance and by hearsay, but try. We are not afraid to come to the bar with our enemies: John vii. 24, 'Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.' If men would not be blinded with visible appearance, and the mask of passion, prejudice, and interest, and condemn the people of God as they are represented in a false mirror; judge and spare not, and where you find the true spirit of Christianity, take all leave, we desire no other trial; but speak not against things you know not. Try, and judge as you find, where is the deepest sense of the other world, where the most careful preparation to get thither, the joy of faith, the love of holiness. If Christianity will allow that worldly pomp, that vanity and liberty, which others take, then judge the servants of the Lord as guilty of a foolish niceness, preciseness, and singularity; but if we be baptized into these things, and unquestionably and indispensably bound to them, either renounce your baptism, or forbear your censures, or rather choose this clear and pure way to everlasting glory. If you will not stand to God's word, stand to your own sober moods. We will make you yourselves judges, when you are serious and best able to judge of things, not in your passion, when lusts are stirring. When you are entering the confines of eternity, when conscience is likely to speak truth to you, you will wish then you were one of those poor godly men whom now you count proud, humorous, and factious.

2. To the children of wisdom. Do not scandalise the holy ways of God, but justify them; be neither ashamed of them, nor a shame to them; till the ancient strictness be revived, wisdom will never be justified.

THE FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST MUST EXPECT TROUBLES IN THIS WORLD.

And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto them, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.—LUKE IX. 57–62.

HERE are three stories put together by the evangelist, to teach us in what manner we should address ourselves to follow Christ.

The first is of a scribe that came uncalled, but his heart was not right with God, having a temporal bias upon it.

The second is of one called, ver. 59. Christ saith, ‘Follow me.’ But he would first cherish, then bury, his dying father. But Christ would have no delays, but presently sets him about his ministry and service in the gospel. This, upon the authority of Clemens Alexandrinus, who received it upon ancient tradition, is supposed to be Philip.

A third offereth himself to follow Christ; but first he would take his farewell at home, and compose matters in his family. But when we set our faces Godward, there is no looking back; there must be no more consulting with flesh and blood; the divine instinct must be obeyed speedily, and wholly, and Christ followed without reserves and conditions.

Of these in their order.

I begin with the first: ‘And it came to pass, as they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,’ &c.

In which words observe:—

1. The time: ‘It came to pass, as they went on the way, a certain man said to him.’

2. A resolution professed: *Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

3. Christ's reply: *And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

1. The time. In Mat. viii. 19, it is when Christ had a mind to retire, and had declared his purpose to go into the desert; in Luke, when he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. Both may agree; the one more immediately, the other more remotely; first to the desert, then to Jerusalem. About that time, a certain man, seeing Christ about to remove from the place where he then was, offereth himself to be one of his disciples. This certain man is by St Matthew said to be a scribe. Men of that rank and order had usually a male talent¹ against the gospel, and are frequently coupled with the pharisees, men covetous and of a bitter spirit. This man seeing Christ did great miracles, and hoping that he would set up a temporal kingdom, he puts in for a place betimes that he might share in the honours of it.

2. Here is a resolution professed: 'Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.' Where take notice—

[1.] Of the ready forwardness of the scribe. He was not called by Christ, but offered himself of his own accord.

[2.] Observe the largeness of the offer, and unboundedness of it, 'whithersoever;' as indeed it is our duty to follow Christ through thick and thin. In the Revelation, Christ's undefiled company are described to be such as 'follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,' Rev. xiv. 4; that is, obeyed him, though to their great peril and loss. Well, then, here is readiness, here is largeness; it is well if all be sincere. Therefore let us see—

3. Christ's answer and reply: 'And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' By the tenor of Christ's answer, you may know what ails him, and on what foot he limped; for this is spoken either by way of preparation to enable him to keep his resolution, or rather by way of probation, to try the truth and strength of it; whether it were sincere and sound; yea or nay: as the young man was tried, Mark x. 21, 'One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, and take up thy cross, and follow me. But he went away sad at that saying.' So here, we hear no more of this scribe; our Lord knew how to discover hypocrites. Two things were defective in this resolution:—

[1.] It was sudden and rash, not weighing the difficulties. They that rashly leap into a profession, usually fall back at the first trial. Therefore we must sit down and count the charges, Luke xiv. 28.

[2.] There was a carnal aim in it. He minded his own profit and honour; therefore Christ in effect telleth him, You had best consider what you do, for following of me will be far from advancing any temporal interest of yours. The scribe was leavened with a conceit of a worldly kingdom, and had an eye to some temporal advantage;

¹ See note on page 90.—Ed.

therefore Christ telleth him plainly, There was no worldly ease and riches to be expected from him; and so, *Non repulit volentem; sed fingentem prodidit*—‘He did not discourage a willing follower, but discover a worldly hypocrite,’ saith Chrysologus.

The doctrine we learn from hence is this:—

They that will sincerely follow Christ, must not look for any great matters in the world, but rather prepare themselves to run all hazards with him.

This is evident:—

1. From Christ's own example; and the same mind should be in all his followers: John xvii. 16, ‘They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.’ Our estranging of our hearts from the world is an evidence of our conformity to Christ. Christ passed through the world to sanctify it as a place of service; but his constant residence was not here, to fix it as a place of rest: and all that are Christ's are alike affected. We pass through as strangers, but are not at home as inhabitants or dwellers; and if we have little of the world's favour, it is enough if any degree of service for God.

2. From the nature of his kingdom. His kingdom is not of this world, John xviii. 3, 6. It is not a kingdom of pomp, but a kingdom of patience. Here we suffer with Christ, hereafter we reign with him. The comforts are not earthly, or the good things of this world, but heavenly—the good things of the world to come. This was the scribe's mistake.

3. From the spirit of Christ. His spirit is given us to draw us off from this world to that which is to come: 1 Cor. ii. 12, ‘Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which are given us of God.’ The spirit of the world is that which possesseth and governeth worldly men, and inclineth them to a worldly happiness; this is in all men naturally. Corrupt nature doth sufficiently prompt and incline men to look after the honours, and pleasures, and profits of this world. James iii. 15, the apostle, when he would describe the wisdom which is not from above, he saith, that it is ‘earthly, sensual, devilish; this wisdom cometh not from above.’ Present things are known by sense, and known easily, and known by all. But there is a divine Spirit put into Christians, which inclineth them to things to come, and worketh graces suitable: some of which give us a sight of the truth of those things, as faith; some, a taste or an esteem of them, as love; some an earnest desire, as hope. This Spirit cometh from God and Christ, Eph. i. 17, 18. And without these graces we can have no sight nor desire of heavenly things: 1 Cor. ii. 14, ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ They think it is folly to hazard present conveniencies for future rewards, and the truest wisdom to live in ease, plenty, and honour. On the contrary, the divine Spirit convinceth us that there is no such business of importance as looking after eternal life; that all the gay things of sense are but so many May-games to heaven's happiness; the terrible things of the world are but as a flea-biting to hell torments; and the pudder and business of the world but as a little childish sport in

comparison of working out our salvation with fear and trembling. This Spirit helpeth us to overcome the world, and grow dead to the world, that we may be alive to God; to look for no great things here, but in the world to come. This Spirit is that which we should all labour after.

4. From the covenant of Christ. It is one thing implied in the gospel covenant, when our Lord Jesus sets down the terms: Mat. xvi. 24, he saith, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me;' that is, we must so believe in Christ, and be persuaded of the truth of his heavenly doctrine, that we are willing to deny our wit and will, natural interests and affections, and to lose all rather than lose our souls, or miss of the happiness he offereth us. Nay, taking up the cross is so considerable a part of our resignation to Christ and trust in him, that in Luke it is said, chap. ix. 23, let him 'take up his cross daily.' How daily? There are fair days as well as foul, and the face of heaven doth not always look sad and lowering. What is the meaning, then, of that, 'Let him take up his cross *daily*'? I answer first, it must be meant of daily expectation. The first day that we begin to think of being serious Christians we must reckon of the cross, we know not how soon it may come. If God seeth fit to spare you, yet you must be prepared for it; stand ready, as porters in the streets, to take up the burden which you must carry. Daily inure your thoughts to the cross, that the grievousness and bitterness of it may be somewhat allayed. St Paul saith, Acts xxi. 13, 'I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;' and Eph. vi. 15, one great piece of the spiritual armour is, 'the preparation of the gospel of peace;' and 1 Peter iii. 15, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:' be ready in point of courage. Now this is necessary, because we are so apt to promise great things to ourselves, and indulge the security of the flesh by putting off the thoughts of the cross; but evils familiarised are the less burdensome, and by renewing our resolution daily, we are the more fortified. Secondly, to show the continuance of our conflicts, as if every day there were some new exercise for our faith and patience. We are not to prescribe to God how long he shall afflict us, nor with how much affliction he shall exercise us; no, though it were all the days of our lives, we must be content; it is but a moment to eternity. We must take up our cross till God remove it. Some promise fair to be contented with a naked Christ though they run all hazards, because they hope God will not take them at their words; but as soon as the cross cometh, wriggle, shift, and distinguish themselves out of their duty; or else, if it be long and frequently return, quite tire and are faint. So that 'Take it up daily,' is as much as 'Let patience have its perfect work,' James i. 4. If day after day we must be troubled, we must be content to be troubled. If God send it daily, we must take it up daily. Well, then, in the new covenant we undertook this; the new covenant doth comprise this as a clear branch and part of it. Christ telleth us the worst at first; the devil showeth us the bait but hideth the hook. The world useth to invite its followers with promises of honour and riches, but Christ telleth us of the cross, and that partly

to discourage hypocrites, who cheapen and taste, but will not buy, and also to prepare sound believers for the nature and temper of his kingdom, which lieth in another world. But here by the way we are to undergo several trials, and therefore we should be armed with a mind to endure them, whether they come or no. God never intended Isaac should be sacrificed, but yet he will have Abraham tried.

Use 1. Is information. With what thoughts we should take up the stricter profession of Christianity—namely, with expectations of the cross. Christ will try us, and the world will hate us; therefore let us not flatter ourselves with an easy passage to heaven. Many think they may be good Christians, yet live a life of pomp, and ease, and pleasure, free from all trouble and molestation. This is all one as if a soldier going to the wars should promise himself a continual peace or truce with the enemy, or as a mariner undertaking a long voyage should only think of fair weather and a calm sea, without waves and storms; so irrational is it for a Christian to look for nothing but rest and peace here upon earth. No; a Christian had need think of this to a double end, that he may be a mortified and a resolute man. If he be not mortified and dead to the world, he can never undergo the variety of conditions which his religion will expose him unto, and say with the apostle, Phil. iv. 13, 14, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me; notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction.' And there is usually in us a propensity and inclination either to honours, riches, or pleasures, and the devil will work upon that weakness, Heb. xii. 13. That which is lame is soon turned out of the way. If we have any weak part in our souls, there the assault will be most strong and fierce. A garrison that looketh to be besieged, will take care to fortify the weak places where there is any suspicion of an attack; so should a Christian mortify every corrupt inclination lest it betray him, be it love of honour, pleasure, or profit. He had need be also a well resolved man, well shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, or else in hard way he will soon founder and halt. If you be Christians indeed, you will soon see the necessity of it. Pure nature itself is against bearing the cross. Christ showed the innocent affections of human nature in his own person; it recoiled a little at the thought of the dreadful cup: Heb. v. 7, 'Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplication, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.' And to us it is much more grievous to suffer: Heb. xii. 11, 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' But corrupt nature will certainly draw back, unless we be armed with great resolution; for after we have launched out into the deep with Christ, we shall be ready to run ashore again upon every storm, unless we be resolved; therefore you need to think of the cross to breed this resolution. If Christians be not mortified, they trip up their own heels; if they be not resolved and prepared for all weathers, they take up religion rather as a walk for recreation than as a journey or serious passage to heaven. Therefore we must all of us prepare for sufferings in this world, looking

for no great matters here. We must expect persecutions, crosses, losses, wants, defamation, injuries; and we must get that furniture of heart and mind which may support and comfort us in such a day of trial.

2. It informeth us what fools they are that take up religion upon a carnal design of ease and plenty, and will follow Christ to grow rich in the world; as this scribe thought to make a market of the gospel, as Simon Magus did, Acts viii. 19, 20; he thought to make a gain by the power of miracles. There are conveniences which religion affordeth in peaceable times, but the very profession at other times will engage us in great troubles; and therefore men do but make way for the shame of a change and other mischiefs, that hope for temporal commodities by the profession of the gospel. There are few that are willing to follow a naked Christ upon unseen encouragements, but this must be; for they that aim to seek the world in and by their religion are disclaimed by our Lord as unfit to be his servants, and indeed sorry servants they are who cannot live without honour, ease, and plenty; therefore turn and wind to shift the cross, put many a fallacy upon their own souls: Gal. vi. 12, 'As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, compel you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.' If that be their only motive, they are apt to desert or pervert Christ's cause. Again, the apostle telleth us of some 'who are enemies to the cross of Christ, whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things,' Phil. iii. 18, 19. Men that have no love to God, but only serve their fleshly appetites, and look no higher than honours, riches, pleasures, and applause with men, will never be faithful to Christ. They are such as study to save themselves not from sin, but from danger, and accordingly accommodate themselves to every interest. As the men of Keilah dealt with David,—entertained him for a while, but when Saul pursued him were resolved to betray him; they would come into no danger for David's sake. So they deal with Christ and religion. They profess Christ's name, but will suffer nothing for him. If they may enjoy him and his ways with peace, and quietness, and conveniency, and commodity to themselves, well and good; but if troubles arise for the gospel's sake, immediately they fall off; not only these summer-friends of the gospel, but the most, yea, the best, have a secret lothness and unwillingness to condescend to a condition of trouble or distress. This is a point of hard digestion, and most stomachs will not bear it.

3. It informs us what an unlikely design they have in hand who would bring the world and Christ fairly to agree, or reconcile their worldly advantages and the profession of the gospel. And when they cannot frame the world and their conveniences to the gospel, do fashion the gospel to the world, and the carnal courses of it. It is pity these men had not been of the Lord's council when he first contrived and preached the gospel, that they might have helped him to some discreet and middle courses, that might have served turn for heaven and earth too. But do they what they will or can, the way is narrow that leadeth to life, and they must take Christ's yoke upon them if they would find rest for their souls. They will find that pure and strict religion will be displeasing to the ungodly and the carnal; that the enmity between the two seeds will remain, and the flesh and the world must not always be

pleased ; that there is more danger of the world smiling than frowning. As to the church in general (in Constantine's time), *Ecclesia facta est opibus major, virtutibus minor* ; so to believers in particular, that the heart is corrupted by the love of the world, and men never grow so dull and careless of their souls as when they have most of the world at will ; and that we are more awakened, and have a more lively sense of eternal life, when under the cross, than when we live in the greatest ease and pomp ; that Christ permitteth troubles, not for want of love to his people, or want of power to secure their peace, but for holy and wise ends to promote their good.

Use 2. Is instruction. When you come to enter into covenant with Christ, consider—

1. Christ knoweth what motives do induce you : John ii. 25, ‘ He needeth not that any should testify of man, for he knoweth what is in man.’ Some believed, but Jesus committed not himself unto them ; he knoweth whether there be a real bent or carnal bias upon the heart.

2. If the heart be false in making the covenant, it will never hold good. An error in the first concoction will never be mended in the second : Deut. v. 29, ‘ Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.’ So Matt. xiii. 21 ; ‘ The stony ground received the word with joy, ‘ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth but for a while ; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.’ Some temporal thing sitteth too near and close to the heart ; you are never upright with God till a relation to God and a right to heaven do incomparably weigh down all temporal troubles, and you can rejoice more in the testimonies of God, fatherly love, and right to eternal life, than in outward things : Ps. iv. 6, 7, ‘ There be many that say, Who will show us any good ? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.’ David speaks in his own name, and in the name of all those that were alike minded with himself. And Luke x. 20, ‘ Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’

3. That Christ cannot but take it ill that we are so delicate and tender of our interests, and so impatient under the cross, when he endured so willingly such great things for our sakes. We cannot lose for him so much as he hath done for us ; and if he had been unwilling to suffer for us, what had been our state and condition to all eternity ? We should have suffered eternal misery. If you would not have Christ of another mind, why will you be of another mind ? 1 Peter iv. 1, ‘ Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind ; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.’

4. If you be not dead to the things of the world, you are not acquainted with the virtue and power of Christ's cross, and have not a true sense of Christianity, cannot glory in it as the most excellent profession in the world : Gal. vi. 14, ‘ God forbid that I should glory,

save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' You are in a dangerous temptation to atheism.

5. We are gainers by Christ if we part with all the world for his sake, Mark x. 29, 30 ; therefore no loss should seem too great in obeying his will. Certainly a man cannot be a loser by God.

6. All worldly things were confiscated by the fall, and we can have no spiritual right to them till we receive a new grant by Jesus Christ, who is the heir of all things. *Dominium politicum fundatur in providentia, evangelicum in gratia* : 1 Cor. iii. 23, 'All things are yours, because you are Christ's, and Christ is God's;' and 1 Tim. iv. 3, 'God hath made them to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.' So that what we enjoy is by the mere favour of the Redeemer, and should be parted with again when he calleth for it.

Thus much for the first point.

A second doctrine or point here offered is :—

The great poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beasts and fowls have places to shelter themselves in, but Christ had no certain place of residence or dwelling wherein to rest. He doth not say kings have palaces, but I have none ; rich men have houses and lands, but I have none. But he saith, 'Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.'

The reasons of this are these following :—

1. To increase the value and merit of his satisfaction. Our sins did deserve this, his whole humiliation, and every degree of it ; and Christ was content to suffer it for the ransom of our souls. It is clear this, that all his condescension conduced to make up the remedy more full ; and it is evident by the apostle that it giveth us a right to a larger allowance of grace : 2 Cor. viii. 9, 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.'

2. Christ came to offer the kingdom of heaven, and the good things of the other world, and to draw men's minds and hearts thither. And, therefore, that he might appear a fit teacher of the world, by his own example, he taught us contempt of outward things. If he had preached up heavenly-mindedness, and lived himself in pomp and fulness, the people would not have regarded his words. 'Alexander, when his army grew sluggish, because laden with the spoils of their enemies ; to free them from this incumbrance, commanded all his own carriages to be set on fire ; that when they saw the king himself devote his rich treasures to the flame, they might not murmur if their mite and pittance were consumed also.' So if Christ had taught us contempt of the world, and had not given us an instance of it in his person, his doctrine had been less powerful and effectual.

3. To season and sanctify a mean estate and degree of life, when we are called to it by God's providence. Christ's own poverty teacheth us to bear a mean condition well : Mat. x. 25, 'It is enough for a disciple that he be as his master, and a servant as his lord.' Uriah would not give way to any softness, while Joab his general was in the

field: 2 Sam. xi. 11, 'The ark and Israel are in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are in the open fields; shall I go into my house and eat and drink?' &c. We must be contented to fare as Christ did; we cannot be poorer than Christ, as poor as we are; for the poorest have some place of shelter, but he had none whereon to lay his head.

1. Let this, then, enforce the former lesson, and teach us contempt of the world, and the riches and greatness thereof. It is some argument that the vilest are capable thereof, as well as the most generous and best deserving, and oftener it happeneth to be so. But this is the argument of arguments,—That the Lord Jesus, when he came to instruct the world by his example, he was not one of the rich and voluptuous, but chose a mean estate, as most conducive to his ends.

2. If you be rich, yet be poor in spirit: Mat. v. 3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Let us possess all things as if we possessed them not, 1 Cor. vii. 31. And so James i. 9, 10, 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.' We should be as having nothing, sitting loose from earthly things, considering that shortly we shall be as poor as the poorest, for we can carry nothing away with us.

3. Let us prepare ourselves to entertain poverty; and if it be already come upon us, and God hath reduced us to a mean inferior life, let us have our hearts reconciled and suited to a low estate, so it may be a help to heaven, so we may have the true riches, and may learn to live by faith, though God feedeth us from hand to mouth; so we may imitate Christ and follow him into glory, it is enough for us.

NO EXCUSE AGAINST A SPEEDY OBEYING CHRIST'S CALL.

WE have done with the first instance, of a scribe that came uncalled; we come now to another. This man offereth not himself, but is called by Christ. 'And he said unto another, Follow me,' &c. He was already a disciple at large; for in Matthew it is said, chap. viii. 21, 'Another of his disciples said unto him, Suffer me first to go and bury my father.' He was now called to a nearer and constant attendance on Christ. Clemens Alexandrinus, from an ancient tradition, telleth us this was Philip. But before he complied with this call, he desireth a little delay and respite, until his aged father were dead and buried. Whether his father were already dead, and he would do this last office to see him decently interred, or whether his father were yet living, but not likely long to continue, and he would attend him till his death and funeral, and then follow Christ, as Theophilact thinketh, it is not much material. Clear it is he putteth off the matter with an excuse. Even the elect do not at first so readily obey the heavenly calling; some of them may put off Christ, but when he intendeth to have

them, he will not be put off so, the importunity of his grace overcoming their unwillingness.

But what was Christ's answer? 'Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God;' that is, leave that office to others who are not designed for this divine and holy employment. It seemeth hard to many that Christ should deny him to do this little office of love to his father, and they know not the meaning of that expression, 'Let the dead bury their dead.' Therefore—

1. Let us open the expression.

2. Show you what Christ teacheth us by this refusal.

1. For the expression. It may be used either proverbially or allusively. Proverbially; let one dead man bury another—that is, let them lie unburied rather than my service be neglected; or, there will not want others that will remove the dead out of their sight: and it is our wisdom to let go things unnecessary, and mind the main. Or else it is used allusively to the law of the Nazarites and the priests of the Old Testament. The law of the Nazarites is in Num. vi. 6-8, 'All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord;' that is, he must rather follow his vow in honouring the Lord, than to follow natural duty in honouring his dead parents. Now, those whom Christ called especially to follow him were consecrated to that service, as the Nazarite unto the Lord during the days of his separation. And as they might not meddle even with the interment of their parents, so this excuse was frivolous. Or else the allusion might be to the high priests, of whom we read, Deut. xxxiii. 9, 'Who said to his father and his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children.' Some think this hath reference to the Levites' fact, who, being commanded by Moses, killed every man his brother, neighbour, friend, and son, that had sinned in making or worshipping the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 26-29. Rather it is meant of the priest's continual duty, who, by the law, if his father, mother, brother, or child did die, he might not mourn for them, but carry himself as if he did not respect or know them; for God would have them more regard their function or duty in his service than any natural affection whatsoever. The law is, Lev. xxi. 11, 12, 'He shall not go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father or his mother; neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him.' Now Christ alludeth to the law to show the urgency of this present service and employment to which he was consecrated, and the burial of the dead might be left to persons less sacred or more at leisure.

2. The reasons of Christ's refusal. Christ would show hereby—(1.) That all human offices and duties must give place to the duty we owe to God. Duty to parents must be observed, but duty to God must be preferred before that or anything whatsoever. A truth justified by Christ's own example. He began betimes, at twelve years old, when he was dis-

putting with the doctors, and his parents sought for him: Luke ii. 49, 'He said unto them, How is it that you sought me? Wist you not that I must be about my Father's business?' So Mat. xii. 47, 48, when his mother and kindred waited for him, desiring to speak with him, 'He answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?' Obedience to God, and declaring his Father's will, was dearer to him than all relations. Natural and secular respects swayed not with him in comparison of gaining proselytes to heaven; his mother's conference with him was nothing to his Father's service, and teaching the people a more acceptable work than paying a civility to his natural relations. So John ii. 4, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.' His office to which he was sent by God was a matter in which she, though his earthly parent, was not to interpose; God's work must be done in God's own way, time, and method: God hath greater authority over you than all the men in the world. (2.) He would teach us hereby that the ministry requires the whole man, even sometimes the omission of necessary works, much more superfluous: 'Give thyself wholly to these things,' 1 Tim. iv. 15.

The words are now explained; the practical notes are these two:—

First, That nothing in the world is a matter of such great weight as to be a sufficient excuse for not following of Christ.

Secondly, That those who are called to follow Christ should follow him speedily, without interposing any delays.

For the first point, that nothing in the world is a matter of such great weight as to be a sufficient excuse for not following of Christ, I will illustrate it by these considerations:—

1. There are two sorts of men. Some understand not their Lord's will, others have no mind to do it, Luke xii. 47, 48. Some understand not the terms of the gospel; they think to have Christ, and the pleasures of the flesh and the world too. But there are others who understand Christ's terms, but are loth to become Christ's disciples; they know their master's will, but they do not prepare themselves to do it; that is, they do not presently set upon the work, but make so many delays that it plainly appeareth that they are loth to yield to Christ's terms; that is, to turn their backs upon the vanities of the world, and renounce their most pleasing sins, and to take the word for their rule, the Spirit for their guide, and eternal life for their felicity and happiness: to such we now speak.

2. They that have no mind to follow Christ put off the matter with dilatory shifts and excuses. To refuse altogether is more heinous, and therefore they shift it off for a time. *Non vacat* is the pretence—I am not at leisure. *Non placet*, I like it not, is the real interpretation, disposition, and inclination of their hearts, for excuses are always a sign of an unwilling and backward heart. When they should serve God there is still something in the way, some danger, or some difficulty which they are loth to encounter with. As Prov. xxvi. 13, 'The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way, there is a lion in the streets.' Palestine was a land infested with lions, because of the many deserts and thickets that were in it, but being well peopled, they did rarely appear. Now the sluggard taketh this pretence from

thence. If his business lay in the fields, there was a lion in the way ; if his business lay in the towns and cities, there is a lion in the streets, as sometimes, though but rarely, they came into places inhabited and of great resort. Now, if he should go about his business too early, he might meet with a lion in his range and walk before they were retired into their dens. Thus do men alarm themselves with their own foolish fears to excuse their idleness and negligence. So again Prov. xv. 19, 'The way of the slothful is as an hedge of thorns, but the way of the righteous is made plain.' They imagine difficulties and intolerable hardships in a course of godliness : but it is their cowardice and pusillanimous negligence which maketh the ways of God seem hard : they are all comfortable, plain, and easy to the pure and upright heart and willing mind. Come we to the New Testament : Luke xiv. 18-20, 'They all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said, I have bought me a piece of ground, and I must go to see it ; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them ; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and cannot come.' The meaning is, many were invited to everlasting happiness, but they preferred their designs of worldly advantages. Mark, they do not absolutely deny, but make excuse. Excuses are the fruit of the quarrel between conviction and corruption. They are convinced of better things, but being prepossessed and biassed with worldly inclinations, they dare not fully yield nor flatly deny, therefore they choose a middle course, to make excuses. Doing is safe, or preparing ourselves to do, but excusing is but a patch upon a filthy sore, or a poor covering of fig-leaves for a naughty heart.

3. The usual excuses which sinners may, and usually do allege, are these four :—The difficulty of religion, the danger that attendeth it, want of time, and that they have no power or strength to do good.

[1.] For the first. It is troublesome and tedious to flesh and blood to be held to so much duty, and to wean our hearts from things we so dearly love ; and the world thinketh that we are too nice and precise to urge men to such a strict and holy and heavenly life, and less ado will serve the turn.

To this I answer :—

(1.) Diligence is certainly necessary to all that will be saved : Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ;' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.' And, therefore, if you cannot deny the ease and sloth of the flesh, you are wholly unfit for the work of godliness.

(2.) This diligence is no more than needeth, whatever the carnal world thinketh, who leave the boat to the stream, and hope to be accepted with God for a few cold and drowsy devotions, or some superficial righteousness. A painter-stainer will think a painter-limner too curious, because his own work is but a little daubing. The broad way pleaseth the world best, but the narrow way leadeth to life.

(3.) This diligence may be well afforded, considering that eternal life and death is in the case. Life! will you stop a journey for your lives because it is a little tedious, or there is dirt in the way, or the wind bloweth on you, and the like? Since it is for God and heaven, we

should not grudge at a little labour : 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Therefore be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' There is also death in the case. Now, which is better, to take a little profitable pains in godliness, or to endure everlasting torments ? To save a little labour or diligence in the holy life, and run the hazard of being miserable for ever. Which is worst ? The trouble of physic, or the danger of a mortal disease ?

[2.] Another excuse is the danger which attendeth it. It may expose you to great troubles to own God and religion heartily ; and if there be peace abroad, and magistrates countenance religion, yet many times at home a man's greatest foes may be those of his own household, Mat. x. 36. But for the pleasing or displeasing of your relations you must not neglect your duty to God ; as Jerom to Heliodorus, *per calcatum perge patrem*—if thy father lie in the way, tread upon his bowels rather than not come unto Christ. Our Lord hath expressly told us, Mat. x. 37, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' Neither favour nor disfavour of our friends is a just let or impediment to our duty. The advantages we can or are likely to receive from parents are not worthy to be compared with those we expect from God, nor is their authority over us so great as God's is : Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father or mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Though Christianity doth not discharge us from obedience to parents, yet the higher duty must be preferred, namely, obedience to Christ, and loving less is hating.

[3.] Another excuse is, I have no time to mind soul affairs. My distractions in the world are so great, and my course of life is such, that I have no leisure. I answer—Will you neglect God and salvation because you have worldly things to mind ? Whatever your business be, you have a time to eat, and drink, and sleep ; and have you no time to be saved ? Better encroach upon other things than that religion should be cast to the walls or jostled out of your thoughts. David was a king, and he had more distracting cares than most of us have or can have, yet he saith, Ps. cxix. 147, 148, 'I prevented the dawning of the morning ; and cried ; I hoped in thy word. Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I may meditate in thy word ;' and ver. 164, 'Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments.' Do you spend no time in idleness, vain talking, and carnal sports ? and might not this be better employed about heavenly things ? Eph. v. 15, 16, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.' *Vitam non accepimus brevem, sed fecimus, nec inopes temporis, sed prodigi sumus.* God hath not set you about work that he alloweth you no time for, but we waste our time, and then God is straitened. Many poorer than you have time, because they have a heart and will to improve it.

[4.] I have no power or strength to do good. And what will you have us do ? This is the excuse of the idle and naughty servant : Mat. xxv. 24, 'I knew that thou wert a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.' God sets you about work, but giveth you no strength, is your excuse ; but certainly

you can do more than you do, but you will not make trial. God may be more ready with the assistances of his grace than you can imagine. The tired man may complain of the length of the way, but not the lazy, who will not stir a foot. If you did make trial, you would not complain of God, but yourselves, and beg grace more feelingly. In short, you are not able, because you are not willing. And your impotency is increased by evil habits contracted, and long custom in sin.

I now proceed to the fourth consideration.

4. None of these excuses are sufficient for not following of Christ. And that—

[1.] Because of his authority. Who requireth this duty from us, or imposeth it on us? It is the Lord Jesus Christ, to whose sentence we must stand or fall. When he biddeth us follow him, and follow him speedily, to excuse ourselves is to countermand and contradict his authority: it is flat disobedience, though we do not deny the duty, but only shift off and excuse our present compliance; for he is as peremptory for the time and season as for the duty. ‘Now while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts,’ Heb. iii. 7, 8. God standeth upon his authority, and will have a present answer. If he say, *To-day*, it is flat disobedience for us to say, *To-morrow*; or Suffer me first to do this and that business.

[2.] It appeareth from his charge to his messengers. Nothing can take off a minister of the gospel from seeking the conversion and salvation of souls. We cannot plead anything to exempt us from this work. To plead that the people’s hearts are hard, and that the work is difficult and full of danger, will not serve the turn. No; ‘Their blood will I require at thy hands.’ Therefore, all excuses set aside, we must address ourselves to our work. Acts xx. 23, 24: Paul went bound in the spirit, and the Holy Ghost had told him that in every city bonds and afflictions did abide and wait for him; but, saith he, ‘None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so as I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of my Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.’ He was willing and ready to endure what should befall him at Jerusalem, and reckoned nothing of it, nor of loss of life, if he might successfully preach the gospel, and serve Christ faithfully in the office of the ministry. If nothing be an excuse to us, can anything be an excuse to you? Should your souls be nearer and dearer to us than to yourselves?

[3.] It appeareth from the matter of the duty imposed on you, if you consider the excellency and the necessity of it.

To begin first: The excellency. All excuses against obedience to God’s call are drawn from the world and the things that are in the world. Now there is no comparison between the things of the world and following Christ’s counsel, that we may be everlastingly happy. The question will soon be reduced to this, Which is most to be regarded, God or the creature, the body or the soul, eternity or time? The excuses are for the body, for time, for the creature; but the injunctions of duty are for God, for the soul, and for eternity. Sense saith, Favour the flesh: faith saith, Save thy soul; the one is of everlasting consequence, and conduceth to a happiness that hath no end;

the other only for a time: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' One turn of the hand of God separateth the neglected soul from the pampered body, and then whose are all these things?

The necessity: that we may please God and enjoy him for ever. We can never plead for a necessity of sinning; for a man is never driven to those straits, whether he shall sin more or less; but sometimes duties come in competition—duty to a father, and a special injunction of Christ's to follow him; one must be subordinated to the other, and the most necessary must take place; the less give place to the greater. Now, this is much more true of those things which are usually pleaded by way of hesitancy, or as a bar to our duty, as our worldly and carnal satisfactions. But you will say, we must avoid poverty and shame. But it is more necessary to avoid damnation; not to preserve our temporal interests, but to seek after eternal life: Luke x. 42, 'One thing is necessary.'

[4.] It appeareth from the nature of the work. To follow Christ is not to give to him as much as the flesh can spare, but wholly to devote yourselves to his service, to sell all for the pearl of great price, Mat. xiii. 46. And you are obliged to walk so, that all may give way to the glory of God, and the service of your redeemer. If He will employ us thus and thus, we must not contradict it, or plead anything by way of excuse.

Use. Do not neglect your duty for vain excuses. The excusing humour is very rife and very prejudicial to us, for the sluggard hath a high conceit of his own allegations: Prov. xxvi. 16, 'The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.' In the Eastern countries their council usually consisted of seven, as we read of the seven princes of Media and Persia, Esther i. 14. Therefore let us a little disprove this vain conceit. The sluggard thinketh himself so wise that all others are but giddy and crazy-brained people, that are too nice and scrupulous, and make more ado with religion than needeth. But can a man do too much for God and heaven? 1 Thes. ii. 12. The sluggard thinketh it is a venture, and he may venture on one side as well as the other; but it is a thousand to one against him in the eye of reason, put aside faith: in doubtful cases, the surest way is to be taken. But to draw it to a more certain determination.

1. Nothing is a reasonable excuse which God's word disproveth, for the scriptures were penned to discover the vain sophisms which are in the hearts of men: Heb. iv. 12, 'For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart;' to discover the affections of a sensual heart, however palliated with the pretences of a crafty understanding. Certainly, our private conceits must not be lifted up against the wisdom of God, nor can a creature be justified in going against his maker's will. Nothing can be reason which the God of wisdom contradicts and calleth folly: Jer. viii. 9, 'Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?'

2. Nothing can be pleaded as a reasonable excuse which your consciences are not satisfied is reason. Men consult with their affections rather than with their consciences. Conscience would draw other conclusions, therefore our excuses are usually our aggravations: Luke xix. 22, 'Out of thy own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.' The master expected increase, therefore he should have done what he could: Job xv. 6, 'Thine own mouth condemneth thee; yea, thine own lips testify against thee.' That is the strongest conviction which ariseth from a man's own bosom; that is the reason why there are so many appeals to conscience in scripture: 1 Cor. x. 15, 'I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.' Your own hearts tell you ye ought to be better, to mind God more, and the world less, to be more serious in preparing for your eternal estate.

3. Nothing can be a reasonable excuse which reflects upon God, as if he had made a hard law which none can keep, especially if urged against the law of grace; this is to say, the ways of God are not equal, therefore there can be no excuse for the total omission of necessary duties.

4. No excuse can be reasonable, but what you dare plead at the bar of Christ; for that is reason which will go for reason at last. Then the weight of all pleas will be considered, and all negligent persons that have not improved the light of nature, or have not obeyed the gospel, will be left without excuse. What doth it avail prisoners to set up a mock sessions among themselves to acquit one and condemn another? He is in a good condition that shall be excused in the last judgment, and in a bad condition that shall be condemned then.

I now proceed to the second point.

Secondly, That those who are called to follow Christ, should follow him speedily, without interposing any delays.

Consider—

1. Ready obedience is a good evidence of a sound impression of grace left upon our hearts. There is a slighter conviction which breedeth a sense of our duty, but doth not so strongly urge us to the performance of it. And there is a more sound conviction, which is accompanied with a prevailing efficacy, and then all excuses and delays are laid aside, and men kindly comply with God's call: Cant. i. 4, 'Draw me, I will run after thee.' *Run*; it noteth an earnest and speedy motion; the fruit of the powerful attraction of the Spirit: Mat. iv. 20, 'They straightway left their nets and followed him.' The scoffing atheistical world thinketh it easiness and fond credulity, but it argueth a sound impression. The impulsions of the Holy Spirit work in an instant, for they carry their own evidence with them: Gal. i. 16, 'Immediately I consulted not with flesh and blood.' *In divinis, non est deliberandum*. When our call is clear, there needeth no debate or demurring upon the matter.

2. The work goeth on the more kindly when we speedily obey the sanctifying motions of the Spirit, and the present influence and impulsion of his grace. You have not such an advantage of a warm conviction afterward: when the waters are stirred then we must put in for a cure, John v. 4. To adjourn and put it off, as Felix did, Acts xxiv. 25, doth damp and cool the work—you quench this holy fire; or

to stand hucking with God, as Pharaoh did, the work dieth on your hand.

3. There is hazard in delaying and putting off such a business of concernment as conversion to God. Certainly this is a business of the greatest concernment, and the greatest work should be first thought of : Mat. vi. 33, ' Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof ; ' and most thought of : ' Ps. xxvii. 4, ' One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord.' Now, if we delay, it is left upon great hazards. Life is uncertain, for you know not what a day may bring forth : Prov. xxvii. 1, ' Boast not thyself of to-morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' If God had given leave (as princes sometimes in a proclamation, for all to come in within a certain day) ; so if God had said, Whosoever doth not repent till thirty or forty years be out, there were no great hazard till the time were expired, we might entertain sin a little while longer. But we know not the day of our death, therefore we should get God to bless us ere we die. A new call is uncertain, 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. It may be he will treat with us no more in such a warm and affectionate manner. If he call, yet not vouchsafe such assistances of his grace, ' if, peradventure, God will give them repentance unto life,' 2 Tim. ii. 25. It is a hazard or uncertain if the Spirit of God will put another thought of turning into your hearts, when former grace is despised : Isa. lv. 6, ' Call upon the Lord while he is near, and seek him while he may be found.'

4. Consider the mischiefs of delaying. Every day we contract a greater indisposition of embracing God's call. We complain now it is hard ; if it be hard to-day, it will be harder to-morrow, when God is more provoked, and sin more strengthened, Jer. xiii. 23. Yea, it may be, our natural faculties are decayed, the vigour of our youth exhausted. When the tackling is spoiled and the ship rotten, it is an ill time to put to sea : Eccles. xii. 1, ' Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth.' And besides, consider the suspicion that is upon a late repentance. The most profane would have God for their portion at last.

5. The reasons for delay are inconsiderable. Suppose it be our satisfaction in our present estate. The pleasures of sin are sweet, and we are loth to forego them ; but those pleasures must one day be renounced, or you are for ever miserable. Why not now ? Sin will be as sweet to the carnal appetite hereafter as now it is ; and salvation is dispensed upon the same terms. You cannot be saved hereafter with less ado, or bring down Christ and heaven to a lower rate. If this be a reason now, it will for ever lie as a reason against Christ, and against conversion. The laws of Christianity are unalterable, always the same, and your hearts not like to be better. Or is it that you are willing now, but you have no leisure ? when such encumbrances are over, you shall get your hearts into better posture. Oh no ; it is hypocrisy to think you are willing when you delay. Nothing now hindereth but a want of will ; and when God treateth with thee about thine eternal peace, it is the best time ; but God always cometh to the sinner unseasonably in his own account. But consider, it was the devil that said, Mat. viii. 29, ' Art thou come hither to torment us before the time ? '

The use is, to reprove that dallying with God in the work of conversion, which is so common and so natural to us.

The causes of it are:—

1. Unbelief, or want of a due sense and sight of things to come. If men were persuaded of eternal life and eternal death, they would not stand hovering between heaven and hell, but presently engage their hearts to draw nigh to God. But we cannot see afar off: 2 Peter i. 9, ‘He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.’

2. Another cause is security. They do not take these things into their serious thoughts. Faith sheweth it is sure, and consideration bringeth it near: Amos vi. 3, ‘Ye put far away the evil day.’ Things at a distance do not move us. We should pray, and preach, and practise as if death were at our backs, and remember that all our security dependeth upon the slender thread of a frail life.

3. Another cause is averseness of heart; they have no mind to these things: Rom. viii. 7, ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God.’ The heart is inclined to worldly vanities, set against God and godliness. Now let us consider the heinousness of this sin. It is ingratitude and unthankfulness for God’s eternal love: Ps. ciii. 17, ‘The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.’ It is also disingenuity; we would be heard presently: Ps. cii. 2, ‘Lord, hear me speedily.’ To-day is the season of mercy, to-morrow of duty. We are always in haste, would have the Lord to tarry for our sinful leisure, when we will not tarry his holy leisure. It is also base self-love; we can be content to dishonour God longer, provided at length we may be saved. Lastly, it is great injustice to keep God out of his right; he hath been long enough kept out of his right already: 1 Peter iv. 3, ‘The time past of our life may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles.’ Therefore, let us no longer delay, but speedily address ourselves to entertain the motions of the Holy Spirit.

LOOKING BACK ILL BECOMES THOSE THAT HAVE SET THEIR FACE HEAVENWARD.

WE are now come to the third instance, wherein we are instructed how to avoid miscarriages in following Christ.

The first instance teaches us to beware of hasty and hypocritical profession, which is the fruit of resolution without deliberation, or sitting down and counting the charges; this was the fault of the scribe.

The second instance cautioneth us against dilatory shifts and excuses. The most necessary business must not be put off upon any pretence whatsoever.

The third instance forbiddeth all thoughts of compounding, or hopes to have Christ and the world too; as this man hoped first to secure his worldly interest, and then to follow Christ at leisure. Whether this man were called, or uncalled, it appeareth not. It is

only said in the text, 'Another also said:' the middle person was only called by Christ; the other two offered themselves. The first was forward, upon a mistaken ground, to share the honours of the kingdom of the Messiah, which he supposed to be temporal. This last offereth himself, but his heart was not sufficiently loosened from the world. From both we see that 'it is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but God that sheweth mercy,' Rom. ix. 16; for neither of those that offered themselves are accepted.

In the words you may observe:—

1. His request.

2. Christ's answer.

1. His request. This third offereth himself to be a disciple of Christ, but with an exception—that he might take his farewell at home, and dispose of his estate there, and so secure his worldly interests: 'I will follow thee, but let me bid those farewell which are at home in my house.' You will say, What harm in this request? Elijah granted it to Elisha, 1 Kings xix. 21. When he had laid his mantle on him, thereby investing him in the office of a prophet, Elisha said, 'Let me, I pray thee, go and kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee:' which the prophet granteth, and gave way to Elisha to go home and salute his friends.

I answer—

[1.] The evangelical ministry exceedeth the prophetic, both as to excellency and necessity, and must be gone about speedily without any delay. The harvest was great, and such an extraordinary work was not to be delayed nor interrupted.

[2.] If two men do the same thing, it followeth not that they do it with the same mind. Things may be the same as to the substance or matter of the action, yet circumstances may be different. Christ knew this man's heart, and could interpret the meaning of his desire to go home first. He might make it a pretence to depart clean away from Christ. We cannot distinguish between the look of Abraham and the look of Lot. One is allowed, the other forbidden. Abraham is allowed to look towards Sodom: Gen. xix. 28, 'And Abraham got up early in the morning, and looked towards Sodom, and behold the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.' Yet Lot and his family are forbidden to look that way: Gen. xix. 17, 'Look not behind thee.' We cannot distinguish between the laughter of Abraham and the laughter of Sarah: Gen. xvii. 17, 'And Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born to him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?' Now compare Gen. xviii. 12; it is said, 'And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure, my lord also being old?' Yet she is reproved, 'For the Lord said, Wherefore did Sarah laugh?' The one was joy and reverence, the other unbelief and contempt. We cannot distinguish between the Virgin Mary's question, Luke i. 34, 'How can this be?' and the question of Zachary, John's father, Luke i. 18, 'How shall I know this, for I am an old man?' Mary was not reproved, but he was struck dumb for that speech. But though we cannot distinguish, God, that knoweth the secrets of all hearts, can distinguish.

[3.] Those that followed Christ on these extraordinary calls were to leave all things they had, without any further care about them : Mat. xix. 21, 'Sell all that thou hast, and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' So Mat. iv. 19, 20, 'He saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men : and they straightway left their nets and followed him.' So Mat. ix. 9, 'As Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom : and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.' Therefore it was preposterous for this man to desire to go home to order and dispose of his estate and family, before he complied with his call.

[4.] In resolution, estimation, and vow, the same is required of all Christians, when Christ's work calleth for it : Luke xiv. 33, 'So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.'

2. Christ's answer, which consists of a similitude, and its interpretation joined together.

[1.] The metaphor or similitude. Taken from ploughmen, who cannot make straight furrows if they look back. So, to look back, after we have undertaken Christ's yoke and service, rendereth us unfit for the kingdom of God. Putting our hands to the plough is to undertake Christ's work, or to resolve to be his disciples. Looking back, noteth an hankering of mind after the world, and also a return to the worldly life. For, first, we look back, and then we go back. First, we have an over-valuing of the world, and then we return to the worldly life.

Doct. That looking back will not become those who have set their faces heavenward.

We have an instance in the text of a man which pretended to follow Christ, which is to set our faces heavenward (for we follow Christ, first in labour and patience, and then into glory). But he would look back, and had many thoughts of what he had left at home. And he is pronounced unfit for the kingdom of God, that is, to be a disciple of Christ. And we have another instance, recommended to our observation by our Lord himself : Luke xvii. 32, 'Remember Lot's wife;' that is, remember her sin, and remember her punishment. Both are taken notice of, Gen. xix. 26, 'But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.' There was a hankering of mind after what she had left in Sodom. She looked back, because she had left her heart behind her ; there were her kindred, her friends, and her country, and pleasant place of abode. That look was a kind of repenting that she had come out of Sodom. And what was her punishment ? She that looked back perished as well as they that never came out. Yea, she is set up as a monument or spectacle of public shame and dishonour, to warn the rest of the world to obey God, and trust themselves with his providence.

In handling this point I shall show you :—

1. Upon what occasions we may be said to look back.

2. How ill this becomes those that have put their hands to the plough.

1. Upon what occasions we may be said to look back. A double pair I shall mention.

The first sort of those :—

[1.] That pretend to follow Christ, and yet their hearts hanker after the world, the cares, pleasures, and vain pomp thereof. Certainly all that would follow Christ must renounce their worldly affections and inclinations, or else they can make no work of Christianity. I prove it from the nature of conversion, which is a turning from the creature to God, from self to Christ, and from sin to holiness. The first is proper to our case. As our degeneration was a falling from God to the creature, Jer. ii. 13, so our regeneration is a turning from the creature to God. If we leave the world unwillingly, our dedication will soon come to nothing, for then our hearts are false with God in the very making of the covenant. If we engaged ourselves to God before the fleshly mind and interest were never well conquered, as we were not well loosened from the world, so not firmly engaged to God, and therefore, when our interest requires it, we shall soon forsake God.

[2.] When men are discouraged in his service by troubles and difficulties, and so, after a forward profession, all cometh to nothing: Heb. x. 38, 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' The former is looking back, and this is drawing back. The one ariseth out of the other: all their former zeal and courage is lost, they are affrighted and driven out of their profession, and relapse into the errors they have escaped. This is the first pair. Once more, the other pair is this :—

There is a looking back with respect to mortification, and a looking back with respect to vivification.

(1.) With respect to mortification, which is the first part of conversion. So we must not look back, or mind anything behind us, which may turn us back, and stop us in our course. The world and the flesh are the things behind us; we turned our back upon them in conversion, when we turned to God. Grace 'teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,' Titus ii. 12. It is the world that doth call back our thoughts, and corrupt our affections—the world, that is an enemy to God, and our religion, James iv. 4. Therefore, the world must be renounced, and we must grow dead to the world, that we may be alive to God. There is no halting between both.

(2.) With respect to vivification, or progress in the duties of the holy and heavenly life. So the apostle telleth us, Phil. iii. 13, 'But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,' &c. Farther progress in holiness is the one thing that we should mind, and that above all other things. This is the *unum necessarium*, Luke x. 42; the *primum* or *principium*, the one thing, that is, the main thing: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.' But how should we mind it? Not looking to the things which are behind, but looking to the things which are before. The things behind are our imperfect beginnings, or so much of the race as we have overcome and got through. It is the sluggard's trick to consider how much of the journey is past, or how far the rest of the racers are behind him. But he that sets heartily to his business considers how much is before, that he may get through the remainder of his race, and so obtain the prize. The things which are before us are God and heaven, and the

remaining duties of the holy life. These we should mind, and not look back, as satisfying ourselves with what we have attained to already.

2. How ill it becometh those that have put their hands to the spiritual plough.

[1.] In respect of the covenant into which they enter, or the manner of entrance into it, which is by a fixed unbounded resignation of themselves unto God. Till this be done, we are but half Christians. As suppose we desire privileges, would have God to be our God, but neglect duties, and are loth to become his people; or suppose we see a necessity of that, and so are in some measure willing to give up ourselves to him, yet if our resolution be not fixed, or be not unbounded, without reserves, and against all reserves, the covenant is not condescended unto. We do nothing unless we do that which is further required of us.

(1.) If it be not fixed, but wavering, we do but treat; we do not conclude, and come to a full agreement with God: Acts xi. 23, 'He exhorted them all, that, with full purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.' It implieth such a resolution as carrieth the force of a principle. Agrippa was almost a Christian, had some enamouring and uncertain inclinations: Acts xxvi. 28, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' Christ is resolved to stick to his servants, and therefore he expects that they should be resolved to stick to him.

(2.) If it be not unbounded, reserving nothing, but leaving all to Christ, to be disposed of at his will. Except but one thing, and the covenant is not fully concluded; it sticketh at that article; it is but hucking with God, not agreeing with God. Resolving with reserves is no resolution at all. It is but dealing like Ananias and Sapphira, giving something, and keeping back the rest, Acts v. Christ will have no disciples which will not part with all. Nothing must be reserved, neither credit, nor life, nor estate, Luke xiv. 28. Now, none of this can be as long as you look back, or allow that that will tempt you to look back; that is, till you be thoroughly loosened from the world; for whilst the heart cleaveth to any earthly thing, your resolution is unfixed. They that only take Christ upon liking, will soon be tempted to mislike him and his ways; and your resolution is not unbounded, whilst you set upon the profession of religion, and yet keep the world, or something of the world: your heart will ever and anon be seeking occasions to withdraw; for you were false at heart at your first setting out, and treacherous in the very making of your covenant.

[2.] With respect to the duties of Christianity, or that part of the kingdom of God which concerneth your obedience to him, you are never fit for these while the heart cleaveth to earthly things, and you are still hankering after the world.

A threefold defect there will be in our duties:—

(1.) They will be unpleasant.

(2.) They will be inconstant.

(3.) Imperfect in such a degree as to want sincerity.

(1.) Your duty will be unpleasant to you, so far as you are worldly and carnal, so that you can never yield cheerful and ready obedience to God.

Certain it is that we must serve God, and serve him with delight. His commandments should be kept, and they should not be grievous to us, 1 John v. 3. Now, what is the great impediment? Worldly lusts are not thoroughly purged out of the heart; for presently he addeth this reason, 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.' It is a hard heart maketh our work hard; and the heart is hard and unpersuadable when our affections are engaged elsewhere. The readiness of our obedience dependeth on the fervency of our love; the fervency of our love on our victory over the world; our victory over the world on the strength of our faith; the strength of our faith on the certainty we have of the principal object of our faith; the principal object of our faith is, that Jesus is the Son of God, whose counsel we must take, if we will be happy. And the evidence of that principle is the double testimony or attestation given to him from heaven, or in the heart of a believer. Once settle in that, that you can entirely trust yourselves and all your interests in the hands of Christ, and all duties will be easy.

(2.) You will be inconstant in it, and apt to be ensnared again, when you meet with occasions and temptations that suit with your heart's lusts. As the Israelites were drawn out of Egypt against their wills, the flesh-pots of Egypt were still in their minds, and, therefore, were ready to make themselves a captain and return again, Num. xiv. 4; and James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in his ways.' Nothing will hold an unwilling heart. Demas had not quitted this hankering mind after the world, and therefore it prevented him doing his duty: 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' He left the work of the gospel to mind his own private affairs. The love of riches, pleasure, ease, and safety, if they be not thoroughly renounced, will tempt us to a like revolt and neglect of God. Therefore, to prevent it, when we first put our hands to the plough, we must resolve to renounce the world: Ps. xlv. 10, 'Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.' Look back no more. As long as we are entangled in our lusts and enticements of the world, we are unmeet to serve God. Paul counted those things that were gain to him to be loss for Christ: Phil. iii. 7, 8, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that I may win Christ.' Paul repented not of his choice, but sheweth his perseverance in the contempt of the world,—I have counted, and do count. He seeth no cause to recede from his choice. Many affect novelties, are transported at their first change, but repent at leisure.

(3.) We are imperfect in it; I mean, to such a degree as to want sincerity, for they bring nothing to perfection, Luke viii. 14. Their fruit never groweth ripe or sound, for religion is an underling. Some good inclinations they have to heavenly things, but their worldly affections are greater, and overtop them so, that though they do not plainly revolt from their profession, yet their duties want that life and power which is necessary, so that they bring little honour to Christ by being Christians.

[3.] In respect of the hurt that cometh from their looking back, both to themselves and to religion.

(1.) To themselves : 2 Peter ii. 20, 21, 'For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, their latter end is worse with them than their beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.' Many have so much of the knowledge of Christ as to cleanse their external conversation; but sin and the world were never so effectually cast out but they are in secret league with them still; and, therefore, they are first entangled, and then overcome; first enticed by some pleasure or profit, and then carried away with the temptation. But what cometh of this? 'Their latter end is worse than their beginning.' Their sin is greater, since they sin against light and taste; their judgment is greater, both spiritual and eternal; as God giveth them over to brutish lusts, and to the power of Satan. And this will be a cutting thought to them to all eternity, to remember how they lost their acquaintance with, and benefit by, Christ, by looking back to the world, and deserting that good way wherein they found so much sweetness in Christ.

(2.) The mischief which is done to religion. They wonderfully dishonour God, and bring contempt upon the ways of godliness, when, after they have made trial of it, they prefer sin before it, as if God had wearied them, Micah vi. 3. Therefore it is just with God to vindicate his honour. And Satan, after he seemeth to be for a while rejected, taketh a more durable possession of them, Luke xi. 26. Oh, think of this often!—to look back after we seemed to escape doth involve us in the greater sin and misery. Better never to have yielded to God so far, than to retract at last, partly because their sins are sins against knowledge: Luke xii. 47, 'That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' Partly because they are unthankful for so much deliverance, by the knowledge of Christ, as they received, and that is an heinous aggravation of their offence. Partly because their sin is treachery and breach of vows, for they turned the back upon the world and all the allurements thereof, when they consented to the covenant, and resolved to follow Christ in all conditions, till he should bring them into a place of rest and safety. Partly because they sin against experience, after they have had some relish and taste of better things, Heb. vi. 4. Partly because their conversion again is the more difficult, the devil having a greater hold of them, Mat. xii. 44.

[4.] With respect to the disproportion that is between the things that tempt us to look back, and those things that are set before us.

(1.) The things that tempt us to look back are the pleasures of sin and the profits of the world. Both are but a temporary enjoyment: Heb. xi. 25, 'The pleasures of sin, which are but for a season.' The pleasures of sin are base and brutish, which captivate and bring a slavery on the soul, Titus iii. 3. The enjoyments of the world cannot last long; your gust and relish of them, within a little while will be gone, 1 John ii. 17; yet these are the things that tempt you to forget and draw you off from God. And will you marry your souls again to those sins from which they were once divorced, and for such paltry vanities repent of your obedience to God, even after you have made

trial of him? Are these things grown better, or God grown worse, that you should turn your hearts from him to them?

(2.) The things that are before you are God and heaven; reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory.

Reconciliation with God, with the consequent benefits; communion with God now, peace of conscience, the gift of the Spirit, and the hopes of glory. If there were no more than these, shall we look back? Can we find better things in the world? Alas! there is nothing here but fears and snares, a vexatious uncertainty, and polluting enjoyments, such as may easily make us worse, but cannot make us better. What is this but to forsake the cold flowing waters for a dirty puddle? Jer. xviii. 14, our own mercies for lying vanities, Jonah ii. 8.

The everlasting fruition of him in glory. Shall we look back that are striving for a crown of endless glory, as if we were weary of the pursuit, and give it over as a hopeless or fruitless business? If Christ will lead us to this glory, let us follow him, and go on in what is well begun without looking back. Never let us leave a crown of glory for a crown of thorns.

Use. Is for instruction, to teach us what to do if we would set about the strict practice of religion.

1. See that your worldly love be well mortified, for till you be dead to the world God cannot recover his interest in your souls, nor the divine nature be set up there with any life and power, 2 Peter i. 4; see also 1 John ii. 15, and 1 John v. 4. Till this be done, God and glory cannot be your ultimate end, nor the main design of your life; for the world will turn your hearts another way, and will have the principal ruling and disposing of your lives: the world will have that love, trust, care, and service that belongeth to God, and be a great hindrance to you in the way to heaven, and you will never have peace. The world doth first delude you, and then disquiet you, and if you cleave to it as your portion, you must look for no more. Well, then, mortified it must be; for how can you renounce the world as an enemy if your hearts be not weaned from it so far that it is a more indifferent thing to you to have it or want it, and that you be not so eager for it, or so careful about it?

2. Let not the world steal into your hearts again, nor seem so sweet to you, for then you are under a temptation. It is our remaining folly and backsliding nature that is ever looking to the world which we have forsaken. Now, when you find this, whenever the world hath insinuated into your affections, and chilled and cooled them to God and heaven, see that the distemper be presently expelled. Pray, as David, Ps. cxix. 36, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness.' Be sure to be more fruitful in good works: Luke xi. 41, 'Give alms of such things as you have, and behold all things are clean unto you.' We renounced the world in our baptismal vow, we overcame the world in our whole after course. It is not so got out of any but that we still need an holy jealousy and watchfulness over ourselves. Now, that we may do both of these, I shall give you some directions.

[1.] Fix your end and scope, which is to be everlastingly happy in the enjoyment of God. The more you do so, the less in danger you

will be of looking back. We are often pressed to lay up treasures in heaven, Mat. vi. 20; and, as those that are 'risen with Christ,' to 'seek the things which are above,' Col. iii. 1. Our Lord himself saith to the young man, Mark x. 21, 'Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven.' If your life and business be for heaven, and your mind be kept intent on the greater matters of everlasting life, nothing will divert you therefrom; you will almost be ready to forget earth, because you have higher and better things to mind. It is not barely thinking of the troubles of the world, or confessing its vanities, will cure your distempers, but the true sight of a better happiness. A little in hand is better, you will think, than uncertain hopes; but a sound belief, which is 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,' that openeth heaven to you, and will soon make you of another mind.

[2.] Entirely trust yourself, and all your concerns, in the hand of God. Christ expected from all those whom he called in an extraordinary manner, that they should leave all without any thought or solicitude about it, trusting in him not only for their eternal reward, but for their provision and protection by the way during their service. And the same in effect is required of all Christians; not to leave our estates or neglect our calling, but renouncing the world, and resolving to take such a lot in good part as he shall carve out to them. All that enter into covenant with God must believe him to be 'God all-sufficient,' Gen. xvii. 1. The apostle, when he dissuadeth from worldliness, he produceth a promise of God's not forsaking us and leaving us utterly destitute: Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' On the other side, certainly, it is unbelief that is the cause of apostasy, or falling back from God: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.' Certainly, when we have resigned up ourselves to Christ to do his work, we may trust him boldly, and serve him cheerfully; we need not look back to shift for ourselves. If you are willing to be his people, he will be your God and your Saviour, and then you may conclude that 'God, even our God, shall bless us,' Ps. lxxvii. 6. He will not be wanting to those that unreservedly yield up themselves to his obedience.

[3.] Consider that they are deluded hypocrites that will meddle no farther with religion than they can reconcile it with their worldly happiness. Whatever glorious notions they have of God, or pretences of admiring free grace, it is self-denial that Christ calleth for; and taking up our cross is the first lesson in his school. And true conversion is a turning from the creature to God, and beginneth in mortification; and baptism implieth a renunciation of the devil, the world, and the flesh. Therefore those that will save their worldly state, and launch out no further in the cause of religion than they may easily get ashore again when a storm cometh, and love and serve God no further than will stand with the contentment of the flesh, and divide their hearts between God and the world, give God but half, and the worst half; surely these were never sincere with God. It is an impossible

design they drive on, to serve two masters, Mat. vi. 24. You must let go Christ and glory, if you be so earnest after the world, and so indulgent to the flesh.

[4.] Consider how much it is your business to observe what maketh you fit or unfit for the kingdom of God. The aptitude or inaptitude of means is to be judged with respect to the end, as they help or hinder the attainment of your great end; for *finis est mensura mediorum*: Mat. vi. 22, 'The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.' Now our great end is to enjoy God for ever. And what fitteth you for this,—looking back, or keeping the heart in heaven? Experience will show. The observant and watchful Christian will soon find where his great hindrance lieth. How much he findeth his heart down by minding the world, and how he needeth to wind it up again by faith and love: Ps. xxv. 1, 'Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.' The world is the great impediment that keepeth him from God, and indisposeth him for his service, dampeth his love, and quencheth his zeal, and abateth his diligence; he will soon find how much more he might do for God if he could draw off his heart more from those inferior objects. This is the weight that presseth us down, and maketh us so cold and cursory in God's service.

[5.] Consider, in the text, here is the kingdom of God, which is double—the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory. The one is called, 'The kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,' Rev. i. 9; the other is called, 'His kingdom and glory,' 1 Thes. ii. 12. By the first we are prepared for the second; and the second is the great encouragement. Now they that look back are unfit for either the duties of Christians or the reward of Christians; he flincheth from his duty here, and shall be shut out of heaven at last: 2 Thes. i. 5, 'That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.' They are only counted worthy who constantly and patiently look for it, and venture something on it.

[6.] Consider the great loss you will incur by looking back after you have put your hand to the plough. You will lose all that you have wrought, and all that you have suffered.

What you have wrought: 2 John 8, 'Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.' You forfeit the reward of your good beginnings. A partial reward they may have in this life, while they continue their well-doing (for no man is a loser by God), but not a complete and full reward till the life to come. Some overflowings of God's temporal bounty they may have, but not the crown of life and glory. So Ezek. xviii. 24, 'All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned.' All is obliterated and forgotten and made void, as to any interest in the great reward. This was represented in the type of the Nazarite: Num. vi. 12, 'The days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.' He was to begin all anew. All that you have suffered, as a man may make some petty losses for Jesus Christ: Gal. iii. 4, 'Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.' This maketh all the cost and expense that you have been at to be to no purpose.

THE EXCELLENCY OF SAVING FAITH.

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.—HEB. X. 39.

IN the verse immediately preceding there is a dreadful doom pronounced on apostates, that God will take no pleasure in them. Now lest they should be much affrighted with the terror of it, and suppose that he had too hard an opinion of them, he showeth, that though he did warn them, he did not suspect them, presuming other things of them, according to their profession: *But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

In the words two things are observable:—

1. The denial of the suspicion of their apostasy.
2. An assertion of the truth and constancy of their faith.

That clause I shall insist upon, *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς*. Where, first, take notice of their faith, *ἐκ πίστεως*; secondly, their perseverance, *εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς*. The word signifieth their purchasing, acquiring, obtaining, finding the soul; meaning thereby, that though they lost other things, they did not lose their souls.

Doct. That a true and sound faith will cause us to save the soul, though with the loss of other things.

1 Peter i. 5, 'Ye are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' It is the power of God indeed that keepeth. He that reserveth heaven for us reserveth and keepeth us for heaven. But by what instrument or means? By faith. To depend upon an invisible God for a happiness that lieth in an invisible world, when in the meantime he permitteth us to be harassed with difficulties and troubles, requireth faith; and by faith alone can the heart be upheld, till we obtain this salvation. So ver. 9, 'Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.' It is faith maketh us row against the stream of flesh and blood, and deny its cravings, that we may obtain eternal salvation at length. The flesh is for sparing and favouring the body; but faith is for saving the soul. That is the end and aim of faith.

To make this evident to you:—

1. I shall prove that all other things must be hazarded for the saving of the soul.

2. That nothing will make us hazard all things for the purchasing or acquiring the salvation of the soul but only faith.

1. That all other things must be hazarded for the saving of the soul: Mat. x. 39, 'He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' So it is repeated again upon the occasion of the doctrine of self-denial, Mat. xvi. 25, 26. The saving of the soul is more than the getting and keeping or having of all the world; for the world concerneth only the body and bodily life, but the saving of the soul concerneth eternal life. If life be lost temporally, it is secured to eternity, when we shall have a life which no man can take from us. And the case standeth thus: that either we must bring eternal perdition upon ourselves, or else obtain eternal salvation. They that are thirsty of life bodily, and the comforts and interests of it, are certainly prodigal of their salvation. But on the other side, if we are willing to venture life temporal, and all the interests thereof, for the saving of the soul, we make a good bargain: that which is left for a while is preserved to us for ever. In short, so much as God is to be preferred before the creature, heaven before the world, the soul before the body, eternity before time, so much doth it concern us to have the better part safe. And as men in a great fire and general conflagration will hazard their lumber to preserve their treasure, their money, or their jewels, so should we take care, that if we must lose one or other, that the better part be out of hazard; and whatever we lose by the way, we may be sure to come well to the end of our journey.

2. That nothing will make us hazard all things for the purchasing or acquiring the salvation of the soul, but only faith. The flesh is importunate to be pleased. Sense saith to us, Favour thyself, that is, spare the flesh; but faith saith, Save thy soul. Faith, which apprehendeth things future and invisible, will teach us to value all things according to their worth, and to lose some present satisfaction for that future and eternal gain which the promises of God do offer to us. Now faith doth this two ways: by convincing us of the *worth* and of the *truth* of things promised by God through Christ. The apostle, when he bloweth his trumpet, and summoneth our reverence and attentive regard to the gospel, in that preface, 1 Tim. i. 15, he saith, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' Salvation by Christ is worthy to be regarded above all things; and if it be true, all things should give place unto it. Now faith convinceth us of the worth and truth, and maketh us to take the thing promised for all our treasure and happiness, and the promise itself, or the word of God, for our whole security.

(1.) It maketh us to take the thing promised for all our treasure and happiness: Mat. vi. 19-21, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' It highly concerneth us to consider what we make our treasure. Worldly things are subject to many accidents, and deserve not

our love nor esteem. Only heavenly things deserve to be our treasure. If our hearts be set upon these things, it is a sign we value what Christ hath offered. So 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' We make these things our end, and scope, and happiness. It is easy to prove the worth of these things in the general, as it is easy to prove that eternity is better than time; that things incorruptible are better than those which are subject to corruption; that things exempted from casualty are better than those things which are liable to casualty, and are not out of the reach of robbery and violence. But to creatures wedded to sense and present enjoyment, it is difficult and hard to cause them to set their hearts on another world, and to lay up their hopes in heaven, and to part with all things which they see and love and find comfortable to their senses, for that God and glory which they never saw. This is the business of faith, or the work of the Spirit of illumination changing their hearts and minds. This general truth all will determine, as that things eternal are better than things temporal. But we undervalue these gracious promises, whose accomplishment must with patience be expected, whilst their future goodness cometh in actual competition with these bodily delights which we must forego, and those grievous bodily afflictions which we must endure, out of sincere respect to Christ and his ways. Therefore, before there can be any true self-denial, faith must incline us to this offered benefit, as our true treasure and happiness, whatever we forego or undergo to attain it.

(2.) For the truth of it the word of God must be our whole security, as being enough to support our hearts in waiting for it, however God cover himself with frowns and an appearance of anger in those afflictions which befall us in the way thither. The word of God is all in all to his people: 'Thy testimonies have I taken as my heritage for ever; they are the rejoicing of my soul,' Ps. cxix. 111. If a man hath little ready money, yet if he have a heritage to live upon, or sure bonds, he is well paid. So is a believer rich in promises, which being the promises of the almighty and immutable God, and built upon the everlasting merit of Christ, are as good to him as performances, and therefore cause joy in some proportion as if the things were in hand: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them;' and Ps. lvi. 4, 'In God will I praise his word, in God have I put my trust; I will not fear what man can do unto me.' Faith resteth upon God's word, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to him by Christ.

Use 1. Is information concerning a weighty truth, namely, what the faith is by which the just do live. It is such a trust or confidence in God's promises of eternal life through Jesus Christ as that we forsake all other hopes and happiness whatsoever that we may obtain it.

To make good this description to you, let me observe:—

1. That faith looketh mainly to heaven, or the saving of the soul, as the prime benefit offered to us by Jesus Christ. For all attend to this: 1 Tim. i. 16, 'For a pattern to them who should hereafter be—'

lieve on him to life everlasting.' This was that they chiefly aimed at, and therefore called 'the end of our faith,' 1 Peter i. 9. For this end were the scriptures written: John xx. 31, 'These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.' The scriptures are written to direct us to know Christ aright, who is the kernel and marrow of all the scriptures, who is the great subject of the gospel; and that the chief benefit we have by him is eternal life, by which all our pains and losses for Christ are recompensed, and from whence we fetch our comfort all along during the course of our pilgrimage, and upon the hopes of which the life of grace is carried on, and the temptations of sense are defeated, so that this is the main blessing which faith aimeth at.

2. That the sure grounds which faith goeth upon is God's promise through Jesus Christ; and so it implieth:—

[1.] That there is a God, who is 'a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;' for the apostle, pursuing this discourse, telleth us, Heb. xi. 6, that a man must believe God's being and bounty before he can do anything to the purpose for him.

[2.] That this God hath revealed himself in Jesus Christ as willing to accept poor creatures who refuse not his new covenant and remedying grace, to pardon and life; for the guilty creature would stand at a distance, and not receive his offers with any comfort and satisfaction, had not God been 'in Christ reconciling the world to himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19. But now they may be invited to come to him with hope, ver. 20. And his gracious promises, standing upon such a bottom and foundation, are the sooner believed: 2 Cor. i. 20, 'For the promises of God are in him, yea, and in him, amen, to the glory of God by us;' that is, the promises of God propounded in Christ's name are undoubtedly true; they are not yea and nay, but yea and amen. They do not say yea to-day, and nay to-morrow; but always yea, so it is, and amen, so it shall be, because they stand upon an immutable foundation, the everlasting merit and redemption of Christ.

[3.] It implieth that the scriptures which contain these offers and promises are the word of God. For though God's veracity be unquestionable, how shall we know that we have his word? It is laid at pledge with us in the scriptures, which are the declaration of the mind of the eternal God. The promises are a part of those sacred scriptures which were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and sealed with a multitude of miracles, and bear the very image and superscription of God (as everything which hath passed his hand hath his signature upon it, even to a gnat or pile of grass), and have been received and preserved by the church as the certain oracles of God, and blessed by him throughout all generations and successions of ages, to the convincing, converting, sanctifying, and comforting of many souls, and carry their own light, evidence, and recommendation to the consciences of all those who are not strangely perverted by their brutish lusts, and blinded by their worldly affections. For the apostle saith, 'By the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience. For if our gospel be hid, it is hid to those who are lost: the god of this world having blinded their eyes, lest

the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them,' 2 Cor. iv. 2-4. Upon these grounds doth faith proceed, which I have mentioned the more distinctly that you might know how to excite faith; for besides praying for the Spirit of wisdom and illumination to open our eyes, we must use the means both as rational creatures and new creatures. And what means are more effectual than those mentioned?

Is there not a God? If there be not a God, how did we come to be? Thou wert not made by chance; and when thou wert not, thou couldst not make thyself. Look upon thy body, so curiously framed, whose workmanship could this be but of a wise God? Upon thy soul, whose image and superscription doth it bear? 'Give unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's.' Nay, look upward, downward, within thee, without thee, what dost thou see, hear, and feel, but the products and effects of an eternal power, wisdom, and goodness? Thou canst not open thine eyes, but the heavens are ready to say to thy conscience, Man, there is a God, an infinite eternal being, who made us and all things else.

Now for the second: Hath not this God revealed himself gracious in Christ? Nature declareth there is a God, and scripture that there is a Christ. As there is one God, the first cause of all, infinitely powerful, wise, and good, therefore it is but reasonable that he should be served, and according to his own will. But we have faulted in our duty to our creator, and therefore are in dread of his justice. Certainly reasonable creatures have immortal souls, and so die not as the beasts; therefore there is no true happiness in these things wherein men ordinarily seek it. Is it not then a blessed discovery that God hath brought life and immortality to light by Jesus Christ; that he sent him into the world to be a propitiation, and to satisfy his justice, and to redeem us from our guilty fears? And shall we neglect this great salvation brought to us by Jesus Christ, or coldly seek after it? Surely God is willing to be reconciled to man, or else he would presently have plunged us into our eternal state, as he did the angels upon their first sinning. But he waiteth, and beareth with many inconveniences; he beseecheth us, and prayeth us to be reconciled. And 'how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which was first spoken by the Lord, and then confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?' Heb. 2-4. Would holy men cheat the world with an imposture, or would God be accessory in lending his power to do such marvellous things? It cannot be.

And then for the third: Is not this a part of the word of God, which holy men have written to consign it to the use of the church in all ages? 1 John ii. 25, 'This is the promise which he hath promised us, eternal life.' Is not this God's promise? And will not God be mindful and regardful of his word? He was wont to be tender of it: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;' above all that is named, or famed, or spoken and believed of God. His truth and trustiness is most conspicuous. In the new covenant he hath given his solemn oath, as well as his word, that the heirs of promise 'might have strong consolation,' Heb. vi. 18. What

is the matter that my belief of these things is so cold and ineffectual? If this be God's promise, and he hath put in no exception against me to exclude me from the benefit of this promise, what is the reason why I can no more encourage myself in the Lord to seek after this salvation, but am disturbed so often by distracting fears and cares, and so easily misled by vain delights? Thus should we excite our faith.

But I digress too long.

3. The nature of this faith I express by a trust and confidence. There is in faith an assent, which is sufficient when the object requireth no more. As there are some speculative principles which are merely to be believed, as they lead on to other things, Heb. xi. 3, there an intellectual assent sufficeth. But there are other things which are propounded, not only as true, but good. There, not only an intellectual assent is required, but a practical assent, or such as is joined with consent and affiance; as suppose when Christ promiseth eternal life to the serious Christian or mortified believer; there must be not only an assent, or a believing that this proposal and offer is Christ's, and that it is true; but there must be a consent to choose it for my portion and happiness, and then a confidence and dependence upon Christ for it, though it lie out of sight, and in the meantime I be exercised with sundry difficulties and temptations. Trust is not a bare opinion of Christ's fidelity, but a dependence upon his word. I do believe there is a God, and that there is a Christ, I do well. I do believe that this God in Christ hath brought life and immortality to light, I do well still; but I must do more. I believe that he hath assured his disciples and followers, that if they continue faithful with him, they shall have eternal life: John v. 24, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.' I know that Christ hath fidelity and sufficiency enough to make good his word. This is well, but I must go farther; that is to say, I must choose this eternal life that is offered to me for my felicity and portion; this is consent: and I must continue with patience in well-doing, depending upon his faithful word whilst I am in the pursuit of it; this is trust or confidence. As this world is vanity, and hath nothing in it worthy to be compared with the hopes which Christ hath given me of a better life, so I choose it for my happiness. But as I judge him faithful that hath promised, and depend upon him that he will make good his word, though this happiness be future, and lieth in another, an unseen, an unknown world, to which there is no coming but by faith, this is the trust, and by that name it is often expressed in scripture. It is nothing else but a sure and comfortable dependence upon God through Jesus Christ, in the way of well-doing, for the gift of eternal life: Ps. cxii. 7, 'His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' So Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou keepest him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' The New Testament also useth this term, 2 Cor. iii. 4, 'Such trust have we through Christ to Godward;' and 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.' Well, then, this trust is more than an assent or bare persuasion of the mind that the promises are true; yea, it is more than a motion of the

will towards them as good and satisfying; for it noteth a quiet repose of the heart on the fidelity and mercy of God in Christ, that he will give this blessedness, if we do in the first place seek after it. The more we cherish this confidence, the more sure we are of our interest, both in Christ and the promise: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence, and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;' and ver. 14, 'We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;' and Heb. x. 35, a little before the text, 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' In all which places confidence noteth our resolute engaging in the heavenly life, because we depend upon Christ's rewards in another world. In our passage to heaven we meet with manifold temptations; we are assaulted both on the right hand and on the left with the terrors of sense, which are a discouragement to us, and the delights of sense, which are a snare to us. Confidence or trust fortifieth us against both these temptations, the difficulties, dangers, and sufferings which we meet with in our passage to heaven, yea, though it should be death itself; for faith seeth the end glorious, and that the salvation of our souls is sure and near if we continue faithful with Christ. On the other side, affiance or trust draweth the heart to better things, and we can easily want or miss the contentments of the flesh, the pomp, and ease, and pleasure of the present life, because our hearts are in heaven, and we have more excellent things in view and pursuit. 'This breedeth a weanedness from the baits of the flesh, and a rejection and contempt of what would take us off from the pursuit of eternal life: 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27, 'I run not as one that is uncertain;' as if he had said, I am confident, therefore I am mortified to the world.

4. The immediate fruit and effect of it is a forsaking all other hopes and happiness for Christ's sake, and for the blessedness which he offereth. That forsaking all belongeth to this affiance and trust is plain, because I can neither trust God nor be true to him till I can venture all my happiness upon this security; and if God calleth me to it, actually forsake all upon these hopes. This will appear to you by these arguments:—

[1.] By the doctrinal descriptions of the gospel-faith. Our Lord hath told us that the kingdom of heaven is like a merchantman: Mat. xiii. 45, 46, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.' And certainly he knew the nature of that faith better than we do. Many cheapen the pearl of price, but they do not go through with the bargain, because they do not sell all to purchase it. No; you must have such a sense of the excellency and truth of salvation by Christ, that you must choose it, and let go all that is inconsistent with this choice and trust. You must be resolved to let go all your sinful pleasures, profit, and reputation, and your life itself, rather than forfeit these hopes. So Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come unto me, and hate not father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple.' So ver. 33, 'Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple.'

After such express declarations of the will of Christ, why should we think of going to heaven at a cheaper rate, and that the covenant will be modelled and brought down to our humours? Christ's service will bring trouble with it. All that is precious in the world must be renounced, or else we shall not be able to hold out. The same is inferred out of the doctrine of self-denial, Mat. xvi. 24. It is the immediate fruit, yea, the principal act of our trust; for if God be trusted as our felicity, he must be loved above all, and all things must give way to God. The same is inferred out of the baptismal covenant, which is a renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a giving up ourselves to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our God. This renouncing implieth a venturing of all, that we may obtain this blessedness, or eternal life.

[2.] By all the extraordinary calls and trials that are propounded as a pattern to us. Faith was ever a venturing all, and a forsaking all, upon the belief of God's veracity. Let us see Noah's faith: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, prepared an ark for the saving of his house.' That warning that God gave him of the flood was extraordinary, but they were 'of things not seen as yet;' whilst these things were in the mind of God, no man or angel could know them; and after God revealed them, there was nothing but his bare word for it. But Noah believed, and what then? At God's prescription, with vast expense, he prepareth an ark, and that was selling all. He was of a vast estate, or else he could not have prepared such a fabric, so many years in building, and so furnished; but this was the prescribed means to save his household. In the next place, let us consider Abraham's trial, who was the 'father of the faithful.' His first trial was, Heb. xi. 8, 'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out to a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed, not knowing whither he went.' Here was trusting and venturing all upon God's call. He forsook his kindred, and father's house, and all, to seek an abode he knew not where. Therefore we must forsake the world, and all things therein, yea, life itself, having our thoughts and affections fixed on heaven. There must be a total resignation of heart and will to God. We owe God blind obedience. To forsake our country, kindred, friends, inheritance, is a sore trial; yet this was done by him, and must be done by all that will be saved: we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and forsake father and mother, wife and children, all relations. All this he did for a land which he neither knew where it was nor the way to it. Our God hath told us, he will bring us into the heavenly Canaan. His second trial you have recorded, ver. 17, 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that received the promises offered up his only son.' God would try Abraham, that he might be an example of faith to all future generations, whether Abraham loved God or his son Isaac more. But he did not shrink upon trial; he offered him up; that is, in his heart he had parted with him and given him wholly unto God, and made all ready for the offering, being assured of God's fidelity; even Isaac, upon whom the promises were settled, must be offered. Children, dear children, everything must be given up to God. In the next place, consider we the Israelites in the Red Sea;

Heb. xi. 29, 'By faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land.' God commands Moses, when in straits, to strike the sea with his rod, and Israel to pass forward, and expect the salvation of God, promising to deliver them. They did so, and the sea was divided, and the waters stood like walls and mountains, as if they had been congealed and turned to ice, and the bottom, which never saw sun before, is made like firm ground, without mud and quicksands. Thus entirely will God be trusted by his people, and they must put their all into his hands. If God will have it so, faith must find a way through the great deep. No dangers so great that we must decline. Come we now to the New Testament; Christ's trial of the young man: 'Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven,' Mark x. 21. But he could not venture on Christ's command, and went away sad. The promise of eternal life and treasure in heaven could not part the young man and his great estate, and therefore he continued incapable of eternal bliss. This young man is set forth in the Gospel as a warning to others. So in Peter's trial, Mat. xiv. 29, 30. If Christ bid Peter come to him upon the waters, Peter must come, though the storm continueth, and he be ready to sink at every step.

[3.] By all the instances of faith in the ordinary and common case of salvation. Moses had faith, therefore he forsook all honours, pleasures, and treasures, for he trusted God, and waited for the recompense of reward, Heb. xi. 24-26. It is endless in instancing in all: take these, Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have a better and more enduring substance.' They were not discouraged, but took this rapine joyfully, which argued a lively faith in Christ, and a sincere love to him. It goeth near to the hearts of worldlings to part with these things; but they valued Christ as infinitely more precious than all the wealth of the world. If they lost their goods, yet if they lost not Christ, they were happy enough; for then they still kept the title to the enduring substance. Thus you see what is faith; such a trusting in God for eternal life as maketh us willing to forsake all, rather than be unfaithful to Christ. Others may delude you, enchant your souls asleep with fine strains of ill-understood and abused grace. But if you would not be deceived, take the faith and Christianity of Christ's recommendation, which is the faith now described. Are we in the place of God, that we can make heaven narrower or broader for you? Surely it is grace, rich grace, that God will pardon us, and call us to eternal life by Jesus Christ. Now, if you will have it, you must believe to the salvation of the soul, so believe, as to quit all other things to obtain it.

Use 2. Is for examination. Let us examine our spiritual condition, whether it be good or bad, whether our faith be sincere, our profession real, whether we tend to perdition or to salvation, whether we believe to the saving of the soul; that is, if we care not what we lose, so we may obtain the heavenly inheritance. Have you such a trust as that you can venture the loss of something which is dear to you for this trust; yea, not only something, but all things? Certainly we have not a true belief of the promise of eternal life if we can venture no-

thing upon it, hazard nothing for it. Now we venture things upon the account of God's promise four ways:—

- [1.] In a way of mortification.
- [2.] In a way of self-denial.
- [3.] In a way of charity.
- [4.] In a way of submission to providence.

[1.] In a way of mortification. Denying ourselves the sinful pleasures of the senses. Our sins were never worth the keeping; these must always be parted with, other things but at times; therefore I can venture but little upon the security of eternal life, if I cannot deny my fleshly and worldly lusts, and a little vain pleasure, for that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand for evermore. I have God's word for it, that if I mortify the deeds of the body I shall live, Rom. viii. 13. It is yet hard to abjure accustomed delights; and to hearts pleasantly set, the strictness of a holy life seemeth grim and severe; but a believer, that hath a prospect into eternity, knoweth that it is better to deny the flesh than to displease God—to take a little pains in rectifying our disordered hearts and distempered souls, than to endure pains for evermore; and that a little momentary delight is bought too dear, if it be bought with the loss of eternal joys. No; let me lose my lusts rather than lose my soul, saith he. Every man's heart cleaveth to those things which he judgeth best, and the more it cleaveth to better things, the more it is withdrawn from other things. Therefore faith, showing us the truth and worth of heavenly things, and taking God's word for its security, it mastereth our desires and carnal affections. It is the 'stranger and pilgrim' (whose mind is persuaded of things to come, and whose heart is set upon them) that 'abstaineth from fleshly lusts,' 1 Peter ii. 11. Upon the assurance of God's word he is taking his journey into another world. Though the flesh will rebel, yet he counterbalanceth the good and evil which the flesh proposeth, with the good and evil of the other world which the word of God proposeth, and so learneth more and more to condemn the pleasures of sin and curb his unruly passions. 'Mortify your members upon earth, for your life is hid with Christ in God,' Col. iii. 3-5. And they that look for a life of glory hereafter will choose a life of purity here upon earth. It is the unbeliever findeth such an impotency in resisting present temptations; he hath not any sense, or not a deep sense, of the world to come.

[2.] In a way of self-denial. What! can you venture and forego that way upon the security of God's promise? Mortification concerneth our lusts, and self-denial our interests. What interest can you venture upon the warrant of the promise? Christ saith, 'He that denieth me before men, I will deny him before my Father in heaven,' Luke xii. 9; and again, 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it,' &c., Luke ix. 24; and once more, ver. 26, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in his glory.' Now urge the soul with the promises. Am I willing to hazard my temporal conveniences for the enduring substance? to incur shame and blame with men, that I may be faithful with God, and own his interest in the world? and do I so when it actually cometh to a trial? The heart is deceitful, and a temptation in conceit and imagination is nothing to a temptation in act and deed.

Therefore, when your resolutions are assaulted by temptations of any considerable strength, do you acquit yourself with good fidelity? Can you trust God when he trieth your trust in some necessary point of confession, which may expose you to some loss, shame, and hazard in the world?

[3.] In a way of charity and doing good with your estates. That religion is worth nothing that costs nothing; and when all is laid out upon pomp and pleasure and worldly ends, as the advancing of your families and relations, and little or nothing for God upon the security of his promise, or only so much as the flesh can spare, to hide your self-pleasing and self-seeking in other things. Can you practise upon that promise, and try your faith: Luke xii. 33, 'Sell that you have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.' What have you ventured in this kind? Do you believe that 'he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord'? and that he will be your paymaster? Do you look upon no estate so sure as that which is trusted in Christ's hands? And are you content to be at some considerable cost for eternal life? Most men love a cheap gospel, and the flesh engrosseth all. Faith gets little from them to be laid out for God. Do not these men run a fearful hazard? And while they are so over-careful to preserve their estates to themselves and families, do they believe to the saving of their souls? Or if they do not preserve their estates, but waste them, and are at great costs for their lusts, they do nothing considerably or proportionably for God. This is saving to the flesh, and they shall 'of the flesh reap corruption.'

[4.] In a way of submission to providence. Whether you will or no, you are at God's disposal, and cannot shift yourselves out of his hands, either here or hereafter. But yet it is a part of your duty voluntarily to surrender yourselves to be disposed of and ordered by God according to his pleasure: to be content to be what he will have you to be, and to do what he will have you to do and suffer, is included in selling all. You must submit to be at God's finding, which is that poverty of spirit spoken of Mat. v. 3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit;' such whose minds and spirits are subdued, and brought under obedience to God. You must be content to enjoy what God will have you to enjoy, and to want what he will have you want, and to lose what he will have you lose: 2 Sam. xv. 26, 27, and Job i. 21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Many seem to resign all—goods, life, and all—to the will of God. But it is because they secretly think in their hearts that God will never put them to the trial, or take from them what they resign to him; but they are not prepared for a submission to all events. Like those that make large promises to others, when they think they will not take them at their words. So their hearts secretly except, and reserve much of that they resign to God. But this is false-dealing, and is shown in part in murmuring when God taketh anything from us.

THE EXCELLENCY OF SAVING FAITH.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.—
1 PET. I. 9.

THE apostle here giveth a reason why believers rejoice in the midst of afflictions; they are qualified thereby to receive salvation, yea, in part have it already, 'Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.'

In which words observe:—

1. The benefit: *the salvation of our souls.*

2. The grace which qualificeth us for that benefit: *faith.*

3. The respect between the benefit and the grace; it is τέλος, the end, or reward.

1. The benefit, which may be considered as consummated, or as begun; and accordingly the word Κομιζόμενοι must be interpreted. If you consider it as to consummation and actual possession, so we receive it at death, when our self-denying obedience is ended; and for the present we are said to receive it, because we are sure to receive it at the close of our days. We believe now that we shall at length have it, and therefore rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

(2.) If you consider it with respect to inchoation or begun possession, we have an undoubted right now, and some beginnings of it in the consolations of the Spirit. Now we receive it in the promises; we receive it in the first-fruits, which are some forerunning beams of the day-light of eternal glory.

2. The grace which qualificeth and giveth us a title to this benefit is faith. The word *faith* is taken in scripture sometimes for *fides quæ creditur*; sometimes for *fides quâ creditur*, for the doctrine or grace of faith. The first acceptation will make a good sense here, namely, that the whole tenor of Christian doctrine leadeth us to the expectation of, and diligent pursuit after, eternal salvation. It is the whole drift of the Christian religion. But I take it rather for the grace. This is the prime benefit which faith aimeth at, as I shall show you by and by.

3. The respect between faith and salvation. It is τέλος, the end; or the word signifieth the fruit and the reward. As τέλος is taken for an end and scope, the scripture favoureth that notion: κατασκοπὸν διώκω, I press towards the mark or scope, Phil. iii. 14. And 2 Cor. iv. 18, σκοποῦντες, the salvation of our souls is the prime

benefit which faith is not only allowed, but required to aim at. A believer levelleth and directeth all his actions to this end, that at length he may obtain eternal life. Sometimes it is put for the fruit or reward: Rom. vi. 22, 'Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.' The issue of all, the final result, was your salvation.

The point that I shall insist on is this:—

Doct. That the end and reward of faith is the salvation of our souls.

I shall open the point by explicating three questions:—

1. What is this salvation of our souls?

2. What right the believer hath to it?

3. What is that saving faith which giveth us a title to it? The last is most important.

1. What is the salvation of the soul? It is not meant of temporal deliverance, or an escape from danger, as some would affix that sense upon it, but of eternal life, or our happy estate in heaven. This belongeth to our whole man, the body as well as the soul; but the soul is the chief part of man, and that which is first glorified. When men come first into the world, first the body is framed, and then the soul cometh after; as we see in the creation of Adam, first his body was organised, and then God breathed into him the spirit of life. And we see it in common generation, when the body is first framed in the womb, then it is quickened by a living soul. This lower region of the world is properly the place of bodies, therefore reason requires that the body, which is a citizen of the world, should first be framed, that it may be a receptacle for the soul, which is a stranger, and cometh from the region of spirits that is above. But when we must remove into these heavenly habitations, then it is quite otherwise; for then the soul, as a native of that place, is presently admitted, but the body, as a stranger, is forced to reside in the grave till the day of judgment; and then, for the sake of the soul, our bodies also are admitted into heaven. This is the ordinary law for all private persons. Christ, indeed, who is the head of the church, and the prince of this world and that which is to come, his body as well as his human spirit was made a denizen of heaven as soon as he ascended. He entered into heaven not as a private citizen, but as king and lord of the heavenly Jerusalem, and therefore carried both body and soul along with him. But as to us, first the soul goeth there, as into his ancient seat and proper habitation, and afterwards the body followeth.

Well, then—[1.] At death our souls go to Christ, and enter into a state of happiness: Phil. i. 23, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.' The soul is not annihilated after death, nor doth it sleep till the resurrection, nor is it detained by the way from immediate passing into glory; but if it be the soul of a believer, as soon as it is loosed from the body it is with Christ: Luke xxiii. 43, 'Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' He asked to be remembered when Christ came into his kingdom; and Christ assureth him of a reception there that day, as soon as he should expire.

[2.] In due time the body is raised and united to the soul, and then

Christ will be 'glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe,' 2 Thes. i. 10. Such glory and honour will be put upon those who are but newly crept out of dust and rottenness; the saints themselves, and all the spectators, shall wonder at it.

[3.] There is another period in this happiness, our everlasting habitation in heaven, near unto the throne of God, and in the presence of his glory: John xiv. 2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions.' There we shall also have the company of angels and blessed spirits, and make up one society with them: Heb. xii. 23, 'To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.' This is the sum of the salvation which we expect, or our everlasting happiness with God in heaven.

2. What is the right of believers, or the interest of faith in this great benefit?

I answer—

[1.] It doth not merit this reward, for it is not a reward of due debt by virtue of any intrinsic righteousness in us, or anything that we can do and suffer, but of mere grace and favour: Eph. ii. 8, 'For by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' The apostle is very tender of the honour of grace, and the interest of grace in our salvation. From the first step to the last period, all is of grace; and this glory of his free grace God must not be robbed of, neither in whole nor in part. We have all from his elective love, we have all from the merit and righteousness of Christ, and all from the almighty operation of the sanctifying Spirit. Faith itself is a gift and fruit of God's grace in us: 'To you it is given to believe,' Phil. i. 29. Therefore surely it is God's free grace, favour, and good-will which doth freely bestow that salvation on the elect, which Christ by his merit hath purchased; and that very faith by which we apply and make out our actual claim and title is wrought in us by the Spirit; so that there is nothing in the persons to whom all this is given to induce God to confer so great benefit on us.

[2.] Though it be an undeserved favour, upon which our works have no meritorious influence, yet believers have an undoubted right by the grant and promise of God, wherein they may comfort themselves, and which they may plead before God: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have life everlastingly;' and John v. 24, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my words, and believeth in him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' And in many places where the believer is qualified as the heir of glory. He that entertaineth Christ's doctrine, and receiveth and owneth him as the true Messiah and Saviour of the world, and dependeth upon him, and obeyeth him, this man hath a full right and new-covenant title to eternal life.

[3.] He hath not only a new-covenant right, but a begun possession. We have some small beginnings, earnest, and foretastes of it in this life; partly in the graces, partly in the comforts of the Spirit.

(1.) In the graces of the Holy Spirit. For salvation is begun in our

new birth, Titus iii. 5; and therefore sanctifying grace is called 'immortal,' or 'incorruptible seed,' 1 Peter i. 23. There is an eternal principle put into them which carrieth them to eternal ends. The life is begun in all that shall be saved, and it is still working towards its final perfection. The apostle telleth us, that 'he that hateth his brother hath not eternal life abiding in him,' 1 John iii. 15; whereby he implieth that he that loveth his brother, or hath any saving grace, he hath eternal life begun in him.

(2.) As to comforts, so they have some foretastes of that sweetness which is in heaven by the life and exercise of faith, which is followed with peace and joy, Rom. xv. 13; or in their approaches to God in the word and prayer, where God most familiarly manifests himself unto his people, 1 Peter i. 3; or upon some apprehensions of his favour, or the exercise of hope and love, 2 Peter i. 8. By these or the like ways, the Spirit of God giveth us the foretaste. Surely such an author, such an object, must needs put ravishing and heavenly joy into the heart of a believer.

(3.) They are also made meet to partake of the heavenly inheritance, Col. i. 12. There is *jus hereditarium*, and *jus aptitudinale*. The difference is as between an heir grown and in his nonage, when a child in the cradle. As their natures are more renewed and purified, and their souls weaned from the delights of sense, they are changed into the divine nature.

3. What is that saving faith which giveth us a title to it? This deserveth to be cleared, that we may not deceive ourselves with a false claim.

Saving faith is such a believing in Christ, for reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory, as maketh us to forsake all things in the world, and give up ourselves to the conduct of the word and Spirit for the obtaining of it.

[1.] The general nature of it I express by believing. There is in it *assent*, *consent*, and *affiance*.

(1.) *Assent*. That leadeth on the rest, when we believe the truth of God's word, Acts xxiv. 14, 15, especially those practical truths which do most nearly concern our recovery to God; as concerning man's sin and misery, that we have broken his laws, and are obnoxious to his justice, and have deserved punishment for our sins, Rom. iii. 23. And concerning Christ, his person and office, that he is the Son of God, and that he came from God, to bring home sinners to God, and what he hath done to reconcile us to him: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'For Christ also hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.' And also concerning your duty and happiness, the end and the way. There is no other end and happiness but God, no other way but the Mediator, and the means appointed by him, John xiv. 6. Now these and such like truths must be believed—that is, in the sense we are now upon, assented unto as faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptation and regard.

(2.) There is a *consent* in faith, whether you apply it to the word or Christ. If Christ be propounded as the object of it, it is called a receiving: John i. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' So the word: Acts ii. 41,

'They gladly received his word;' that is, embraced the gospel covenant, being really affected with what he had spoken concerning their sin and their duty. Without this, the assent is but intellectual and speculative, not practical; an opinion, not an act or motion of the new nature. I am to receive the Christ offered, to embrace the covenant propounded, to accept of the blessings offered for my happiness, and to resolve upon the duties required as my work. This is consent, or a hearty accepting of Christ, or the covenant of grace offered to us in his name.

(3.) There is *affiance*, *trust*, *dependence*, or *confidence*, which is a quiet repose of heart in the mercy of God or fidelity of Christ, that he will give me pardon and life, if I seek after it in the way that he hath appointed. This cometh in upon the former; for when I consent to seek my happiness in God, through Christ, I depend upon the security of his word, that so doing I shall obtain it. This entitleth us to the reward: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence, and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;' and ver. 14, 'For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;' and Heb. x. 35, 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' The happiness which Christ promiseth us is spiritual, and for the most part future, and lieth in an unseen and unknown world; but whilst we are engaged in the pursuit of it, we must depend upon his faithful word. That must be security enough to us, to engage us to continue with patience in the midst of manifold temptations, till we obtain what he offereth to us. These three must be often renewed—assent, consent, and affiancement.

[2.] It is a believing in Christ. I make Christ the special object of this belief, not as exclusive of the Father or the Spirit, but because of the peculiar reference which this grace hath to the Mediator in this new and gospel dispensation, which was appointed for the remedy of the collapsed estate of mankind. So Acts xx. 21, 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' He speaks of repentance as respecting God, and faith as respecting Christ. These are the two recovering graces: repentance is necessary because of the duty we owe to our Creator and supreme Lord; and faith respects our Redeemer, who principally undertook our recovery to God. Christ is believed in, in order to the salvation of our souls.

(1.) Because he purchased and procured this salvation for us as mediator of the new testament: Heb. ix. 15, 'He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.' By the intervention of his death sins are expiated, that penitent believers might have everlasting life.

(2.) Because it is by him promised, or in his name: 1 John ii. 25, 'This is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life.' Christ's great business as a prophet is to discover with certainty and clearness such a blessed estate that it may be commodious for our acceptance, laid at our doors; if we will take it, well and good. He is 'Amen, the faithful witness,' Rev. iii. 14, who came with a commis-

sion from heaven to assure the world of it; and to confirm his message, he wrought miracles, died, and rose again, and entered into that happiness which he spake of, 'that our faith and hope might be in God,' 1 Peter i. 21. Guilty man is fallen under the power and fear of death, and strangely haunted with doubts about the other world. Now, he that came to save us and heal us, did himself in our nature rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven, that he might give a visible demonstration, both of the resurrection and life to come, which he hath promised to us. And when he sent abroad messengers in his name to assure the world of it, their testimony was accompanied with divers signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, Heb. ii. 3, 4, that the stupid world might be alarmed to regard the offer, and by this evidence be assured of the truth of it; therefore still it is a believing in Christ.

(3.) Because as king he doth administer and dispense the blessings of the new covenant; and among them, as the chief and principal, this salvation unto all those who are qualified. And therefore it is said, Heb. v. 9, 'Being made perfect through sufferings, he is become the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.' Every effect must have some cause; and this noble and glorious effect of eternal salvation could have no other cause but Christ; and he, as perfected and consecrated, is the author and efficient cause of it. For as king, he sendeth down the Holy Ghost to reveal the gospel, and work faith in the hearts of men, to qualify them for pardon and salvation; and all those that sue for pardon and salvation in his name, by the plea of his blood before the throne of God, and promise obedience to his laws and institutes, he actually bestoweth pardon and eternal salvation upon them. There be many other ministerial and adjutant causes, which conduce to this effect. But he is the principal; and the word *αἴτιος*, which signifieth a *cause* in general, is fitly by our translation termed the *author* of eternal salvation. So that still you see a new reason why saving faith should be described to be a believing in Christ.

[3.] The prime benefits which faith respecteth I make to be two—reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory.

(1.) Reconciliation is necessarily eyed and regarded by the guilty soul.

First, Because there hath been a breach by which we have lost God's favour and happiness. We have to do with a God whose nature engageth him to hate sin, and whose justice engageth him to punish it. And before we can be induced to treat with him, such a reconciliation is necessary for all mankind as that he should be willing to deal with them upon the term of a new covenant, wherein pardon and life might be offered to penitent believers. This reconciliation is spoken of, 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses: and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;' that is, upon the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, ransom, and satisfaction, there was so much done towards an actual reconciliation with God, that he offered a conditional covenant to as many as were willing to enter into his peace. He provided a sufficient remedy for the pardon of sin, if men would as heartily accept of it as it was freely given them; and the office of ambassadors was appointed

to beseech men so to do. And unless this had been done, a guilty soul could never be brought to love a holy, sin-hating God, engaged by justice to damn the sinner. But it must be a loving, reconciled God, that is willing to forgive, that can be propounded as an object of faith and love, or as an amiable God to us: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'

Secondly, Reconciliation is necessarily eyed by the penitent believer, because this reconciliation and recovery by Christ consists both in the pardon of sin and the gift of the sanctifying Spirit.

1st, One branch of the actual restitution of God's favour to us is the pardon of sin, without which we are not capable of life and happiness, Eph. i. 7. The possible conditional reconciliation consists in the offer of pardon, and the actual reconciliation in the actual pardon and forgiveness of our transgressions, and then the man beginneth to be in a blessed estate, Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

2dly, The other branch is the gift of the sanctifying Spirit, which is the great testimony and pledge of his love; then is our pardon executed, or actually applied to us, and we receive the atonement, Rom. v. 11; and 2 Cor. v. 18, 'All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;' that is, all things which belong to the new creature, ver. 17. And that is the reason why God is said to sanctify as a God of peace, that is, as reconciled to us in Christ: see 1 Thes. v. 23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;' and Heb. xiii. 20, 21, 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will,' &c. And in all God's internal government with the saints, he showeth his pleasure or displeasure with the saints by giving or withholding and withdrawing the Spirit, as it were easy to prove to you. Well, then, you see the reasons why, in believing in Christ, we reflect the eye of our faith on reconciliation, as the prime initial benefit.

(2.) The next great consummating benefit is the everlasting fruition of God in glory; for Christ's office is to recover us to God, and bring us to God, which is never fully and completely done till we come to heaven. Therefore the saving of the soul is the prime benefit offered to us by Jesus Christ, to which all other tend, as justification and sanctification, and by which all our pains and losses for Christ are recompensed, and from which we fetch our comfort all along the course of our pilgrimage, and upon the hopes of which the life of grace is carried on, and the temptations of sense are defeated. So that this is the main blessing which faith aimeth at: see the scriptures, 1 Tim. i. 16, 'For a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life.' Wherefore do men believe in Christ, but for this end, that they may obtain everlasting life? Wherefore were the scriptures written? John xx. 31, 'These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.' The scriptures are written that we might know Christ aright, who is the kernel and marrow of them; and the chief benefit we have by him is life, or the salvation of our souls; and therefore well may it be called in the text 'the end of our faith.'

[4.] In the next place, I add the immediate acts and effects of it:—

(1.) Such as maketh us to forsake all things in this world; and—

(2.) Give up ourselves to the conduct of the word and Spirit, for the obtaining this happiness.

(1.) To forsake all things in this world. As soon as we address ourselves seriously to believe, we turn our backs upon them—namely, upon the pleasures, and honours, and profits of this world. We forsake them in vow and resolution when we are converted and begin to believe, for conversion is a turning from the creature to God. As soon as we firmly believe, and hope for the fruition of God in glory, as purchased and promised by Christ, our hearts are weaned and withdrawn from the false happiness, not perfectly, but yet sincerely. And we actually renounce and forsake them at the call of God's providence, when they are inconsistent with our fidelity to Christ, and the hopes of that happiness which his promises offer to us. Now that our faith must be expressed by forsaking all, yea, that it is essential to faith, and nothing else is saving faith but this, as appeareth—

First, By the doctrinal descriptions of it in the gospel (which I shall describe to you according to my usual method). Our Lord hath told us, Mat. xiii. 45, 46, that 'the kingdom of heaven is like a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.' And surely he knew the nature of faith better than we do. Many cheapen the pearl of price, but they do not go through with the bargain, because they do not sell all to purchase it. Faith implieth such a sense of the excellency and truth of salvation by Christ that you must choose it, and let go all which is inconsistent with this choice and trust. All your sinful pleasures, profit, reputation, and life itself, rather than forfeit these hopes: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not father and mother, and brother and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple;' and ver. 33, 'Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' After such express declarations of the will of Christ, why should we think of going to heaven at a cheaper rate? Christ must be preferred above all that is nearest or dearest, or else he will not be for our turn, nor we for his. The same is inferred out of the doctrine of self-denial: Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' For self-denial hath a greater relation to faith, and is nearer of kin to faith, than the world imagineth; it is the immediate fruit of our trust. If God be trusted as our supreme felicity, he must be loved above all things, and all things must give way to God. If Christ be trusted as the way to the Father, all things must be counted dung and loss that we may gain Christ, Phil. iii. 8. The same is inferred out of the baptismal covenant, which is a renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a choosing Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for our God. If there be a choosing, there must be a renouncing. The devil by the world tempts our flesh from the Christian hope; therefore idols must be renounced before we can have the true God for our God: Josh. xxiv. 23, 'Put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.' Naturally our god is our

belly while carnal, Phil. iii. 19. Mammon is our god, Mat. vi. 24. The devil is our god, Col. i. 13; and Eph. ii. 2, 3, 'Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' Besides the nature of the thing, baptism implieth this renunciation, 1 Peter iii. 21; and this renunciation is nothing else but a forsaking all that we may have eternal life by Christ.

Secondly, It appeareth by reasons:—

First, For faith cannot be without this forsaking.

Secondly, Nor this forsaking without faith.

First, Faith cannot be without this forsaking; for faith implieth a sight of the truth and worth of those blessed things which are to come, and so to take the thing promised for our happiness, and the promise for our security. (1.) There is no true sound faith till we take the everlasting fruition of God in glory for our whole felicity; till our hearts be set upon it, and we do desire it, intend it, wait for it, as the chief good and blessedness. The upright heart is known by its treasure: Mat. vi. 20, 21, 'Lay up treasure in heaven; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' Now, if this be so, other things will be lessened; all other hopes and happiness is nothing worth, and will appear so if compared with this better part, with what we account our treasure; you will see all this world is vanity, and hath nothing in it worthy to be compared with the salvation of our souls. (2.) There is no true faith where the word and promise of God is not taken for our security, so as our trust in his word may quiet and embolden us against temptations, and give us stronger consolation than all the visible things on earth, Ps. cxix. 111, and Heb. vi. 18. We should do more and go farther upon such a promise, than for all that man can give unto us. Earthly pleasures and possessions should be small things in regard to the promise of God. This should make us row against the stream of the flesh, and cross its desires and appetites, and deny the conveniences of the world, and all because we have God's promise of better things.

Secondly, This forsaking cannot be without faith; because the flesh is importunate to be pleased with present satisfactions, and loth to part with things which we see and love for that God and glory which we never saw, to quit what is present for what is future, and with patience to be expected. The flesh is for pleasing the body, but faith is for saving the soul: Heb. x. 39, ἐκ πίστεως εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς: purchasing the soul with the loss of other things. So that this is faith, nothing but faith, and other faith is not true and sound.

(2.) It maketh us to give up ourselves to the conduct of the word and Spirit for obtaining this happiness. I add this, because the word is our rule, Gal. vi. 16; and the Spirit our guide, Rom. viii. 14. And faith is not only an apprehension of privileges, but a consent of subjection. And the sound believer devoteth himself to the love, fear, service, and obedience of God, 2 Cor. viii. 5: 'They first gave up themselves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God;' that is, to the

apostles as Christ's messengers, to be directed in the way to heaven : Ps. cxix. 38, 'Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.' This now is saving faith.

The use is, to exhort you to believe to the saving of the soul.

To this end :—

1. Because faith is the gift of God, beg 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that your eyes may be opened, that you may see what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,' &c., Eph. i. 17, 18. That you may be convinced of the truth and worth of the blessedness promised, and know and see it, not by a traditional report, but in the lively light of the Spirit, such as may affect and engage your hearts. Naturally we are purblind, 2 Peter i. 9 ; have no acute discerning, but in back and belly concerns. We know what is noxious or comfortable to the present life, pleasing or displeasing to the flesh ; but are little affected with the danger of perishing for ever, the need of Christ, or the worth of salvation. And till God make a change, how slight and sensual are we !

2. Think often and seriously how much the saving of the soul is better than the saving, or getting, or keeping all the world : Mat. xvi. 26, 'What will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?' So much as God is to be preferred before the creature, heaven before the world, eternity before time, the soul before the body ; so much must this business of saving the soul have the pre-eminence, and be preferred before the interests of the body and the bodily life. But, alas ! what poor things divert us from this happiness ; the satisfying of the flesh, the pleasures of sin for a season ; a little ease, or profit, or vainglory—this is all for which we slight heaven and our own salvation.

3. Put yourselves into the way of salvation, by seeking reconciliation with God by Christ. You are invited in the universal conditional offer, John iii. 16. It is offered to all that will repent and believe, and there is no exception put in against you to exclude you ; why then will you exclude yourself ? Therefore, come forward in the way of faith, and God will help you.

4. Mind often the genuine effect of the true faith. It makes you forsake all, that you may be obedient to Christ, and resolved upon it.

Therefore consider—(1.) The necessity of it. You can neither trust God nor be true to him till your heart be loosened from the pleasures and profits and honours in the world, and you can venture all upon the security of his promise. Other hopes and happiness will divert us from the true happiness, and the good seed will be choked by the cares of this world and voluptuous living, that you can bring nothing to perfection. Either you will turn aside by open defection or apostasy, or else be a dwarf and cripple in religion all your days. Either in mortification, in denying the sinful pleasures of the senses, you will slight the fulness of joy at God's right hand for a little vain pleasure, which, when it is gone, it is as a thing of nought—(it is the pilgrim abstaineth from fleshly lusts—he that runneth not as uncertain, that keepeth down his body, 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27)—or in a way of self-denial, run few hazards for Christ. It may be they may make some petty losses, but do not

sell all for the pearl of great price ; or, in a way of charity. How else can you lend to the Lord upon his bond, or the security of his promise ? Prov. xix. 17, 'He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again.'

(2.) Consider the profit. Whatever a believer loseth by the way, he is sure to have it at the end of his journey : Mat. xix. 28, 'Jesus said unto them, 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 also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' You will be no losers by God at the last.

A WEDDING SERMON.

And brought her unto the man.—GEN. II. 22.

THE words belong to the story of the first marriage that ever was celebrated in the world, between the first man and the first woman; a marriage made by God himself in paradise, who, when he built the rib taken from Adam into a woman, from a builder becometh her bringer: *He brought her unto the man*, saith the text.

God's bringing Eve to Adam implieth five things:—

1. His permission, allowance, and grant; for that Adam might thankfully acknowledge the benefit as coming from God, God himself brought her; whether in a visible shape, as prefiguring Christ's incarnation, and with what ceremony he brought her—since the Holy Ghost hath not expressed it, I shall not now inquire; it is enough that God brought her to give her to him as his inseparable companion and meet-helper. This bringing was the full bestowing her upon him, that they should live together as man and wife.

2. His institution and appointment of marriage as the means of propagating mankind. God's *adduxit* is, by our Saviour's interpretation, *conjunxit*: Mat. xix. 6, 'Those whom God hath joined together,' &c. Otherwise what need this bringing, for she was created just by him in paradise, when Adam was fallen into a deep sleep; not in another place; which sheweth that marriage is an honourable estate. God was the first author of it; his act hath the force of an institution.

3. For the greater solemnity and comely order of marriage. Adam did not take her of his own head, but God brought her to him. When we dispose of ourselves at our own wills and pleasures, being led thereunto by our own choice, without consulting with God, or upon carnal reasons, without the conduct of God's providence, we transgress the order which God hath set in the first precedent of marriage, and cannot expect that our coming together should be comfortable. Much more doth it condemn the unnatural filthiness of whoredom, whereby men and women join and mingle themselves together without God, the devil and their inordinate lusts leading them. God would not put Adam and Eve together without some regard, as he did the brutish and unreasonable creatures; but doth solemnly, as it were, bring the manness by the hand to the man, and deliver her into his hands, having a more honourable regard and care of them. God cannot abide that brutish coming together as the horses do, neighing, in the rage of unbridled lusts, upon their mates, Jer. v. 8. No; Adam stayeth till

she is brought to him. This honour and special favour God vouchsafeth mankind above all other creatures; he himself, in his own person, maketh the match, and bringeth them together.

4. To dispense his blessing to them. The woman was created on the sixth day, as appeareth Gen. i.; and it is said that when he had 'created them male and female, he blessed them,' ver. 28. He doth enlarge things here, and explaineth what there he had touched briefly. When he had made the woman, he brought her to the man, and blessed them both together; showing thereby that when any enter into this estate, they should take God's blessing along with them, upon whose favour the comfort of this relation doth wholly depend. Those whom God bringeth into it are likely to fare best, and they that resign themselves up into his hands, to be disposed of by him, surely take the readiest way to obtain the happiness they expect.

5. For a pattern of providence in all after-times. It is worth the observing, that Christ reasoning against polygamy, from ver. 24, compared with Mat. xix. God having abundance of the spirit, as the prophet speaks, Mal. ii. 15, brought the woman to one man, though there was more cause of giving Adam many wives for the speedier peopling of the world, than there could be to any of his posterity. As Christ observeth the number, so we may observe the thing itself. It is God's work still to give every one his marriage companion; he bringeth the woman to the husband, and every husband to his wife, that meet as they ought to do. His providence doth mightily and evidently govern all circumstances that concern this affair, as we shall show you by and by.

The point which I shall insist on is this:—

Doct. That marriages are then holily entered into, when the parties take one another out of God's hands.

I. I will show you in what sense they are said to take one another out of God's hands.

II. Why this is so necessary to be observed.

I. For the first, they take one another out of God's hands two ways.

1. When his directions are observed.

2. When his providence is owned and acknowledged.

1. When his directions in his word are observed; and so—

[1.] As to the choice of parties. When a man seeketh out a helpmeet for himself, he should in the first place seek out a helpmeet for himself in the best things; for in all our deliberate and serious consultations, religion must have the first place: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof,' &c. A man's chief end should be discovered in all his actions, as it must guide me in my meat, and drink, and recreations, and the ordinary refreshments of the natural life, or else I do not act as a Christian. So much more in my most important and serious affairs, such as marriage is, and upon which my content and welfare so much dependeth. Certainly, he that would take God's blessing along with him, should make choice, in God's family, of one with whom he may converse as an heir with him of the grace of life. A Christian, saith the apostle, is at liberty to marry, *ἀλλὰ μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ*, 'but only in the Lord,' 1 Cor

vii. 39; he is at liberty to rejoice, but in the Lord; to eat, and drink and trade, but in the Lord; so to marry, but in the Lord. Religion must appear uppermost in all his actions, and guide him throughout. The mischiefs that have come by a carnal choice should be sufficient warning to Christians: Gen. vi. 2, 'The sons of God went in unto the daughters of men, and took them wives, because they were fair.' They were swayed by carnal motives (or because rich, or nobly descended, it is all one), and what was the issue of it? There came of them a mongrel race of giants, that rose up against God and his interest in the world. Many times, by a carnal choice, all the good that is gotten into a family is eaten out, and within a little while religion is cast out of doors: Ps. cvi. 35, 'They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works;' Neh. xiii. 25, 26, 'I contended with them, and made them swear by God, Ye shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons;' 2 Kings viii. 18, 'He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife.' Valens, the emperor, married with an Arian lady, and so was ensnared so far as to become a persecutor of the orthodox. The wife of the bosom hath great advantages, either to the perverting or the converting a man's heart to God; or else, if they should not prevail so far, what dissonancy and jarrings are there in a family when people are unequally yoked, the wife and husband drawing several ways!

[2.] As to consent of parents. God here in the text, as the common parent, taketh himself to have the greatest hand in the bestowing of his own children. He brought her unto the man; and ordinary parents are his deputies, which must bring and give us in marriage, especially when young, and under their power. The scripture is express for this: Exod. xxii. 17, 'If her father wholly refuse to give her unto him,' &c.; 1 Cor. vii. 38, 'He that giveth her in marriage,' &c.

[3.] As to the manner of procuring it, that they labour to gain one another by warrantable, yea, religious ways, that we may lay the foundation of this relation in the fear of God; not by stealth, or carnal allurements, or violent importunities, or deceitful proposals, but by such ways and means as will become the gravity of religion; that weanedness and sobriety that should be in the hearts of believers; that deliberation which a business of such weight calls for; and that reverence of God, and justice that we owe to all; that seriousness of spirit, and that respect to the glory of God with which all such actions should be undertaken: Col. iii. 17, 'Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.' When this is observed, we are said to take one another out of God's hands.

[4.] Especially clearing up our right and title by Christ. Meats, drinks, marriage, they are all sanctified by the word and prayer, and appointed to be received by thanksgiving of them that believe and receive the truth, 1 Tim. iv. 3-5. There is a twofold right—*dominium politicum et evangelicum*; *dominium politicum fundatur in providentiâ, evangelicum in gratiâ*—political right is founded in God's providence, evangelical right in grace. We have a civil right to all that cometh to us by honest labour, lawful purchase, or inheritance, and fair and comely means used; which giveth us a right not only be-

fore men, but before God ; not by virtue of their laws, but his grant. By a providential right, all wicked men possess all outward things, which they enjoy as the fruits and gifts of his common bounty, it is their portion, Ps. xvii. 14. Whatever falleth to their share in the course of God's providence, they are not usurpers merely for possessing what they have, but for abusing what they have. They have not only a civil right to prevent the encroachments of others by the laws of men, but a providential right before God, and are not simply responsible for the possession, but the use. But then there is an evangelical or new-covenant right. So believers have a right to their creature comforts by God's special conveyance, that sweeteneth every mercy, that it comes wrapt in the bowels of Christ. 'The little which the righteous hath is better than the treasures of many wicked ;' as the mean fare of a poor subject is better than the dainties of a condemned traitor. And this we have by Christ, as the heir of all things, and we by him, 1 Cor. iii. latter end. So all those things do belong to them that believe, as gifts of his fatherly love and goodness to us in Christ. As we take our bread out of Christ's hands, so we must be married to Christ before married to one another ; the marriage covenant should be begun and concluded between Christ and you.

[5.] For the end. The general and last end of this, as of every action, must be God's glory, 1 Cor. x. 31, and Col. iii. 17. A Christian's second-table duties and first-table duties should have on them HOLINESS TO THE LORD. All the vessels of Jerusalem must have God's impress. More particularly our increase in godliness, and the propagation of the holy seed must be aimed at. Where one person is a believer, much more where both, they beget sons and daughters to God ; 'but now are they holy,' 1 Cor. vii. 14. But those out of the church beget sons and daughters to men, merely to people the world. Seth's children are called 'sons of God,' Gen. vi. 1, 2. In the careful education of children, the church is upheld.

2. When his providence is owned and acknowledged. It is the duty of them that fear God to own him upon all occasions, especially in such a business. Heathens would not begin such a business without a sacrifice. There is a special providence about marriages. God claimeth the power of match-making to himself, more than he doth of ordering any other affairs of men : Prov. xix. 14, 'Riches and honours are an inheritance from our fathers ; but a good wife is from the Lord.' Inheritances pass by the laws of men, though not without the intervention of God's providence, who determineth to every man the time of his service, and the bounds of his habitation, where every man shall live, and what he shall enjoy. The land of Canaan was divided by lot ; but marriage is by the special destination of his providence, either for a punishment to men, or for a comfort and a blessing. Here providence is more immediate, by its influence upon the hearts of men ; here providence is more strange and remarkable, in casting all circumstances and passages that did concern it. Estates fall to us by more easy and obvious means, and, therefore, though nothing be exempted from dominion of providence, yet a good wife is especially said to be of the Lord. So also Prov. xviii. 22, 'Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.' A wife,

that is a wife indeed—one that deserveth that name—he that findeth her, it is a chance to him, but an ordered thing by God. He hath not only experience of God's care, but his goodness and free grace to him in that particular. Well, then, God must be owned, sought, glorified, in this particular. The husband, in the catalogue and inventory of his mercies, must not forget to bless God for this, and the wife for the husband. The Lord was gracious in providing for me a good companion; I obtained favour from the Lord. God is concerned in this whole affair, he brought the woman to the man; he giveth the portion, which is not so much the dowry given by the parents, which is little worth, unless his blessing be added with it, as all the graces and abilities by which all married persons are made helpful one to another. He giveth the children, Ps. cxxxvii. 3, 'Lo, children are an heritage from the Lord;' their conception and formation in the womb is from God. Parents know not whether it be male or female, beautiful or deformed. They know not the number of the bones, and veins, and arteries. He giveth them life; a sentence of death waylayeth them as soon as they come into the world. He giveth them comfort; there is a great deal of pride, and arrogancy, and self-willedness in all the sons and daughters of Adam, which makes them uncomfortable in their relations. A wife would soon prove a Jezebel, and not an Abigail, and a husband a Nabal, and not a David, by Satan's malice and our own corruption; a help would soon become a snare. They that would perform the duties of this relation need strongly to be supported with the assistance of God's Spirit. 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,' Eph. vi. 10. So that, since God giveth all, surely his providence must be owned and acknowledged; and you ought to say, this is the wife God hath chosen for me, and this is the husband God hath chosen for me.

II. Why is this so necessary a duty? It doth in a great measure appear from what is said already. But farther—

1. It will be a great engagement upon us to give God all the glory of the comfort we have in such a relation, when you do more sensibly and explicitly take one another out of God's hands. We are apt to look to second causes; he that sendeth the present is the giver, not he that bringeth it to us. The Romans were wont once a year to cast garlands into their fountains, by that superstition owning the benefit they had by them. However, it hath a good moral to us in the bosom of it, that we should own the fountain of our blessings, and not ascribe them to our own wisdom and foresight, but the grace and favour of God, who, in the mere lottery and chance of human affairs, was pleased to choose so well for us. Jacob owned his fountain when he was become two bands, Gen. xxxii. 10. So should we; *of him, through him, to him*, do mutually infer one another. What we have from God, must be used for God. God is very jealous that we will not look to the original and first cause of our mercies: Hosea ii. 8, 'She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold; and therefore will I return, and take away my corn, and wine, and oil, and flax,' &c. It is the way to lose our comforts, when we do not own and acknowledge God's hand in them. We are drowned in sense, inured and accustomed to second causes, so that

God's hand is invisible and little regarded, we know it not, or heed it not. Now that we may look up and own the first cause, and give him his due honour, it is good to have explicit and actual thoughts in the receiving of our mercies, so as to take them out of God's hand; to draw aside the veil and covering of the creature, that you may remember the giver.

2. That we may carry ourselves more holily in our relations, it is good to see God's hand in them. Every relation is a new talent wherewith God intrusteth us to trade for his glory; and to that end we must make conscience to use it. In Mat. xxv., the master delivered to every one his goods apart, and they that had the benefit received the charge. We are often pressed to do things, as in and to the Lord, upon religious and gracious reasons. It hath been the credit of religion, *Dent tales mercatores, tales maritos, tales exactores fisci*, &c.—Let history show such husbands, such wives, &c. The Christian religion maketh a man conscientiously careful and tender of his duty to man, not from a natural principle, or from our own ease, peace and credit, but from the conscience of our duty to God. Now it must not lose this credit by you. God puts us into relations to see how we will glorify him in them; there is something more required of you than as single Christians. God that puts a man into the ministry, requireth that he should honour him, not only as a Christian, but as a minister. And God that calleth a man into the magistracy, requireth that he should honour him as a magistrate. So to be a master of a family, and a wife or husband, there is another talent to be accounted for. An ambassador that is sent into a foreign country about special business, must give an account, not only as a traveller, but as an ambassador, of the business he was intrusted with. God will have honour by you as a wife, or as a husband; you have a new opportunity to make religion amiable, that the unbelieving world may see how profitable the heavenly life is to human society.

3. That we may more patiently bear the crosses incident to this state of life if God call us to them. They that launch forth into the world, sail in a troublesome and tempestuous sea, and cannot expect but to meet with a storm before they come to the end of their voyage. The married life hath its comforts, and also its encumbrances and sorrows. Now it will sweeten all our crosses incident to this condition, when we remember we did not rashly enter into it by our own choice, but were led by the fair directure and fair invitation of God's providence; we need not much be troubled at what overtaketh us in the way of our duty, and the relations to which we are called. That hand that sent the trouble will sanctify it, or he will overrule things so that they shall work for our good. If God call us into this estate, he will support us in it. It is a great satisfaction to you that you are acting that part in the world which God would have you act; that you can say, I am there where God hath set me, and therefore will bear the troubles that attend that state and condition of life. If a man run on his own head, and inconveniences arise, they are more uncomfortably borne. It is true, that God doth fetch off his people from the afflictions they have brought upon themselves by their sin and folly, such is the indulgence of his grace; yet those sufferings are the more

uncomfortable that take us out of the way of our duty; and God hath undertaken only to keep us in all our ways, but not out of our duty, Ps. xci. 11. The promises are not to foster men in their running after folly, but to encourage them in their several callings and state of life wherein God hath set them; there we may abide with comfort, and expectation either of God's blessing or his support. We tempt God when we venture upon a state of life which he hath not called us to, and have not his warrant; but when it is not good for us to be alone, and the Lord sends an helpmate for us, he will not forsake us.

4. We may with the more confidence apply ourselves to God, and depend on him for a blessing upon a wife of God's choosing, or a husband of God's choosing. We have access to the throne of grace with more hope, because we have given up ourselves to his direction: Prov. iii. 6, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' God will order things for the best, when we do not lead, but follow him, we still consult with God, and dare not undertake anything but what is agreeable to his will. And will God mislead us and direct us amiss, or turn us into a by-way or crooked path? It is said, Ps. xxxvii. 23, 24, 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he (that is the Lord) delighteth in his way; though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.' It is a blessed thing to be under God's conduct, to be led on or led off by so wise, and powerful, and all-sufficient a guide; for such he delights to do them good, and taketh pleasure in his resolutions to prosper them. Sometimes they shall have a taste of the evils of the world, but they shall not be ruined by them. They may fall, but they shall not be dashed in pieces; it is an allusion to a vessel that gets a knock, but is not broken by the fall.

5. It is an help to make us more ready to part with one another when God willeth it. All temporal things, we receive them from God, upon this condition, to yield them up to God again, when he calls for them. The law concerning all created enjoyments is, 'The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh,' Job i. 21. We make a snare for ourselves, and receive them not in a right notion, if we do not receive them as mortal and perishing comforts, which God may demand at pleasure, and so keep the soul loose, and in a posture of submission, if God should cross us and disappoint us in them. Thus must we use all outward comforts with that weanedness and moderation as to children, estates, and all temporal blessings, &c., that will become a sense of the frailty that is in them, and the wheelings and turnings of an uncertain world. It is the apostle's direction: 1 Cor. vii. 29, 'The time is short, it remains that those that have wives be as though they had none;'—not as to be defective in our love to them and care over them; no, there is rather to be an excess than a defect here: Prov. v. 19, 'Be thou ravished always with her love;'—but as to a preparation of heart to keep or lose, if God should see fit, to be contented to part with a dear yoke-fellow, or at least with an humble submission and acquiescence, when God's will is declared; and somewhat of this must be mingled with all our rejoicings, some thoughts of the vanity of the creature. Leavened bread was to be eaten with

the thank-offerings in the feast of tabernacles, when the barns were full. 'Man at his best estate is vanity,' Ps. xxxix. 5. Now, to help us to do this, it is good to consider he that hath the right to give hath also the right of taking away; and as you must not be overjoyed with the receiving, so not be over-sad with parting.

APPLICATION.

Use 1. Let us seek God by earnest prayer when any such matter is in hand. Marriages, we say, are made in heaven before they are made on earth. Pagans, before the awe of religion was extinguished, would begin with their gods in any weighty enterprise. *A Jove principium* was an honest principle among the heathens. Laban consults with his teraphim; Balak sendeth for Balaam to give him counsel; heathens had their sybils, and oracles at Delphos. So far as any nation was touched with a sense of a divine power, they would never venture upon any weighty thing without asking the leave or the blessing of what they supposed to be God. So for God's children, it was their constant practice; they durst not resolve upon any course till they had asked counsel of God. David always ran to the oracle of the ephod: 'Shall I go up to Hebron?' Jacob in his journey would neither go to Laban nor come from him without a warrant. Jehoshaphat, when the business of Ramoth Gilead was afoot, doth not lead forth the captains of the army but he sends for the prophets of the Lord: 1 Kings xxii. 4, 5, 'Inquire, I pray thee, of the word of the Lord this day.' So Judges i. 1, 'Who shall go up and fight against the Canaanites?' It is a contempt of God, and a kind of laying him aside, when we dare undertake anything without his leave, counsel, and blessing; and these are the things we are to seek in prayer.

1. His leave. God is the absolute Lord of all things, both in heaven and earth, and whatsoever is possessed by any creature is by his indulgence. Whatever store and plenty we have by us, our Saviour teacheth us to beg our allowance, or leave to use so much as is necessary for us, or the portion of every day: 'Give us, *σήμερον, this day* our daily bread.' It is a piece of religious manners to acknowledge God's right and sovereignty. It is robbery to make use of a man's goods, and to waste them and consume them, without his leave. All that we have or use is God's, who reserveth the property of all to himself. In distributing to the creatures, he never intended to divest himself of his right; as a husbandman, by sowing his corn in the field, is not dispossessed of a right to it. God hath *dominium*; we have *dispensationem* of life, and all the comforts that belong to it. Life is his; man is a *custos*, a guardian of it for God. Gold and silver is his; man is a steward to improve it for God. Adam had no interest in Eve till God brought her to him, and bestowed her on him. Every one of us must get a grant of God of all that he hath; the Lord he possesseth the house that we dwell in, the clothes we wear, the food we eat; and so, in the use of all other comforts, we must have a license from God, and take his leave. God is said to have given David the wives that he had into his bosom.

2. His counsel and direction when the case is doubtful and our thoughts are uncertain: Prov. iii. 5, 'Lean not to thy own understanding.' We scarce know duties, certainly we cannot foresee events; therefore a man that maketh his bosom his oracle, his wit his counsellor, will choose a mischief to himself, instead of a comfort and a blessing. Therefore we ought chiefly, and first of all, to consult with God, and seek his direction, for he seeth the heart, and foreseeth events. We can only look upon what is present, and there upon the outward appearance. Therefore God can best direct us in our choice, he knoweth the fittest matches and consorts for every one; who hath a prospect of all things in one moment of time, and by one act of the understanding, and so can best dispose of human affairs for the profit and comfort of the creature: Jer. x. 23, 'O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: nor is it in the sons of men to direct their steps;' that is, to order their affairs so as they may have felicity and comfort in them. So Prov. xx. 24, 'Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?' We cannot foresee the event of things, what is expedient, what not. Man would fain work out his happiness like a spider, climb up by a thread of his own spinning. But alas! all our devices and fine contrivances are gone with the turn of a besom. He that will be his own carver, seldom carveth out a good portion to himself. They intrench upon God's prerogative, and take the work out of his hands; and therefore no wonder if their wisdom be turned into folly.

3. We ask his blessing. God doth not only foresee the event, but order it; by his wisdom he foreseeth it, and by his powerful providence he bringeth it to pass. Therefore God, that hath the disposal of all events, when our direction is over, is to be sought unto for a blessing; for every comfort cometh the sooner when it is sought in prayer; and whatever God's purposes be, that is our duty: Jer. xxix. 11, 12, 'I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you;' Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 'I will for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' So in this case we read, John ii. 2, when there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, 'both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage.' Married persons do need, and therefore should seek, Christ's presence to their marriage, that he would vouchsafe his presence and countenance. Be sure to invite him, and take him along with you, that he may strengthen you by his grace, and dispose all providences about you for your comfort. He puts the greatest honour upon the marriage when he doth enable you to carry yourselves graciously in that relation, and to God's glory; and he hath the power of all providences put into his hand, as well as all grace.

Use 2. Is advice to persons that are entering into this relation.

1. Negatively. See that God be no loser by the marriage.

2. Positively. Be sure that God be a gainer.

These are the two proffers I have to make to you.

1. Negatively. Let not God be a loser; he never intended to give you gifts to his own wrong.

Now that will be :—

[1.] If he be not the only one, and the lovely one of your souls. God must not have an image of jealousy set up; he must still be owned as the chiefest good. A wife is the delight of the eyes, but not the idol of the heart. Still you must be sure that his place be not invaded, that you may say, Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom do I desire on earth in comparison of thee?' Carnal complacency must not weaken your delight in God; it is apt to do so. The excuse of one of those that was invited to the marriage-feast was, 'I have married a wife, and I cannot come,' Mat. xxii. Surely Christ would teach us thereby that this relation may become a snare, and encroach upon the prerogatives of God; he may be jostled out of the heart by the intrusion of some earthly comfort.

[2.] If you be diverted from the earnest pursuit of heavenly things, either by carnal complacency or distracting cares and worldly encumbrances. There will be a time when we shall 'neither marry nor be given in marriage,' Luke xx. 35. And that is our happiest time; present contentments must not weaken the lively expectation of it, and steal away the heart into a mindlessness of it. Would God bring you to one another, think you, to turn off your thoughts and hopes for this blessed time when he shall be all in all? No; your comforts by the way in your pilgrimage must not hinder your delight in your comforts at home and in your country; this would be like a great heir in travel that should guzzle in an alehouse, and never think of returning to his inheritance.

[3.] God would be a loser if you be less resolute in owning God's truth than you were before. Oh, take heed of daubing in religion! We must hate all for Christ, Luke xiv. 26. We must be as true still to make good our engagement to him. Wife and children must be undervalued for the gospel; we may be put to the trial whether we will cleave to them or Christ, who is our choice husband. The bond of religion is above all bonds; all bonds between husband and wife, father and children, end in death, but the bond of Christ is eternal: your children will not lose by your faithfulness to God.

2. Positively. Let God be a gainer.

[1.] By your daily praises, and blessing God for his providence, that hath brought you into this relation: 'I obtained favour from the Lord.'

[2.] By living to God in this relation, performing the duties thereof so as your converse may be some lively resemblance of the communion between Christ and his church: Eph. v. 25-30, 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.'

[3.] By being mutual helps to one another in the best things, by

the advancement of piety and godliness. The love of Christ doth not only enforce the husband's duty as an argument, but points forth the right manner of it as a pattern. Christ's love is sanctifying love: so should theirs be, such a love as sheweth itself by sincere and real endeavours to bring about one another's spiritual and eternal good. Love one another, 'as heirs together of the grace of life,' 1 Peter iii. 7.