

of many, that they set light by Christ and his precious benefits, and thoughts of God and heaven grow unwelcome and unpleasing to them, rather desire wealth than God's favour, do not lay up treasures in heaven, but value an estate by the possession rather than the use. Some men's distemper is a sensual disposition; their hearts are carried after all the alluring vanities of the world, and are basely surprised by the baits of the flesh, cannot deny themselves, or govern their fancies and appetites. Others' distemper is pride, when they mind high things, know little of that poverty of spirit recommended in the gospel, and is reconcilable with a mean condition; they can hardly live with any but those that will honour and please them. Now the darling sin may be known by the frequency of its assaults, its power over other sins, thoughts that haunt us in duty; and every wise man knoweth where his temptations lie most.

3. Remember the lesser acts of sin make way for greater, as the lesser sticks set the great ones on fire. As in anger; give way to the distempers of it, and from folly it groweth to downright madness, Eccles. x. 13. So for envy, if it break out into detraction, it will make us malignant, and undermine those whom we envy, and mischievous malice is the final product. So for pride and self-esteem, let it break out into boasting, and it will breed contention, Prov. xiii. 10. Let the love of the world make us immoderate in the pursuit of it, then God is neglected, charity omitted, and it will in time draw us to unjust gain. So for sensuality; pamper the flesh with all the delights it craveth, and in time men will be scandalous in their apparel, meat, or drink. Let lust break out into wantonness, and wantonness will produce downright uncleanness; lusts will beget acts, and these acts multiply into deeds of a more foul and heinous nature. Therefore stop betimes; when you run down-hill there is little hope of staying yourselves.

4. Renew the inclination of the new nature by the means appointed thereunto, especially the Lord's supper, which is the food of the new nature, wherein we remember Christ crucified, and we remember him, that the end of his death may be accomplished, which is, that, 'we may die unto sin, and live unto righteousness,' 1 Peter ii. 24. He purchased the grace whereby this might be accomplished, and wherein we renew our covenant with God, for the strengthening our baptismal vow. Baptism is an avowed death to sin, and here we renew it again.

SERMON XVI.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.—1 JOHN iii. 10.

IN these words you have the conclusion of the whole discourse, together with a transition to another. The former discourse was about abstain-

ing from sin, the subsequent and following discourse about love of the brethren. Both exceedingly become the children of God; the one showeth their respect to their Father, the other to those in the same relation with themselves.

In this verse observe—

1. The preface, which asserts that this is the true note and character by which the two seeds are distinguished, ‘In this the children of God are manifest,’ &c.

2. This note of difference is referred to two heads—purity and charity.

3. They are propounded negatively, ‘Doeth not righteousness, neither he that loveth not his brother.’ But the affirmative is understood, that whosoever doeth righteousness and loveth his brother is of God, namely, he that liveth to God, and doth what God requireth and approveth.

Doct. 1. That there is, and should be, a broad and manifest difference between the children of God and the children of the devil.

Doct. 2. That charity and purity are true notes of God’s children.

The first doctrine may bear two senses—that this difference is manifest to others, or to themselves.

1. To others. I exclude not what the apostle mentioneth, Gal. v. 19, ‘Now the works of the flesh are manifest.’ Look, as the lewd lives of some do plainly speak out their corrupt estate to the conscience of any discerning man; as Ps. xxxvi. 1, ‘The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, There is no fear of God before his eyes.’ Either they do not believe there is a God, or they do not really and in good earnest care for him. Now if the wickedness of the wicked doth discover itself to an attentive beholder, so, on the contrary, grace should not be concealed, but break out into the conversation: 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, ‘Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of his calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him.’ God is more glorified, the world more edified, and we ourselves more comforted, the more explicitly we show ourselves to be christians. The wicked man is known by his fruits: Mat. vii. 20, ‘Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.’ And the good man by his fruits: Ps. i. 3, ‘He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf doth not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.’ But on the one side, all graceless and unconverted men do so plainly manifest themselves; and on the other, too many good christians do not so easily interpret themselves in their actions, or ‘declare plainly’ (in the apostle’s phrase) ‘that they seek a country,’ Heb. xi. 14, that is, heaven.

2. This being manifest is meant of being manifest to ourselves, in the sense of our consciences; for conscience is a nearer discernor of our actions than the observation of other men can be. It is hard to think that the soul should be a stranger to its own operations: 1 Cor. ii. 11, ‘There is a privy spy in man which knoweth the things of a man.’ There is a privy spy in our own bosoms, which is conscious to all that we do, and can reflect upon it, and judge of it whether it be good or evil; it knoweth when we understand, or will, or purpose, and resolve, or do

anything ; much more is it conscious, if not to single acts, yet to our conversation and constant course, and that for a fourfold reason—

[1.] Because acts of grace are the most serious and important actions of our lives. Many ordinary acts may escape us, they being not of such moment, for want of advertency ; but surely he that acteth for eternity will mind what he doeth. This is the great business that we attend upon, and with the greatest solicitude and diligence : Phil. ii. 12, ‘ Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.’

[2.] All acts of grace are put forth with difficulty, and with some strife and wrestling ; for there is a continual opposition of the flesh : Gal. v. 17, ‘ The flesh lusteth against the Spirit.’ Now things difficult, and carried on with much opposition, must needs leave a notice and impression of themselves upon the soul.

[3.] There is a special delight that accompanieth acts of grace, because of the excellency of the objects they are conversant about, and the excellency of the power they are assisted withal, and the excellency and nobleness of the faculties they are acted by, and the excellent ends and uses they are designed unto. There is a pleasantness in the paths of wisdom : Prov. iii. 17, ‘ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.’ Now the experience of this pleasure, and grief, and trouble for the contrary doth make the acts of grace more notorious to the soul.

[4.] A serious, constant, uniform course of obedience will evidence itself ; for though conscience be unobservant of particular actions, yet the course and drift and tenor of our lives cannot be hidden from it. A man in a journey doth not count his steps, but he doth observe his way ; so here methinks a christian should not be ignorant of his mark, drift and scope, course, and constant business. Am I going to heaven or to hell ? Phil. ii. 12. Am I pleasing God or men ? 2 Cor. i. 12 ; 2 Cor. v. 9, ‘ Whether present or absent, I desire to be accepted of the Lord.’ What is my labour, my ambition, my daily work and business ?

Two reasons.

(1.) Because they are governed and influenced by different powers, God and the devil. The children of God are guided by his Holy Spirit : Rom. viii. 14, ‘ As many as are the children of God are led by the Spirit of God.’ The children of the devil by the evil spirit : Eph. ii. 2, ‘ They walk after the prince of the power of the air, that worketh in the children of disobedience.’ Now are God and the devil so agreed as that the votaries and followers of each cannot be distinguished ? The children of God are led by the Spirit of God ; that is, they obey his sanctifying motions, either by way of restraint, or invitation and excitement. By way of restraint : Rom. iii. 13, ‘ If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.’ Or invitation and excitement : Gal. v. 25, ‘ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.’ On the contrary, the unregenerate follow the motions and suggestions of the devil, whom they resemble in their sin and wickedness. He doth by their outward senses tempt them to sin, and the tempted sinner soon yieldeth ; and he by pleasure, profit, and credit withdraweth them from God, and hardeneth them ; and they are so addicted to sin and vanity, that they cannot refrain it. Satan hath too great a power on the godly,

but he doth not so efficaciously work in them as on the carnal. Therefore between these two sorts of people there should be a manifest and broad difference.

(2.) They have a different principle, the seed of God and corrupt nature: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.' Now both correspond with their principles. It is true the principles are mixed in the regenerate, but the better part is predominant; and therefore the acts, for the most part, suit with it, and so there is a broad difference between them and those who are only influenced by the flesh.

3. They have a different rule; the one walk according to the law of God, wherein he hath declared his will, the other according to the course of this world. According to the law of God: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the whole Israel of God.' The other according to the course of this world: Eph. ii. 2, 'Walking after the prince of the power of the air, which worketh in the children of disobedience.' According to the fashion and example of unrenewed men, or the general and corrupt custom and example of those with whom we live; and they conform themselves to it more than to the will of God. Now the fashions of the vain world and the strict law of the holy God are so different, that he that walketh according to the one must needs distinguish himself from the other; there being a distinct rule, there must needs be a different course; the one doeth righteousness, the other committeth sin.

4. There is a different end and scope; the one studieth to please God, the other to please themselves. The one studieth to please God: 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;' 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'I exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more;' 2 Cor. v. 9, 'For we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' The other to gratify their carnal desires: Rom. xiii. 14, 'And make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' The one seek their own things, Phil. ii. 21. They spend their time in the flesh, 'to the lusts of men, not the will of God,' 1 Peter iv. 2. Now there being such a different scope, the practice must be different also.

5. There is a different event and issue; all the world emptieth itself into heaven or hell. Now heaven and hell are much unlike, and vastly distant, and so are those that are travelling to either place: Phil. iii. 19, 20, 'For many walk, of whom I have told you, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' If the end be different, the way must be so also.

Use 1. Is to reprove them that profess themselves to be the people of God, but do not distinguish themselves from the children of the devil; they are so like one another that there is no manifest difference to be seen. A christian never liveth up to the majesty of his profession

till he be the world's wonder and the world's reproof: 1 Peter iv. 4, 'They think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot.' It is no strange matter to please the flesh, but it is strange to row against the stream of flesh and blood. It is no wonder to see men carnal, proud, covetous, sensual; the wonder is to see men dead to all these things, to be humble, meek, sober, modest. It is no wonder to see men walk as men, but it is a wonder to see men walk as born of God. It is no wonder to see men court the world, but to live in a contempt of the world, and to see men ready to part with what they see and love for a God and glory which they never saw, this is the wonder. Yet such a mystery and wonder should a christian be that liveth up to his principles. Secondly, The world's reproof; as Noah: Heb. xi. 7, 'By preparing an ark to save himself and his household, condemned the world;' that is, judged them for their laziness and disrespect of God's warning and impenitency, for that they repented not when God gave them time to repent. God hath told the world of the danger of sin, and showed them the way of salvation. By our diligence and seriousness in his ways, and in the use of the means prescribed to save our souls, we must condemn the world for their sloth and negligence; otherwise, if we do not condemn the world, we justify the world, as Israel justified Sodom, Ezek. xvi. 51; namely, that they are not so culpable in slighting God and the offers of salvation by Christ.

Use 2. Is information. It informeth us of two important truths; the one concerneth the ministry, the other all christians.

1. If there be such a manifest difference between the children of God and the children of the devil, then ministers must carefully make the distinction, and convince the one sort and comfort the other: Jer. xv. 19, 'If thou shalt take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth;' that is, thou by thy teaching put a difference between the godly and the wicked, by confirming and comforting the one, and soundly convincing and reprovng the other; as if I myself had spoken it. The contrary is charged on a corrupt ministry: Ezek. xiii. 22, 'With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked ways, by promising him life.' This is to turn the ordinances of Christ to the service of the devil, and to gratify his children; as usually those that are indulgent to the wicked are severe against the godly, and traduce them with wrong imputations; as the naughty steward 'did eat and drink with the drunken, and smite his fellow-servants,' Mat. xxiv. 49; uphold the wicked in their carnal life; but the serious are sure to meet with a buffet from them, and smart for it.

2. The other concerneth all christians, and that is, to show us the lawfulness, yea, the necessity, of trying our estate, and taking comfort in our estate, from marks and signs of grace, taken from our works or conversations. Many think this is to lead them off from Christ to themselves, but vainly; for this is the method the Holy Ghost directeth us unto.

[1.] What comfort can we take in the promises if we must not look at those evidences in ourselves which may prove our interest in them?

All privileges have their conditions annexed, and our right is suspended till the condition be performed, and our comfort till we know that it belongs to us. For instance, God hath said, John i. 12, 'To whomsoever have received him, even to as many as believed in his name, God hath given this power, that they should become the sons of God.' Now how will you know that you have this power but by knowing that you are a true believer? and how will you know that but by marks and signs of faith? If you say, No man can know that he is a true believer, you make the promise vain; for what good will it do any man that adoption is promised to believers, if we cannot know whether we be believers, yea or no? If it may be known, we must look after the qualification, which must evidence it to be our privilege. Will you apply the promise to all, or some, or none? If to none, then it is in vain; if to all, then you deceive the most; for though some be of God, the whole world lieth in wickedness, and the most are the children of the devil. If to some, what is the reason of the restraint? How will you know who they are, but by being believers, or doing righteousness, and loving our brother?

[2.] It informeth us that if conscience be a judge and witness within us, in order to our joy and comfort, then we must judge by what we are, or what we have done, or how we have lived; for conscience can take notice of no other things. Now it is certain that conscience hath a great hand and stroke in our comfort, assurance, and peace: Acts xxiv. 16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men;' 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world;' 1 John iii. 20, 21, 'If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' Much dependeth on its verdict and testimony.

[3.] We shall be judged according to these things by God, and therefore we should judge ourselves by them; for we cannot judge by a righter way than God will judge, whether our estate be good or bad. Now this is the way of God's procedure: Rev. xx. 12, 'All of us shall be judged according to our works.'

[4.] If the Lord hath propounded this way as a likely course to produce solid consolation, surely man should not murmur against it, and gratify the cavils of the loose professor. But even so it is: Gal. vi. 4, 'Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.' Many rejoice in this, that others are worse than they; but they should try their own work and carriage by the rule, for otherwise they do but rejoice in the sins of others. No; prove so as you may approve your own work, that is, your own state and actions.

Use 3. It is an awakening to God's people, who after long profession are no more clear in their own qualification. You should so unquestionably carry it for God, that others should know you; at least you should know your own selves: 'Examine yourselves, prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' It is a shame to live so long, and not to know what is in us. But you will say, If the case be so evident, why then do so

many good people want assurance, and live in doubtfulness of their sincerity? I answer—

1. There need two witnesses: Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;' Rom. ix. 1, 'I say the truth in Christ, and lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' Why? Because the heart of man is so deceitful, Jer. xvii. 9, and the operations of it so various, dark, and confused, that we dare not trust our private judgment: 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not thereby justified.'

2. That so few know their spiritual condition is through their own default, for otherwise the Spirit is ready to witness, if we are ready to receive his testimony. There is a fourfold fault—

[1.] They do not exercise grace to the life in the mortifying of sin or perfecting of holiness, and therefore the remainders of sin are active and troublesome, and grace is weak and small, and doth little discover itself in any costly and self-denying acts, and so are not accompanied with that delight and sweetness by which they should be noted and observed. Surely great things are more liable to sense and feeling than little; a staff is sooner found than a needle, and they that cross the inclinations of corrupt nature can sooner discern a divine spirit and power working in them than others that only cull out the safe, cheap, and easy part of religion; as valour is more seen in an open field than by lurking in a garrison.

[2.] It may be they do not examine their state or heed soul-affairs, that they may get their uprightness interpreted: 1 Cor. xi. 28, 'But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup;' 2 Cor. xiii. 4, 'Examine yourselves, prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye are reprobates?' Now if men do not reflect upon themselves, no wonder they be ignorant of their own estate.

[3.] Sometimes, out of a faulty modesty and humility, they deny what is wrought in them and by them. A child of God should own his graces as well as corruptions. Hezekiah said, 2 Kings xx. 3, 'O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and done that which is good in thy sight.' We should not so far look to what we should be as not to observe what we are and have already been; for the day of small things must not be despised, Zech. iv. 10. The spouse owneth grace in the midst of infirmities: Cant. v. 2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh;' and he in the Gospel, Mark ix. 24, 'Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief.' We are sensible of a disease more than health. We come short of what we should have, but is there nothing of God in our souls? We should not only observe our sins and infirmities, but also take notice of the good things that are found in us. Christ taxeth this over-humility in Peter: John xiii. 8, 'Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.'

[4.] The general cause is laziness: 2 Peter i. 10, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' Heb. vi. 11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end;' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace.' So far as

we neglect our duty, the sense of our interest may abate. Foolish presumption costs a man nothing, but solid assurance cometh with diligence; and the more grace is exercised in acts of communion with God, the more it is known by us: Job xxii. 21, 'Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace.' In difficulties and afflictions: Heb. xii. 11, 'No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' In all the duties of holiness: John xiv. 21, 23, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' In duties towards God: Heb. xi. 4, 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.' In duties towards men: 1 John iii. 19, 'And hereby we know we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.'

Doct. 2. That purity and charity are true notes of God's children.

These are characters laid down here, as manifest evidences whereby our estate may be determined.

First, Purity. See how it is described in the text, 'He that doeth not righteousness is not of God.' Where observe—

1. That not only sins of commission, but omission, may render our estate questionable. He had said before, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil;' now he altereth his manner of speaking, 'He that doeth not righteousness is not of God,' and so by consequence of the devil, though he should not offend by doing harm or doing unrighteousness. To do righteousness is to do that which righteousness calleth for and requireth at our hands, when time and occasion is offered; and he that doth not so is not of God; and therefore not only commission of sin, but neglect of a christian life, involveth us in this blemish of being children of the devil: Mat. iii. 10, 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.' Not only the poisonous, but the barren tree. And it is made the character of the wicked: Ps. xxxvi. 3, 'He hath left off to be wise, and to do good.' To cast off or neglect the ways of wisdom and holiness is an argument of wickedness, though no other apparent evil should be charged upon us. The unprofitable servant is cast into everlasting fire, Mat. xxv. 30; not he that embezzled his talent, but folded it in a napkin. Many think, if they do nobody any harm, God will accept them; but what good do you do? That child is counted undutiful not only that doth not wrong and beat his father, but he that doth not give him due reverence. Therefore it should humble us that we do no more good, that we so much neglect God, that we do no more edify our neighbour, or take care for the saving of our souls. We think omissions no sins, or light sins, but God doth not think so. Surely omissions are sins; there is in them the nature of the first sin, as considered in Adam or us; there was an aversion from God, and a conversion to the creature. In us there is *caentia originalis justitiæ*, first a want of that grace that should incline us to God, and then followeth all the corruption and pollution of nature; the daughter is like the mother. In actual sin there is a cessation of acts of love to God, then inordinate acts of self-love: Titus ii. 12,

‘Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.’ Secondly, From the nature of the law. A sin of omission is contrary to the precept, as well as a sin of commission. To the prohibition: ‘Cease to do evil, learn to do well,’ Isa. i. 16. There we must use the bridle, here the spur. Thirdly, Our mercies are not only privative, but positive; deliverance from hell, and eternal life, John iii. 16. God is both a sun and a shield, Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Gen. xv. 1, ‘I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.’ As our mercies, so our obedience. Sinning is a direct way to hell, as doing righteousness is to heaven. Fourthly, Christ came that we might live unto righteousness, as well as die unto sin, 1 Peter ii. 24; to promote vivification as well as mortification; that we might know the power of his resurrection as well as be planted into the likeness of his death; that the good principle might be cherished and induced into act, as well as the bad principle curbed and restrained. Fifthly, Because we cannot else improve our talents, but God’s best gifts would lie idle upon our hands if we did not exercise ourselves unto godliness. Every relation puts new duties upon us; so doth every new gift and talent. To be sure our relation to God calleth for more duty at our hands than we are wont to perform; and the general wickedness that is charged upon mankind is, that they do not seek after God, Ps. xiv. 2; and Ps. x. 3, 4, ‘The wicked through the pride of his heart will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts.’ But besides this, consider our relations to one another, as magistrates, subjects, ministers, christians, parents and children, masters and servants; consider this, and you will find that the greatest part of the sins of the world lieth in sins of omission. When we look into our bill, to see what we owe to God, according to the advice of the unjust steward, instead of a hundred, to put down fifty, we leave out all our omissions. We do not worship an idol, but we forget the true God days without number, Jer. ii. 32. We do not take away that which is another’s, but do not give our own; they do not swear, but do they honour and glorify the name of God in their conversations?

2. But let us explain the nature of this doing righteousness. It is to fear God, and walk in all his ways: Acts x. 35, ‘He that feareth God and worketh righteousness.’ Or he is said to do righteousness who, being justified and sanctified by the Spirit, doth give up himself to God to do his will, and maketh it the business of his life to grow more complete therein. Renewing is in it: Eph. ii. 10, ‘Ye are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works.’ Dedication is in it: Rom. vi. 13, ‘But yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.’ The will of God is your rule: Rom. xii. 2, ‘That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable will of God.’ After dedication, our work and business should be to ‘live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,’ Titus ii. 12. This is the righteousness which should so be carried on from an everlasting principle by a divine rule to eternal ends. Well, then, they do but arrogate a place and a name among God’s people that do not live holily.

Secondly, The next mark is charity; this is not mentioned at random, nor merely to bring on another discourse, but with good advice.

1. The general note of God's children is holiness, and the particular note is love of the brethren. It is a great branch of righteousness, take it largely for holiness, or more strictly for our duty to our neighbour. So alms is often called righteousness in scripture; for doing good is one special act of our duty, and so a branch of righteousness: Ps. cxii. 9, 'He hath given to the poor, and his righteousness endureth for ever;' Isa. lviii. 7, 8, 'If thou give thy bread to the hungry, then shall thy righteousness go before thee.'

2. It explaineth the former note; for righteousness and love to the brethren are joined together, and so it showeth that he doth righteousness whose works are good, and come from a good spirit, from love to God, which is the soul of all duties; for he that loveth his brother for God's sake loveth God: Gal. v. 14, 'All the law is fulfilled in this one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' How all the law? Namely, as second-table duties arise out of the first, and are done for God's sake.

3. He is speaking of being born of God, and the seed of God. We resemble God in nothing so much as love: 1 John iv. 8, 16, 'He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' And we resemble the devil mostly by malice. It is the devil's work to do all the hurt he can to the bodies and souls of men, 'for the devil is a murderer from the beginning,' John viii. 44. Devouring malice is the true image of Satan, the devilish nature in us. When Jesus Christ came to discover the amiableness of the divine nature to us, it is said, Acts x. 38, 'He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.' Christ did nothing by way of malice and revenge; he used not the power that he had to make men blind or lame, or to kill any; no, not his worst enemies, when he could easily have done it, and justly might have done it. No; he went up and down giving sight to the blind, and limbs to the lame, health to the sick, and life to the dead. Therefore those that are God's children, and are born of God, and have the seed of God abiding in them, should be as zealous in doing good to all as Satan's servants are in hurting.

4. Much of christianity consists in love and doing good. Love is made to be the fulfilling of the law, Rom. xiii. 8, the end of the gospel institution: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'Now the end of the commandment is charity.' The great lesson which God teacheth us: 'Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another,' 1 Thes. iv. 9. The grand characteristic of Christ's disciples, by which they are notified to themselves and others: John xiii. 35, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' With what eyes do men read the gospel that can overlook all these things, and live in malice, envy, and hatred?

5. The parties to be loved are called brethren, and elsewhere neighbours, Mat. xxii. 39. By common nature every neighbour is a brother; but saints have the pre-eminence in this love, but not the confinement: 'Do good to all, especially to the household of faith,' Gal. vi. 8; 2 Peter i. 7, 'And add to brotherly-kindness, love.' Enemies are not excepted: Mat. v. 44, 45, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good

to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.' God must be loved in all his creatures; his natural image in all men, his spiritual image in his saints. Well, then, if you would be accounted children of your Father which is in heaven, love to all in their several capacities must be your very nature, and the doing them all the good that you can must be the very business of your lives.

Use. Look after these evidences, and see they be more and more found in you.

1. Nothing quiets the mind but a persuasion that God loveth us as his children, and that he will give us eternal life. Get this persuasion once, that God is your Father and you are his children, and then all the controversy between God and us is at an end. The reason is clear: He that taketh God for a judge only can never be fully satisfied in his condition, nor live in peace; there is no safety but in God's family, and no holy security but in being his children. The great business of the Spirit of God is to clear this to us: Rom. viii. 15, 'But you have received the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father.' So Gal. iv. 6, 'Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;' Eph. i. 13, 14, 'Whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.' The great business of our Redeemer was to purchase this blessing for us: Gal. iv. 5, 'To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;' John viii. 36, 'If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed.' The great privilege which we have by baptism as a sign: Gal. iii. 26, 27, 'For ye are all children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' By faith as to the reality: John i. 12, '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.' The church of the new testament, as to her outward estate, is an estate of sonship and adoption; and the truly godly have the real effect of it; they have the dignity, the privileges or the rights which belong to the children of God.

2. Purity of life and charity, which are here asserted to be the two sure signs of a child of God, are to be understood evangelically. If so, then they that lead impious and uncharitable lives are no children of God, however they flatter themselves in the goodness of their estate. The exclusive mark is more easy than the inclusive, because of the many failings of God's children, who have a deep reverence for God's holiness and the exactness of his law, therefore they are not so clear. What shall be said to them? They must labour to make their qualification more explicit, and remember it is to be interpreted evangelically, that is, if they be sincere. The first covenant required unsinning obedience, the second alloweth of uprightness and sincerity; the old covenant bringeth all things to the balance, the new to the touchstone. If the best of us were put into the balance of the sanctuary, we should be found wanting, and then who can be saved? Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'He is a sun and a shield, and will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' The upright are the Lord's

delight, Prov. xi. 20. These may take comfort in God, as God delighteth in them, both in affliction and prosperity: Ps. cxii. 9, 'To the upright there ariseth light in darkness,' not only after, but in life: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is my rejoicing, the testimony of my conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.' In death: 2 Kings xx. 3, 'Remember, O Lord, that I have walked before thee with a perfect heart, and done that which is good in thy sight.'

3. No sincerity is to be discerned but by our constant walk and course: 'He is a sun and a shield to them that walk uprightly;' and 'I have walked before thee with a perfect heart.' Here the upright are described by their conversations; newness of life is the perpetual testimony of our adoption. A man may force himself for an act or two; Saul in a raptural fit may be among the prophets; therefore we are to judge by our scope and walk. A child of God may be under a strange appearance in some simple acts; so the wicked have their good moods; an aguish man hath his well days: Ps. cvi. 3, 'But blessed are they that keep judgment, and do righteousness at all times.'

SERMON XVII.

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.—1 JOHN iii. 11.

IN these words we have a reason of the last clause in the former verse, why he that loveth not his brother is not of God. This is his argument: He that keepeth not God's commandments is not of God; he that loveth not his brother keepeth not God's commandments. The major is evident in itself, the minor is proved in the text, 'For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning,' &c.

In the words we have—

1. A duty, 'That we should love one another.'

2. The authority by which it is recommended to us, 'This is the message that ye have heard from the beginning.' Where—

[1.] It is a message or command, 'This is the message.'

[2.] An ancient doctrine or command, 'Which ye have heard from the beginning.'

1. The duty recommended to us, which is mutual love, 'That we should love one another;' that is, that we should love all men, but chiefly that christians should love christians.

2. The authority by which this command is enforced.

[1.] It is the declaration and message, or the commandment. Everything we read in the word of God, or hear from the word of God, is a special message sent from God: Acts xiii. 20, 'To you is the word of this salvation sent;' not brought, but sent. I allude to that of Judges iii. 20, 'I have a message from God to thee, and he arose off his seat.' Every message from God bespeaketh its own respect and reverence.