

SERMON XXII.

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.—
1 JOHN iii. 16.

THE apostle having instanced in the lowest act of love, not hating our brother, and destroying the life of another, as Cain did; now he cometh to instance in the highest act of love, laying down our own lives for the brethren. Lest by the former discourse he should seem to beat down the price of love too low in the world, he seeketh here to advance it again. A christian should be so far from destroying the life of another, that he should venture his own, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God,' &c.

In the words observe two things—(1.) An instance of God's love; (2.) The inference of duty drawn from thence.

First, The instance of God's love, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.'

1. The phrase of laying down of life imports his death was not forced, but he yielded to it by a voluntary submission; so it is explained, John x. 17, 18, 'I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and have power to take it again.'

2. For us; not only for our good, but in our place and room: John x. 15, 'I lay down my life for my sheep.'

3. Hereby perceive we the love of God. Here is love testified by some notable effect and fruit. Love lieth hidden in the breast of those that love, but it is visibly known and seen by the effects. We perceive it was a true, real, effectual love; not a well-wishing only, or a kind affection arising in the heart, and there resting, but a love breaking out into action, and evidencing itself by some act becoming such a love.

Doct. That Christ laying down his life for us was a pregnant proof and great demonstration of his love to us.

To evidence this I shall prove these things—

First, That love was the bosom-cause, spring, and rise of all that Christ did for us, and that which did set on work the whole business of our recovery to God. This is often noted in the scripture, whether you consider the act of God or Christ: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.' So Christ: Gal. ii. 20, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me;' Eph. v. 25, 'He loved the church, and gave himself for it;' Rev. i. 5, 'He hath loved us, and washed us in his blood from our sins.' Love is the inward moving cause, and our misery is the outward occasion which moved him to do so. The nature of love is *velle amari bonum*, to desire the good of the party loved. That this was the first rise is evident, because we can give reasons of other things, but we can give no reason of his love. Why did he employ so much wisdom and goodness and power, and make such a deal of do to save a company of poor forlorn creatures? He loved us. But why did he love us? Because he loved us. It was not necessity

of nature, as fire burneth because it can do no otherwise. It was the error of a great philosopher to say, that the first cause did work out of mere necessity, and that what he doth he must needs do. No; God is a free agent; he might have left us remediless, and in everlasting misery; but out of his self-inclination, and according to his own heart, he hath done us good, though he might have chosen whether he would or no. It was *opus liberi consilii*, but God would restore us, and that in the best way.

Secondly, It was God's end to carry on the way of our salvation in such a manner as might commend his love to sinners: Rom. v. 8, 'But God commended his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' There was power discovered in the creation, when God made us like himself out of the dust of the ground; but love in our redemption, when he made himself like us. He revealeth his glorious majesty in the highest heavens; in hell his fearful justice; his wise and powerful providence throughout the whole world; his gracious love and mercy to his church and people. All things in God are infinite, but the effects of his love are more wonderful than any of his attributes; there he hath gone to the uttermost. He hath no better thing to give us than himself, his Christ and his Spirit. He never showed so much of his wisdom but he can show more; but how can he show more of his love to us than he hath shown? He hath not another Christ to die for us, nor a better saviour to bestow upon us, nor a better salvation to offer to us.

Thirdly, That the course which God took doth fully suit with his end, which was a full and clear demonstration of his love, as will appear by these circumstances—

1. The person who was to work out our deliverance was the eternal Son of God. We need no other proof than this very text we have in hand, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.' He that is God did this for us; Jesus Christ, 'who is God over all,' Rom. ix. 5. Now that God, who is the absolute Lord of all things, and can do with us what he pleaseth; God, that oweth nothing to any man, that was so much offended with man; God, that stood in no need of us, as having infinite happiness and contentment within himself, that he should show so much love as to come and die for us, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God.' When we consider what Christ is, we shall most admire what he hath done for us. For creatures to be kind to one another is not so great a matter, for every one hath need of another. The world is upheld by a combination of interests, as the stones in an arch; the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee; the prince standeth in need of the peasant, as well as the peasant of the prince. But God standeth in no need of us: 'He is not worshipped with men's hands, as if he needed anything,' Acts xvii. 25. We need his blessing, but he doth not need our service to support his being and dignity or increase his happiness. When Christ was in the state of humiliation, he was subject to wants as we are; as when they loosed the foal whereon he was to ride up to Jerusalem, they were to answer, Mat. xxi. 3, 'The Lord hath need of him.' But it was otherwise with Christ as God, which we now speak of. As God, he needed not the being of man or angel; or else why did he not

make the world and things therein sooner, that he might be sooner happy? Again, as man, he was to be in subjection: 'For being made of a woman, he was made under the law,' Gal. iv. 4; and as mediator he had a commandment: John x. 18, 'This commandment I received of my Father.' But as the second person in the trinity, he is one God with the Father, as undivided in nature and essence; so of the same liberty, authority, and power: Phil. ii. 6, 'He thought it no robbery to be equal with God.' The angels were cast out of heaven for robbery, for usurping divine honour; but Christ was not thrust down for robbery and usurpation, but came down out of love and voluntary condescension to die for us. Sometimes Christ's death is made an act of obedience, sometimes an act of love: Rom. v. 19, 'By the obedience of one many shall be made righteous.' So Phil. ii. 8, 'He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.' With respect to his Father's command, it was an high act of obedience, the like of which cannot be done by man or angel, carried on with such humility, patience, self-denial, resignation of himself to God, charity and pity toward us. But considering the dignity of his person, all was purely an act of love; and the more love because, coming in our nature, he put himself under a necessity of obedience, and doing what conduced to our salvation; so he loved me and gave himself for me.

2. Our necessity and condition, when he came to show this love to us. We were the cursed offspring of sinful Adam, in a lost and lapsed estate, and so altogether hopeless, unless some means were used for our recovery. Kindness to them that are ready to perish doth most affect us. Surely we should love Christ as men fetched up from the gates of hell, for we had lost the image of God, Rom. iii. 23; sold ourselves to Satan, Isa. lvi. 3; sentenced to death and eternal condemnation by God's righteous law, John iii. 18; ready for execution, Eph. ii. 3, John iii. 36; nothing but the slender thread of a frail life between us and it. Then did Christ step in by a wonderful act of love to rescue and recover us, not staying till we relented and cried for mercy. We were neither sensible of our misery nor mindful of our remedy, but lay dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1. Thus when we had cast away the mercies of our creation, and were wallowing in our blood and filthiness, Ezek. xvi., then the Son of God came to die for us, Rom. v. 7, 8. Surely it was love, mere love, when we stood guilty before the tribunal of God's justice, that he should take the chastisement of our peace upon him: Isa. liii. 5, 'And with his stripes we are healed.'

3. The astonishing way in which our deliverance was brought about; by the incarnation, shame, agonies, blood, and death of the Son of God; this was the highest act of self-denial on Christ's part, considering him only as to the nature he had assumed: John xv. 13, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.' If his people need his death, he will give proof to them by his death of his love to them, and will act to the highest laws of friendship; we learn more of God's love by this instance than anything else.

4. The notions by which the death of Christ is set forth to us. There are two solemn ones—a ransom and a sacrifice.

[1.] A ransom: Mat. xx. 28, 'And to give his life as a ransom for many;' 1 Tim. ii. 6, 'Who gave himself a ransom for all.' This was an ancient notion: Job xxxiii. 24, 'Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom;' that is, a price and recompense given in our stead. A ransom is a price given to one that hath power of life and death, to save the life of one capitally guilty, or by law bound to suffer death, or some other evil and punishment. This was our case. God was the supreme judge, before whose tribunal man standeth guilty, and liable to death; but Christ interposed that we might be spared, and the Father is content with his death as a sufficient ransom.

[2.] The other notion is that of a mediatorial sacrifice: Isa. liii. 10, 'When he shall make his soul an offering for sin;' Eph. v. 2, 'As Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour.' He undertook the expiation of our sins and the propitiating of God. God's provoked justice would not end the controversy it had against us till it was appeased by a proper sacrifice of propitiation. Now herein was love: 1 John iv. 10, 'Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' The sins and guilty fears of mankind show the need of such a remedy. We are naturally sensible that the punishment of death is deserved and due to us by the law of God: Rom. i. 32, 'Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.' And also the necessity of a sin-offering. This Christ hath made, 'that our consciences, being purged from dead works, might serve the living God,' Heb. ix. 14.

Fourthly, The consequent benefits.

1. Relative privileges, pardon, justification and adoption. Pardon: Eph. i. 7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' To have sin pardoned, which is the great makebate, which is the worm that eateth out the heart of all our comforts, the venom that embittereth all our crosses; surely this is the great effect of God's love to us. Justification: Rom. v. 1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' To be at present upon good terms with God, freed from fears of hell and the wrath of God, which is so deservedly terrible to all serious persons: Rom. v. 9, 'Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.' Oh, how should we love the Lord Jesus, who hath procured such privileges for us. So for adoption, to be taken into God's family: Gal. iv. 5, 'When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Assured of welcome and audience in all our needs, as children are when they come to their father, to wait for present provision, and hereafter for a child's portion.

2. Positive inherent graces, to have our natures sanctified, healed, and freed from the stains of sin; all which is done by virtue of the death of Christ: Eph. v. 26, 'He gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it;' Titus ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;' and so fitted for the service of God:

Rev. i. 5, 6, 'Who hath loved us, and washed us in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God.' Surely to have a nature divine and heavenly, to be made like God, serviceable to God, is a mercy not easily valued according to its worth. Nay, further, to be fortified against the enemies of our salvation. The devil: Col. ii. 15, 'And having spoiled principalities and powers, he hath made a show of them openly, triumphing over them.' The world: Gal. i. 4, 'He gave himself that he might redeem us from this present evil world.' The flesh: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof;' Rom. vi. 6, 'Knowing that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed;' 1 Peter ii. 24, 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness.' They are distempered and diseased souls that are not affected with these kind of mercies, and value worldly greatness before them; as swine take pleasure in the mire, and ravenous beasts feed on dung and carrion. Surely these greater mercies, which tend to the perfecting and ennobling our natures, should endear Christ to us.

3. Eternal blessedness and glory; this is also the fruit of his laying down his life for us; for it is said, 1 Thes. v. 10, 'He died for us, that whether we sleep or wake, we should live together with him;' and again, Heb. ix. 15, 'He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressors that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.' That is the consummate benefit, when we shall be brought nigh to the throne of God, and shall be companions of the holy angels, and for ever behold our glorified Redeemer, and our nature united to the Godhead; and for our persons, we shall have the nearest intuition and fruition of God that we are capable of, and live in the fullest love to him and delight in him, and the soul shall for ever dwell in a glorified body, which shall not be a prison, but a temple to it; and be no more troubled with infirmities, necessities, and diseases, but for ever be at rest with the Lord, and glorify his name to all eternity. Thus we see what love God hath showed us in Christ, or Christ hath showed to us in dying for us.

Fifthly, That love doth shine forth more in our redemption by Christ than in any other way whereby God hath discovered himself to the creature. That we have a good God is otherwise manifested, and there is nothing comes from him but shows forth something of his goodness: Ps. cxix. 68, 'Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.' He discovered love in our creation, when he gave us a reasonable nature, and made us a little lower than the angels; but he showeth more love in our restoration, when he giveth us a divine nature, and advanceth our nature in the person of Christ far above principalities and powers. He might have made us toads and serpents; he might have left us devils. He showeth love to us in his preservation and daily providence, that he maintaineth us at his own expense, though we do him so little service, yea, do so often offend him; but he shows more in pardoning our sins, and adopting us into his family, and giving us eternal life. A word made us, and his providential word keepeth us: 'For he upholdeth all things by the word of his power;' and 'Man

liveth not by bread alone ;' but we could not be redeemed without the death of the Son of God: 1 John iv. 10, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' Therefore here is the true glass wherein to see God. Surely we had never known so much of the love of God had it not been for this great instance: 1 John iv. 9, 'In this was the love of God manifested towards us, because he sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.' What was Jesus Christ but love incarnate, love born of a virgin, love hanging on a cross, love laid in the grave, love made sin, love made a curse for us? It was love that accomplished all the wonders of our redemption.

Use 1. This glorious demonstration of God's love should fill us with admiring thoughts and praise. We owe all to love. Christ: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' The covenant: Jer. xxxii. 40, 41, 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and will not turn away from them, to do them good: yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.' The blessings of the covenant; conversion: Eph. ii. 4, 5, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins and trespasses, he quickened us.' Pardon: Hosea xiv. 4, 'I will heal their backslidings, and will love them freely.' Hopes of glory: 2 Thes. ii. 16, 'He hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.' Our final glorification: 1 John iii. 1, 'Behold what manner of love is this!' Pardon, grace, glory, all cometh of love. Nothing should be more frequent in our hearts and mouths than the love of God. It is the study of the saints to admire this: Eph. iii. 18, 'That we may comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.' To get more large and lively thoughts of it. This will most be when we have some interest in these things: 1 John iii. 1, 'Behold what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!' And you find the fruits of it in your own souls: Rom. v. 5, 'But hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.' Feel the virtue of his death in heart and conscience, then glory in it: Gal. vi. 14, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;' 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself.' When it appeaseth your guilty fears, and freeth you from the tyranny of worldly lusts, the saving effects of this love, a deep and intimate feeling giveth us the true sense of those things, more than a pertinent and exact discourse.

2. This glorious demonstration of God's love to us should beget love in us to God again: 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him because he hath loved us first.' Shall Jesus Christ love me, and make a plaster of his blood for my poor wounded soul, and shall I not love him again? The cold wall will reverberate and beat back again the heat of the sun: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, if one died for all, then are all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.' Our hearts should

be drawn in to him, and love and thankfulness should be the life of all obedience; for all christian religion in effect is but love. Love is the spring and rise of all that Christ did for us; so it should be the rise and spring of all that we do for Christ, that we may act and suffer for him as willingly and readily as he did for us. We can hardly take comfort in any dispensation of God unless there be love in it; neither will God accept any duty of ours unless there be love in it. Oh, let love beget love!

3. Let us be content with this manifestation of the love of God; we have the fruits of his death, though God straiten us in outward things. We cannot say God doth or doth not love us, though he giveth or withholdeth a worldly portion: Eccles. ix. 1, 'None can know love or hatred by these things.' Sometimes God's enemies have a large supply, when his people are kept short and bare: Ps. xvii. 14, 'From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose bellies thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.' But if he giveth us the saving effects of Christ's death, it is a certain demonstration of his love, though he doth not gratify us with worldly increase. Let us look after the distinguishing effects of his love, and the favour he beareth to his people.

Secondly, I come to the duty hence inferred, 'We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'

Doct. Christians ought to be ready to lay down their lives for the brethren.

This is the use we are directed to make of God's laying down his life for us, not only that we may love him again, and be reconciled to him, but to teach us how to love one another.

Note three things from hence—

First, 'That our love of the brethren is inferred out of Christ's love to us. Christ's love to us hath a double respect to it—(1.) It hath the force of a cause; (2.) The use of a pattern and example.

1. The force of a cause. Out of gratitude to Christ we should love those that are Christ's, those that are his people, and bear his name and image; because he hath loved us, we should love one another: 1 John iv. 11, 'If God so loved us, we should love one another,' for this reason.

2. It hath the use of a pattern and example; we must not only love others because he hath loved us, but we must love others as he hath loved us: John xv. 12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you;' and John xiii. 34, 'This is my new commandment which I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' This is the pattern propounded to our imitation.

Secondly, 'That in our love to the brethren, as we must imitate Christ in other things, so in laying down our lives for their good. Our love should be free as his was, sincere as his was, fruitful as his, constant as his love, superlative as his: Eph. v. 2, 'Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us.' But chiefly in his dying, to reduce men to God. Christ was willing to endure all extremity to expiate our sins and bring about our salvation. Christ's love fainted not: John xiii. 1,

'Christ having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end.' Therefore we should venture our lives in such a noble design to bring men to the christian faith. Christ's precious blood was more valuable than all the world, therefore we should not stick at any thing.

Thirdly, It is not left arbitrary and free to us to do or not to do, but we must or ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. So it is in the text, 'We ought also.' Christ must be obeyed whatever our inclinations be. It is such a necessary duty, that we are nothing without it: 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3, 'Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gifts of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I had all faith, and I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And 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.' We have not the true spirit of christianity till this be accomplished in us.

But in what cases is a man to die for another?

I answer—This case of conscience must be decided by distinguishing—(1.) The persons; (2.) The cause; (3.) The manner; (4.) The call.

First, As to the persons for whom we must lay down our lives.

1. They may be considered as aliens or infidels, or as fellow-christians. Principally the latter are intended, for they are more properly our brethren, and this duty belongeth to brotherly love, as it is distinguished from charity. But yet the others are not wholly to be excluded, because we die or venture our lives for infidels that they may become brethren; as Christ died for us when we were enemies that we might be made friends. And therefore, though base and brutish, and opposite to us for the present, yet there should be an earnest desire of their spiritual good; and it is most like the example of Christ to run all hazards for the conversion of the world, as well as the confirmation of the faithful: Phil. ii. 17, 'Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.' His blood poured out as a drink-offering, with allusion to the sacrifices of the law.

2. They may be considered as a single person or as a multitude. Now for a community, there is no question but I should venture my single life to save them. It is a constant rule that all private things must give way to public, for God's glory is more promoted and concerned in a public good than in a private; therefore a public good is better and more considerable in itself than any man's particular temporal happiness. God's glory must be preferred before the creature's profit. Heathens have chosen to die for the public good, or for their country's, though it may be suspected fame had a great influence on it. Thus Curtius went into a gulf to save his country. Yea, the creatures act against their particular nature to preserve the universe. Lawrence ran the hazard of a gridiron rather than betray the faithful. But now the question is, whether is one single person bound to die for another? Yes, if more eminently useful, as you shall see by and by; and that is not hard, because he is as much bound to die for me as I for him; the strong to confirm the faith of the weak, and the weak to

preserve the strong, that they may do more good. So where a great obligation is; as to our natural parents: we have received our lives from them. A private christian suffering for Christ should be owned, since a man cannot without it perform necessary duties in owning Christ's members: Mat. xxv. 43, 'I was in prison, and ye visited me not;' 2 Tim. iv. 16, 'All men forsook me; I pray God it be not laid to their charge.' Though it may involve them in great trouble to own God's servants and supply their necessities, as in Queen Mary's days.

3. Others may be considered as to their capacities of promoting the glory of God, as the magistrate, or the father of the country: 2 Sam. xviii. 3, 'Thou art better than ten thousand of us;' 2 Sam. xxi. 16, 17, 'O quench not the light of Israel,' when David was in danger; or eminent ministers, such as may save many souls. Paul telleth us, Rom. xvi. 4, 'Who have for my life laid down their own necks, unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the gentiles;' Phil. ii. 30, 'For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding life, to supply your lack of service towards me.' Persons public must be preferred before private; and among private those that excel and may be more useful, whose lives may more conduce to the glory of God. We must love a better and a more serviceable man, who hath more of God's Spirit in him, above ourselves, and an equal person equal with ourselves. Well, then, a subject is bound to preserve the life of the magistrate, as the hand will lift up itself to save the head. Nay, in some cases, though it be a private friend; for though my life and his be of an equal value, yet my duty to him and his life overweigheth, especially if the case be but hazardous, as to rescue him from an assassin.

Secondly, The cause for which we exercise this great charity to others; it is for their good. Now good is either temporal or eternal; for their eternal good chiefly we are to do this. Paul, if he might promote the glory of God, 'could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh,' Rom. ix. 3; if to free others from eternal death; so did Christ die for us. Suppose temporal good, to free them from temporal evil, to clear the community; or for useful persons, or persons for whom I stand bound.

1. Certainly we ought to help one another's spiritual good by the loss of our temporal, and venture life, liberty, and estate for the propagation of the gospel. An instance we have in Paul's glorious excess of charity. Moses: Exod. xxxii. 'Blot me out of thy book, if thou wilt forgive their sins.' But the Lord Jesus Christ above all: 2 Cor. viii. 9, 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.' A public spiritual good is more valuable than any temporal good, a necessary act of our love to God.

2. Temporal good, to save the life of public, useful, eminent persons, if their lives be more serviceable than ours.

Thirdly, The manner of exposing life to apparent hazard or to certain death; partly because in some cases we may venture our lives, though not actually lay them down, as we may expose ourselves to uncertain danger to hinder others' certain danger, as when a man is assaulted by thieves and ruffians, to prevent murder. I must contribute

my help to the wronged party, though I endanger my own life: Esther iv. 16, 'If I perish, I perish.' There are two grounds of that resolution—a public good preferred before a private. The case was only hazardous, though likely; for she would go with a courageous mind. And partly because he that ventureth puts his life in his hand, is accepted with God, though he doth not actually lay down his life; for it is so interpreted, because he runneth a course of danger.

Fourthly, The call. We must not precipitate and cast ourselves needlessly on such trials. God willeth no man to be foolishly and rashly prodigal of his own life and health, yet when clearly called, none of this must be stood upon. In two cases we seem to be called. First, When we cannot without sin escape such a trial. It overtaketh us in our station wherein God hath set us, otherwise we must preserve our lives for the glory of God and the good of others. Secondly, When God findeth us out in our sin, and others are like to suffer for our sake. 2 Sam. xxiv. 12, when David had displeased God in numbering the people, God, by the prophet Gad, offereth him three things: 'Choose one of them, that I may do it unto thee;' and Jonah i. 12, 'And he said, Take me up and cast me into the sea, for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.'

Object. It is true, I must love my neighbour as myself; but by this it seemeth I must love him above myself.

Ans. 1. I love myself when I only hazard temporal life to obtain eternal. It is not a hard law for them to keep that have an eternal life assured to them for the loss of a temporal one: John xi. 25, 'He that believeth on me shall live though he die.'

Ans. 2. Natural love is to be subservient to our spiritual love. Natural love, which is put into a man for self-preservation, no question will be stronger to itself than another; and indeed we are to prefer, and first preserve and provide for, ourselves; our neighbour is only regarded as a second self. But this is to be directed and mastered by our spiritual love. As reason taught the heathens to prefer their countries before their life, so grace teacheth christians to prefer God's honour, Christ's kingdom, gospel church, neighbour's spiritual good, before our own life and liberty; and we ought to lay down our lives for others, when the glory of God, edification of the church, and spiritual necessity of others requireth it. Our lives must not be dearer to us than Christ's was to him.

Use 1. If we are to lay down our lives for the brethren, then we should sincerely perform all lesser offices of love to them. See the next verse, 'But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need.' If you cannot part with superfluities, can you part with life for their sake? 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. If you will not hazard a frown or a check for them, how can you suffer death for them? If not put yourselves to the trouble of a visit, how will you travel all the world, and put yourselves to all manner of hazards to convert souls?

2. How much self-lovers and self-seekers are to be condemned. If I must not only love my neighbour as myself, but love him as Christ loved me, surely they have a temper most unsuitable to christianity that only mind their own things, and please their own wills and desires, without seeking the welfare of others. Whether they be in a

public or private capacity, they care not how it goes with the church and people of God, so their particular interests may flourish. This is against nature and grace. By nature man is a sociable creature, that cannot live by himself, therefore should not live to himself; and grace hath cast us into the mystical body, there is a great aggregated self, and that is the society to which we do belong; and that is the reason why we are so often said to be members of one another, Rom. xii. 5. It is but self still, the same mystical body; and we should care one for another as for ourselves, especially the public state of Christ's church. If it be ill with them and the church too, church-sorrow swalloweth up their private grief: 1 Sam. iv. 22, 'The glory is departed, for the ark of God is taken.' She doth not bewail the death of her husband, the death of a father and brother, so much as the ark's being taken, and the glory departed from Israel. If it go well with them and the church too, it doubleth the contentment: Ps. cxxviii. 5, 'Thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.' But if things go cross and ill with the church when it goeth well with them, the state of the church is a wound to their hearts: Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6, 'They prefer Zion above their chief joy.' If it go well with the church when ill with them, it is a comfort; as Paul in prison rejoiced in the progress of the gospel, Phil. i. 15-18.

3. That christian love is a more necessary and excellent grace than usually we take it to be. First, More necessary, for Christ died to set a pattern to our love; as to teach us to love God, so with what fervour and affection to love one another. Of all duties and graces that respect our neighbour, this is most necessary; it is indeed all the sum of the law: Rom. xiii. 8, 'He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.' The fountain of all: 1 Cor. xvi. 24, 'My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.' Without it, though we have the greatest gifts, do the most pompous acts, it is nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3. Yea, it is the great means of making believers useful to one another. Secondly, The excellency; here is the highest pattern, viz., Christ. We cannot come up to his height and measure, yet some resemblance there must be between his love to souls and our love to the brethren. Thirdly, The highest act of his self-denial is instanced in his laying down his life, which Christ telleth us is the greatest act of friendship among men, scarce ever found, John xv. 13. Now we take love for a slight thing as practised among us; but as it is taught in scripture, the law of charity is very strict, that we should forget our own highest interests for the profit of others; and few christians there are that have the due impressions of Christ's death upon them.

4. How much all that profess christianity should be above the fears of death, and in readiness to lay down their lives when God in his providence calleth them to it. Love to God calleth for it, Luke xiv. 26. Yea, love to man calleth for it: Acts xxi. 13, 'I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem.' This is no hard law, if we consider our obligation from the death of Christ, and our encouragement from the hope of eternal reward. Heathens died for their country out of natural gallantry and greatness of mind; they knew they could not have lived long, therefore chose this way. But christianity only teaches the true grounds of contemning life and all temporal interests.