

he was a child ; he can carry an heavier burden ; so a Christian can bear crosses with more patience.

* Obj. *But I fear I have no faith it is so weak ?*

Ans. If you have faith though but in its infancy, be not discouraged ; For, (1.) A little faith is faith, as a spark of fire is fire. (2.) A weak faith may lay hold on a strong Christ : a weak hand can tie the knot in marriage, as well as a strong. She, in the gospel, who but touched Christ, fetched virtue from him. (3.) The promises are not made to strong faith, but, to true. The promise doth not say, he who hath a giant faith, who can believe God's love through a frown, who can rejoice in affliction, who can work wonders, remove mountains, stop the mouth of lions, shall be saved ; but, whosoever believes, be his faith never so small. A reed is but weak especially when it is bruised ; yet the promise, is made to it, Mat. xii. 20. ' A bruised reed will he not break.' (4.) A weak faith may be fruitful. Weakest things multiply most. The vine is a weak plant, but it is fruitful. The thief's cross, which was newly converted, was but weak in grace ; but how many precious clusters grew upon that tender plant ! Luke xxiii. 40. he chides his fellow-thief, ' Dost thou not fear God ?' He judgeth himself, ' We indeed suffer justly.' He believes in Christ, when he said, ' Lord.' He makes a heavenly prayer, ' Remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.' Weak Christians may have strong affections. How strong is the first love, which is after the first planting of faith ! (5.) The weakest believer is a member of Christ, as well as the strongest ; and the weakest member of the body mystically shall not perish. Christ will cut off rotten members, but not weak members. Therefore, Christian, be not discouraged : God, who would have us receive them that are weak in faith, Rom. xiv. 1. will not himself refuse them.

II. The second means whereby we escape the curse and wrath due to sin, is by repentance.

OF REPENTANCE.

Acts xi. 18. *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted Repentance unto Life.*

REPENTANCE seems to be a bitter pill to take, but it is to purge out the bad humour of sin. Repentance is, by some Antinomian spirits, cried down as a legal doctrine ; but Christ himself preached it, Matth. iv. 17. ' From that time Jesus began to preach, and say, Repent,' &c. And, in his last farewell,

when he was ascending to heaven, he commanded that 'Repentance should be preached in his name,' Luke xxiv. 37. Repentance is a pure gospel grace. The covenant of works would not admit of repentance: it cursed all that could not perform perfect and personal obedience, Gal. iii. 10. Repentance comes in by the gospel; it is the fruit of Christ's purchase, that repenting sinners shall be saved. Repentance is wrought by the ministry of the gospel, while it sets before our eyes Christ crucified. Repentance is not arbitrary, but necessary; there is no being saved without it, Luke xiii. 3. 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' And we may be thankful to God, that he hath left us this plank after shipwreck.

(1.) I shall shew the counterfeits of repentance.

1. Natural softness and tenderness of spirit. Some have a tender affection, arising from their complexion, whereby they are apt to weep and relent when they see any object of pity. These are not repenting tears: for many weep to see another's misery, who cannot weep at their own sin.

2. Counterfeit, Legal affrightments. A man hath lived in a course of sin; at last he is made a little sensible, he sees hell ready to devour him, and he is filled with anguish and horror; but, within a while the tempest of conscience is blown over, and he is quiet: then he concludes he is a true penitent, because he hath felt some bitterness in sin: this is not repentance. Judas had some trouble of mind. If anguish and trouble were sufficient to repentance, then the damned would be most penitent, for they are most in anguish of mind. There may be trouble of mind, where there is no grieving for the offence against God.

3. Counterfeit, a slight superficial sorrow. When God's hand lies heavy upon a man (he is sick or lame) he may vent a sigh or tear, and say, Lord, have mercy; yet this is no true repentance. Ahab did more than all this, 1 Kings xxi. 27. 'He rent his clothes, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.' His clothes were rent, but not his heart. The eye may be watery, and the heart flinty. An apricock may be soft without, but it hath an hard stone within.

4. Counterfeit, Good motions arising in the heart. Every good motion is not repentance. Some think, if they have motions in their hearts to break off their sins, and become religious, this is repentance. As the devil may stir up bad motions in the godly, so the Spirit of God may stir up good motions in the wicked. Herod had many good thoughts, and inclinations stirred up in him by John Baptist's preaching, yet he did not truly repent for he still lived in incest.

5. Counterfeit, vows, and resolutions. What vows and solemn protestations do some make in their sickness, if God recovered them they will be new men, but afterwards are as bad as

ever ! Jer. ii. 20. ‘ Thou saidst, I will not transgress ; here was a resolution : but for all this she ran after her idols ; ‘ Under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

6. Counterfeit, Leaving off some gross sin. But this is a mistake, for, (1.) A man may leave some sins, and keep others. Herod did reform many things amiss, but kept his Herodias. (2.) An old sin may be left, to entertain a new. A man may leave off riot and prodigality, and turn covetous ; this is to exchange a sin. These are the counterfeits of repentance. Now, if you find that your’s is a counterfeit repentance, and you have not repented aright, mend what you have done amiss : as in the body, if a bone be set wrong, the chirurgeon hath no way but to break it again, and set it aright : so must you do by your repentance ; if you have not repented aright, you must have your heart broken again in a godly manner, and be more deeply afflicted for sin than ever. And that brings me to the second, to shew wherein true repentance consists : it consists in two things ;

1st Humiliation ; Lev. xxvi. 41. ‘ If their uncircumcised hearts be humbled.’ There is (as the schoolmen) a twofold humiliation, or breaking of the heart. 1. Attrition ; as when a rock is broken in pieces ; This is done by the law, which is an hammer to break the heart. 2. Contrition ; as when ice is melted into water. This is done by the gospel, which is as a fire to ‘ melt the heart,’ Jer. xxiii. 9. It is the sense of abused kindness causeth contrition.

2^{dly}, Transformation, or change, Rom. xii. 2. ‘ Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.’ Repentance works a change in the whole man : as wine put into a glass where water is, the wine runs into every part of the water, and changeth its colour and taste ; so true repentance doth not rest in one part, but diffuse and spread itself into every part.

1. Repentance causeth a change in the mind. Whereas, before a man did like well of sin, and say in defence of it, as Jonah, ‘ I did well to be angry,’ chap. ii. 9. So, I did well to swear, and break the sabbath. When once a man becomes a penitent, his judgment is changed, he now looks upon sin as the greatest evil. The Greek word for repentance, signifies after-wisdom ; when, having seen how deformed and damnable a thing sin is, we change our mind. Paul, before conversion, verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, Acts xxvi. 9. But, when he became a penitent, now he was of another mind, Phil. iii. 8. ‘ I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.’ Repentance causeth a change of judgment.

2. Repentance causeth a change in the affections, which move under the will as the commander in chief. Repentance doth

metamorphose the affections. It turns rejoicing in sin into sorrow for sin : it turns boldness in sin into holy shame : it turns the love of sin into hatred. ' As Amnon hated Tamar more than ever he loved her,' 2 Sam. xiii. 15. So the true penitent hated sin more than ever he loved it, Psal. cxix. 104. ' I hate every false way.'

3. Repentance works a change in the life. Tho' repentance begins at the heart, it doth not rest here, but goes into the life. I say, it begins at the heart, Jer. iv. 14. ' O Jerusalem, wash thy heart.' If the spring be corrupt, there can no pure stream run from it. But tho' repentance begins at the heart, it doth not rest there, but changeth the life. What a change did repentance make in Paul! it changed a persecuter into a preacher. What a change did it make in the jailer? Acts xvi. 33. He took the apostles, and washed their stripes, and set meat before them. What a change did it make in Mary Magdalene? She that before did kiss her lovers with wanton embraces, now kisseth Christ's feet; she that did use to curl her hair, and dress it with costly jewels, now she makes it a towel to wipe Christ's feet: her eyes that used to sparkle with lust, and with impure glances to entice her lovers, now she makes them a fountain of tears to wash her Saviour's feet: her tongue, that used to speak vainly and loosely, now it is an instrument set in tune to praise God. And this change of life hath two things in it;

(1.) The *terminus a quo*, a breaking off sin, Dan. iv. 27. ' Break off thy sins by righteousness.' And this breaking off sin must have three qualifications; 1. It must be universal, a breaking off all sin. One disease may kill as well as more, one sin lived in may damn, as well as more. The real penitent breaks off secret, gainful complexion sins: he takes the sacrificing knife of mortification, and runs it through the heart of his dearest lusts. 2. Breaking off sin must be sincere: it must not be out of fear or design, but upon spiritual grounds: as *1st*, From antipathy and disgust.

2dly, From a principle of love to God. If sin had not such evil effects, yet a true penitent would forsake it out of love to God. The best way to separate things that are frozen, is by fire. When sin and the heart are frozen together, the best way to separate them is by the fire of love. Shall I sin against a gracious Father, and abuse that love which pardons me? *3dly*, The breaking of sin must be perpetual, so as never to have to do with sin any more, Hos. xiv. 8. ' What have I to do any more with idols?' Repentance is a spiritual divorce, which must be till death.

(2.) Change of life hath in it *terminus ad quem*, a returning unto the Lord: it is called 'repentance towards God.' Acts xx. 21. 'Tis not enough when we repent, to leave old sins:

but we must engage in God's service : as when the wind leaves the west it turns into a contrary corner. The repenting prodigal did not only leave his harlots, but did arise and go to his father, Luke xxv. 8. In true repentance the heart points directly to God, as the needle to the North-pole.

Use. Let us all set upon this great work of repentance ; let us repent sincerely and speedily : let us repent of all our sins, our pride, rash anger, unbelief. ' Without repentance no remission ; ' It is not consistent with the holiness of God's nature, to pardon a sinner while he is in the act of rebellion. O meet God, not with weapons, but tears in your eyes. And, to stir you up by a melting, penitent frame.

1. Consider, what is there in sin, that you should continue in the practice of it ? It is the ' accursed thing,' Josh. vii. 11. It is the spirits of mischief distilled. (1.) It defiles the soul's glory ; it is like a stain to beauty : ' tis compared to a plague-sore, 1 Kings viii. 38. Nothing so changeth one's glory into shame, as sin. (2.) Without repentance, sin tends to final damnation. *Pecatum transit actua manet reatu.*—Sin at first shews its colour in the glass, but afterwards it bites like a serpent, Those locusts, Rev. ix. 7. were an emblem of sin : ' On their heads were crowns like gold, and they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions, and there were stings in their tails.' Sin unrepented of, ends in a tragedy. Sin hath the devil for its father, shame for its companion, and death for its wages, Rom. vi. 23. What is there in sin then, that men should continue in it ? Say not, it is sweet : who would desire that pleasure which kills ?

2. Repentance is very pleasing to God ; no sacrifice like a broken heart, Ps. li. 17. ' A contrite and a broken heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' St. Austin causeth this sentence to be written over his bed when he was sick. ' When the widow brought empty vessels to Elisha, the oil was poured into them,' 2 Kings iv. 6. ' Bring God the broken vessel of a contrite heart, and he will power in the oil of mercy. Repenting tears are the joy of God and angels, Luke xv. Doves delight to be about the waters ; and surely God's Spirit (who once descended in the likeness of a dove) takes great delight in the waters of repentance. Mary stood at Jesus' feet weeping, Luke vii. 38. She brought two things to Christ, tears and ointment ; her tears were more precious to Christ than her ointment.

3. Repentance ushers in pardon ; therefore they are joined together, Acts v. 31. ' Repentance and remission.' Pardon of sin is the richest blessing ; it is enough to make a sick man well, Isa. xxxiii. 24. ' The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick ; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.' Pardon settles upon us the rich charter of the promises. Par-

doing mercy is the fauce that makes all other mercies relish the sweeter; it sweetens our health, riches, honour. David had a crown of pure gold set upon his head, Pf. xxi. 3. But that which David did most bless God for, was not that God had set a crown of gold upon his head, but that God set a crown of mercy upon his head, Pf. ciii. 4. 'Who crowneth thee with mercies.' But what was this crown of mercy? you may see, *ver.* 3. 'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.' David more rejoiced that he was crowned with forgiveness, than that he wore a crown of pure gold. Now, what is it makes way for pardon of sin, but repentance? When David's soul was humbled and broken, then the prophet Nathan brought him that good news, 2 Sam. xii. 13. 'The Lord hath put away thy sin.'

Obj. But sure, my sins are so great, that if I should repent, God would not pardon them.

Ans. God will not go from his promise, Jer. iii. 12. 'Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful.' If thy sins are as rocks, yet, upon thy repentance, the sea of God's mercy can drown these rocks, Isa. i. 19. 'Wash ye, make ye clean.' Wash in the laver of repentance, *ver.* 18. 'Come now, and let us reason, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' Manassah was a crimson sinner; but, when he humbled himself greatly, the golden sceptre of mercy was held forth; when his head was a fountain to weep for sin, Christ's sides was a fountain to wash away sin. 'Tis not the greatness of sin, but impenitency, destroys. The Jews, some of them, that had an hand in crucifying Christ, upon their repentance, the blood they shed was a sovereign balm to heal them. When the prodigal came home to his father, he had the robe and the wring put upon him, and his 'father kissed him,' Luke xv. If you break off your sins, God will become a friend to you: all that is in God shall be yours; his power shall be yours, to help you; his wisdom shall be yours, to counsel you; his spirit shall be yours, to sanctify you; his promises shall be yours, to comfort you; his angels shall be yours, to guard you; his mercy shall be yours to save you.

4. There's much sweetness in repenting tears. The soul is never more enlarged and inwardly delighted, them when it can melt kindly for sin. Weeping days are festival days. The Hebrew word to repent, *Nicham*, signifies *consolari*, 'to take comfort,' John xvi. 21. 'Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.' Christ turns the water of tears into wine. David, who was the great mourner in Israel, was the sweet singer; and the joy a true penitent finds, is a prelibation and foretaste of the joy of paradise. The wicked man's joy turns to sadness; the penitent's sadness turns to joy. Though repentance seems at

first to be thorny and bitter, yet of this thorn a Christian gathers grapes. All which considerations may open a vein of godly sorrow in our souls, that we may both weep for sin, and turn from sin, if ever God restores comfort, it is to his mourners, Isa. lvi. 18. And when we have wept, let us look up to Christ's blood for pardon: say, as that holy man, *lava Domine lacrymas meas.*—"Lord, wash my tears in thy blood." We drop sin with our tears, and need Christ's blood to wash them: and this repentance must not be only for a few days, like the mourning for a friend, which is soon over; but it must be the work of our lives: the issue of godly sorrow must not be stopt till death. After sin is pardoned, we must repent. We run afresh upon the score, "we sin daily, therefore must repent daily." Some shed a few tears for sin; and, when their tears, like the widow's oil, have run a while they cease. Many, if the plaister of repentance begin to smart a little, pluck it off; whereas this plaister of repentance must still lie on, and not be plucked off till death, when as all other tears, so these of godly sorrow, shall be wiped away.

Qu. *What shall we do to obtain a penitential frame of heart?*

Ans. Seek to God for it: It is his promise to give an 'heart of flesh,' Ezek. xxxvi. and to 'pour on us a spirit of mourning,' Zech. xii. 10. Beg God's 'holy Spirit,' Pf. cxlvii. 18. 'He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.' When the wind of God's Spirit blows upon us, then the waters of repentant tears will flow from us.

THE WORD READ AND PREACHED, HOW EFFECTUAL?

III. THE third way to escape the wrath and curse of God and obtain the benefit of redemption by Christ, is, 'The diligent use of ordinances:' in particular the "word, sacraments and prayer."

1. I begin with the first of these ordinances,

I. The 'word,' 1 Thess. ii. 13.—'which effectually worketh in you that believe.'

Qu. *What is meant by the words working effectual?*

Ans. The word of God is said to work effectually, when it hath good effect upon us for which it was appointed of God; namely, when the word works powerful illumination, and thorough reformation, Acts xxvi. 18. 'To open their eyes, and turn them from the power of Satan to God.' The 'opening their eyes,' denotes illumination; and, 'turning them from Satan to God,' denotes reformation.