

father hath taught his son to swear, and damned him by his example. These men's sins are greater than others, and they shall have an hotter place in hell.

Use. You see all sins are not equal; some are more grievous than others, and bring greater wrath; therefore especially take heed of these sins, Psal. xix. 13. 'Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.' The least sin is bad enough; you need not aggravate your sins, and make them more heinous: He that hath a little wound will not make it deeper. O beware of these bloody circumstances which greaten your sin, and make it more heinous. The higher a man is in sinning, the lower he shall lie in torment.

WHAT SIN DESERVETH.

Q. LXXXV. *WHAT doth every sin deserve?*

Ans. God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come.

Mat. xxv. 41. 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.'—

Man having sinned, is like a favourite turned out of the king's favour, and deserves the wrath and curse of God.

I. God's curse, Gal. iii. 10. As when Christ cursed the fig-tree, it withered, Mat. xxi. 19. So, when God curseth any, he withers in his soul. God's curse blasts whether it comes.

II. God's wrath, which is nothing else but the execution of God's curse.

First, What this wrath is? In this wrath there is, (1.) Something that is Privative; that is, the being deprived of the smiles of God's face. It is hell enough to be excluded from God's 'presence; in whose presence is fulness of joy,' Psal. xvi. 11. God's smiling face hath that splendor and oriency of beauty shining in it, as ravisheth the angels with delight. This is the diamond in the ring of glory. And, if it were such a mercy for Absalom, that he might not see the king's face, 2 Kings xiv. 22. what will it be for the wicked to be shut out from beholding God's pleasant face! *Privatio Divinae visionis omnium suppliciorum summum.*

(2.) God's wrath hath something in it Positive: That is, his frown and enraged fury; which is 'wrath come upon the sinner to the uttermost,' 1 Thess. ii. 16. Here three positions or maxims;

1. God's wrath is irresistible, Psalm xc. 11. 'Who knows the power of thine anger?' Sinners may oppose God's ways,

but not his wrath. Shall the briars contend with the fire? Shall finite contend with infinite? Job xl. 9. 'Hast thou an arm like God?'

2. God's wrath is *terrible*. The Spanish proverb is, *The lion is not so fierce as he is painted*. We are apt to have slight thoughts of God's wrath; but it is very tremendous and dismal, as if scalding lead should be dropt into one's eye. The Hebrew word for *wrath*, signifies *heat*. To shew that the wrath of God is hot, therefore it is compared to *fire* in the text: Fire, when it is in its rage, is dreadful (as we saw in the flames of this city). So the wrath of God is like fire, it is the terrible of terribles. Other fire is but painted to this: If when God's wrath is kindled but a little, and a spark of it flies into a wicked man's conscience in this life, it is so terrible; what will it be when God "stirs up all his wrath?" Psal. lxxviii. 38. How sad is it with a soul in desertion! Now God dips his pen in gall, and 'writes bitter things:' now his poisoned arrow sticks fast in the heart, Psalm lxxxviii. 15, 16. 'While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted; thy fierce wrath goeth over me.' Luther, in desertion, was in such horror of mind, that *Nec calor, nec sanguis super esset*; he had no blood seen in his face, but he lay as one dead. Now, if God's wrath be such towards them whom he loves, what will it be towards them whom he hates? If they who sip of the cup find it so bitter, what will they do who drink the dregs of the cup? Psal. lxxv. 8. Solomon saith, "The wrath of a prince, is as the roaring of a lion," Prov. xix. 12. What then is God's wrath? When God musters up all his forces, and sets himself in battalia against a sinner, how can his heart endure? Ezek. xxii. 14. 'Who is able to lie under mountains of wrath?' God is the sweetest friend, but the forest enemy. To set forth the fearfulnes of this wrath.

(1.) The wrath of God shall seize upon every part of a sinner: 1. Upon the body: The body, which was so tender, it could not bear heat or cold, shall be tormented in the wine-press of God's wrath; those eyes, which before could behold amorous objects, shall be tormented with the sight of devils; the ears, which before were delighted with music, shall be tormented with the hideous shrieks of the damned. 2. The wrath of God shall seize upon the soul of a reprobate. Ordinary fire cannot touch the soul; when the martyrs' bodies were consuming, their souls did triumph in the flames: but God's wrath burns the soul. 1. The memory shall be tormented to remember what means of grace have been abused. 2. The conscience shall be tormented with self-accusations: The sinner shall accuse himself for presumptuous sins, for mis-spending his precious hours, for resisting the Holy Ghost.

(2.) The wrath of God is without intermission. Hell is an

abiding place, but no resting place; there's not a minute's rest. Outward pain hath some abatement; if it be the stone or cholic, the patient hath sometimes ease: But the torments of the damned have no intermission; he that feels God's wrath, never saith, 'I have ease.'

(3.) The wrath of God is eternal. So saith the text, 'Everlasting fire.' No tears can quench the flame of God's anger; no, though we could shed rivers of tears. In all pains of this life, men hope for a cessation, the suffering will not continue long; either the tormentor dies, or the tormented: But the wrath of God is always feeding upon a sinner. The terror of natural fire is, that it consumes what it burns: But this makes the fire of God's wrath terrible, that it doth not consume what it burns. *Sic morientur damnati ut semper vivant*, Bern. The sinner shall ever be in the furnace; after innumerable millions of years, the wrath of God is as far from ending, as it was at the beginning. If all the earth and sea were sand, and every thousand years a bird should come and take away one grain of this sand, it would be a long while ere that vast heap of sand were emptied; but if after all that time the damned might come out of hell, there were some hope: But this word *Ever* breaks the heart.

Qu. *But how doth it seem to consist with God's justice to punish sin (which perhaps was committed in a moment) with eternal fire?*

Ans. In respect of the heinous nature of sin. Consider the person offended; it is *Crimen Laesae-majestatis*: Sin is committed against an infinite majesty; therefore the sin is infinite, and so the punishment must be infinite. Now, because the nature of man is but finite, and a sinner cannot at once bear infinite wrath, therefore he must in eternity of time be satisfying what he cannot satisfy at once.

(4.) While the wicked lie scorching in the flames of wrath, they have none to commiserate them. It is some ease of grief, to have some condole with us; but the wicked have wrath and no pity shewn them. Who should pity them? God will not pity them: They derided his Spirit, and now he will laugh at their calamity, Prov. i. 26. The saints will not pity them: They persecuted the saints upon earth, therefore they will rejoice to see God's justice executed on them, Psal. lviii. 10. 'The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance.'

(5.) The sinner under wrath hath none to speak a good word for him. An elect person when he sins, hath one to intercede for him, 1 John ii. 1. 'We have an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Christ will say, It is one of my friends, one for whom I have shed my blood; Father, pardon him. But the wicked (that die in sin) have none to solicit for them; they have

an accuser, but no advocate; Christ's blood will not plead for them; they slighted Christ, and refused to come under his government, therefore Christ's blood cries against them.

3. God's wrath is just. The Greek word for vengeance, signifies justice. The wicked shall drink a sea of wrath, but not one drop of injustice. 'Tis just God's honour be repaired, and how can that be but by punishing offenders? Having shewn you what this wrath of God is, I shall shew you, 2. That we have deserved the curse and wrath of God: he who infringeth the king's laws, deserves the penalty. Mercy goes by favour, punishment by desert, Dan. ix. 8. 'To us belongeth confusion of face. Wrath is that which belongeth to us as we are sinners; it is as due to us, as any wages that are paid.

Use I. Of information. 1st, *Branch.* It justifies God in condemning sinners at the last day. Sinners deserve wrath, and it is no injustice to give them that which they deserve. If a malefactor deserves death, the judge doth him no wrong in condemning him.

2d, *Branch.* See what a great evil sin is, which exposeth a person to God's wrath for ever. You may know the lion by his paw: and you may know what an evil thing sin is, by the wrath and curse it brings. When you see a man drawn upon an hurdle to execution, you conclude he is guilty of some capital crime that brings such a punishment: when a man lies under the horrid zone of God's wrath, and roars out in flames; then say, How horrid an evil sin is! They who now see no evil in swearing, or sabbath-breaking, they will see it look black in the glass of hell-torments.

3d, *Branch.* See here an hand-writing upon the wall; here is that which may check a sinner's mirth. He is brisk now and frolic, 'he chants to the sound of the viol, and invents instruments of music,' Amos vi. 5. He drinks 'stolen waters,' and saith, 'they are sweet.' Oh! but let him remember, that the wrath and curse of God hang over him, which will shortly (without repentance) be executed on him. Dionysius thought, as he sat at table, he saw a naked sword hang over his head: the sword of God's justice hangs over a sinner; and when the slender thread of life is cut asunder, the sword falls upon him. 'Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth,' Eccl. xi. 9. 'But know thou for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.' For a drop of pleasure, thou must drink a sea of wrath. Your pleasure cannot be so sweet, as wrath is bitter: the delights of the flesh cannot countervail the horror of conscience: better want the devil's honey, than be so stung with the wrath of God. The garden of Eden, which signifies pleasure, had a flaming sword placed at the east end of it, Gen. iii. 24. The garden of carnal and

sinful delight is surrounded with the flaming sword of God's wrath.

Use II. Reproof. It reproves the stupidity of sinners, who are no more affected with the curse and wrath of God which is due to them, Isa. xlv. 19. 'no man considereth in his heart.' If they were in debt, and were ready to have the serjeant arrest them, they would be affected with that: but tho' the fierce wrath of God is ready to arrest them, they remember not. A beast, though he hath no shame, yet he hath fear; he is afraid of fire: but sinners are worse than brutish, they fear not the 'fire of hell,' till they are in it. Most have their conscience asleep, or seared; but when they shall see the vial's of God's wrath dropping, then they will cry out, as Dives, 'O I am tormented in this flame!' Luke xvi. 24.

Use III. Exhort. 1. Let us adore God's patience, who hath not brought this wrath and curse upon us all this while. We have deserved wrath, yet God hath not given us our desert. We may all subscribe to that, Ps. ciii. 8. 'The Lord is slow to anger:' and ver. 10. 'He hath not rewarded us according to our iniquities.' God hath deferred his wrath, and given us space to repent, Rev. ii. 19. God is not like an hasty creditor, that requires the debt, and gives no time for the payment: he shoots off his warning-piece, that he may not shoot off his murdering-piece, 2 Pet. iii. 9. 'The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.' God adjourns the assizes, to see if sinners would turn; he keeps off the storm of his wrath: but if men will not be warned, let them know, that long-forbearance is no forgiveness.

2d, Branch. Let us labour to prevent the wrath we have deserved. How careful are men to prevent poverty or disgrace? Oh labour to prevent God's eternal wrath, that it may not only be deferred, but removed.

Qu. What shall we do to prevent and escape wrath to come?

Ans. 1. By getting an interest in Jesus Christ. Christ is the only skreen to stand betwixt us and the wrath of God: he did feel God's wrath, that they who believe in him should never feel it, 1 Thess. i. 10. 'Jesus hath delivered us from the wrath to come.' Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace was a type of God's wrath, and that furnace did not singe the garments of the three children, 'nor was the smell of fire upon them,' Dan. iii. 27. Jesus Christ went into the furnace of his Father's wrath; and those that believe in him, the smell of the fire of hell shall never pass upon them.

2. If we would prevent the wrath of God, let us take heed of those sins which will bring the wrath of God. Edmund, successor of Anselm, had a saying, "I had rather leap into a fur-

nace of fire, than willingly commit a sin against God." There are several fiery sins we must take heed of, which will bring the fire of God's wrath.

(1.) The fire of rash anger. Some who profess religion, yet cannot bridle their tongue; they care not what they say in their anger, they will curse their passions. St. James saith 'The tongue is set on fire of hell,' chap. iii. 6. O take heed of a 'fiery tongue,' lest it bring thee to 'fiery torment.' Dives begged a drop of water to cool his tongue: St. Cyprian saith, He had offended most in his tongue, and now that was most set on fire.

(2.) Take heed of the fire of malice. Malice is a malignant humour, whereby we wish evil to one another; it is a vermin lives on blood, it studies revenge. Caligula had a chest where he kept deadly poisons for them he had malice against. The fire of malice brings men to the fiery 'furnace of God's wrath.'

(3.) Take heed of the sin of uncleanness, Heb. xiii. 4. 'Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.' Such as burn in uncleanness, are in great danger to burn one day in hell. Let one fire put out another; let the fire of God's wrath put out the fire of lust.

2d, Branch. To you who have a well-grounded hope, that you shall not feel this wrath, which you have deserved; let me exhort you, 1. To be very thankful to God, who hath given his Son to save you from this tremendous wrath. 'Jesus hath delivered you from wrath to come.' The Lamb of God was scorched in the fire of God's wrath for you: Christ did feel the wrath which he did not deserve, that you may escape the wrath which you have deserved. Pliny observes, that there is nothing better to quench fire than blood: Christ's blood hath quenched the fire of God's wrath for you. 'Upon me, upon me be the curse,' said Rebekah to Jacob, Gen. xxvii. 13. So said Christ to God's justice, "Upon me be the curse, that my elect may inherit the blessing." 2. Be patient under all the afflictions which you endure. Affliction is sharp, but this is not wrath, this is not hell. Who would not willingly drink in the cup of affliction, that knows he shall never drink in the cup of damnation? who would not be willing to bear the wrath of men, that knows he shall never feel the wrath of God?

Christian, tho' thou mayest feel the rod, thou shalt never feel the bloody ax. Austin once said, "Strike, Lord, where thou wilt, if sin be pardoned." So say, Afflict me, Lord, as thou wilt in this life, seeing I shall escape wrath to come.