

his word to leave such sins, but we would not hear him ; therefore he lets us speak to him in prayer and seems not to hear us.

3. God may delay prayer when he will not deny, because he sees we are not yet fit for the mercy ; perhaps we pray for deliverance, we are not fit for it ; our scum is not yet boiled away ; we would have God swift to deliver, and we are slow to repent.

4. God may delay prayer, when he will not deny, that the mercy we pray for may be the more prized, and may be sweeter when it comes. The longer the merchant's ships stay abroad, the more he rejoiceth when they come home laden with spices and jewels ; therefore be not discouraged, but follow God with prayer : though God may delay, he will not deny. Prayer *vincit invincibilem*, it overcomes the Omnipotent, Hos. xii. 4. The Tymans tied fast their god Hercules with a golden chain, that he should not remove : the Lord was held by Moses' prayer, as with a golden chain, Exod. xxxii. 10. ' Let me alone ; ' why, what did Moses ; he only prayed. Prayer ushers in mercy. Be thy case never so sad, if thou canst but pray, thou needest not fear, Psal. x. 17. Therefore give thyself to prayer.

## OF THE PREFACE TO THE LORD'S PRAYER.

*Our FATHER which art in heaven.*

HAVING (through the good providence of God) gone over the chief grounds and fundamentals of religion, and enlarged upon the decalogue or ten commandments, I shall now, at the close, speak something upon the Lord's prayer.

MATTH. vi. 9. ' After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed, ' &c.

In this scripture are two things observable,

1. The introduction to the prayer.

2. The prayer itself which consists of three parts. (1.) A preface. (2.) Petitions. (3.) The conclusion.

I. The introduction to the Lord's prayer, ' After this manner pray ye. ' Our Lord Jesus, in these words, prescribed to his disciples and us a directory for prayer. The ten commandments are the rule of our life, the creed is the sum of our faith, and the Lord's prayer is the pattern of our prayer. As God did prescribe Moses a pattern of the tabernacle, Exod. xxv. 9. so Christ hath here prescribed us a pattern of prayer. ' After this manner pray ye, ' &c. The meaning is, let this be the rule and model according to which you frame your prayers. *Ad hanc*

*regulam preces nostras exigere neceſſe eſt*, Calvin. Not that we are tied to the words of the Lord's prayer: Chriſt ſaith not, 'After theſe words, pray ye;' but 'After this manner;' that is, let all our petitions agree and ſymbolize with the things contained in the Lord's prayer: and indeed, well may we make all our prayers conſonant and agreeable to this prayer, it being a moſt exact prayer. Tertullian calls it, *Breviarium totius evangelii*, a breviary an compendium of the goſpel: it is like an heap of maſſy gold. The exactneſs of this prayer appears, 1. In the dignity of the Author: a piece of work hath commendation from the artifiſer, and this prayer hath commendation from the Author; it is the Lord's prayer. As the law moral was written with the finger of God, ſo this prayer was dropt from the lips of the Son of God. *Non vox hominem ſonat, eſt Deus*. 2. The exactneſs of this prayer appears in the excellency of the matter. I may ſay of this prayer, it 'is as ſilver tried in the furnace, purified ſeven times,' Pſal. xii. 6. Never was there prayer ſo admirably and curiouſly compoſed as this. As Solomon's ſong, for its excellency, is called, 'The ſong of ſongs;' ſo may this well be called the "prayer of prayers." The matter of it is admirable, 1. For its ſuccinctneſs, 'tis ſhort and pithy, *multum in parvo*, a great deal ſaid in a few words. It requires moſt art to draw the two globes curiouſly in a little map. This ſhort prayer is a ſyſtem or body of divinity. 2. Its clearneſs. This prayer is plain and intelligible to every capacity. Clearneſs is the grace of ſpeech. 3. Its compleatneſs. This prayer contains in it the chief things that we have to aſk, or God hath to beſtow.

*Uſe*. Let us have a great eſteem of the Lord's prayer: let it be the modern pattern of all our prayers. There is a double benefit ariſeth from framing our petitions ſuitably to the Lord's prayer. 1. Hereby error in prayer is prevented: 'tis not eaſy to write wrong after this copy: we cannot eaſily err, having our pattern before us. 2. Hereby mercies requested are obtained: for the apoſtle aſſures us, God will hear us, when we pray, 'according to his will,' 1 John v. 14. And ſure we pray according to his will, when we pray according to his pattern he hath ſet us. So much for the introduction to the Lord's prayer, 'After this manner pray ye.'

II. The prayer itſelf, which conſiſts of three parts. (1.) A preface. (2.) Petitions. (3.) The concluſion.

*Fiſt*, The preface to the prayer: (1.) 'Our Father.' (2.) 'Which art in heaven,' To begin with the fiſt words of the preface.

'Our Father.' Father is ſometimes taken perſonally, John xiv. 28. 'My Father is greater than I:' but Father in the text is taken eſſentially for the whole Deity. This title, Father,

teacheth us to whom we must address ourselves in prayer; to God alone. Here is no such thing in the Lord's prayer, as, O ye saints or angels that are in heaven, hear us; but, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'

Qu. *In what order must we direct our prayers to God? Here is only the Father named: may not we direct our prayers to the Son, and Holy Ghost?*

Ans. Though the Father only be named in the Lord's prayer, yet the other two Persons are not hereby excluded: the Father is mentioned because he is first in order; but the Son and Holy Ghost are included, because they are the same in essence. As all the three Persons subsist in one God-head; so, in our prayers, tho' we name but one Person, we must pray to all. To come then more closely to the first words of the preface, 'Our Father.' Princes on earth give themselves titles expressing their greatness, as "High and Mighty:" God might have done so, and expressed himself thus, "Our king of glory, our Judge:" but he gives himself another title, 'Our Father,' an expression of love and condescension. God, that he might encourage us to pray to him, represents himself under this sweet notion of a Father, 'Our Father.' *Dulce nomen Patris.* The name Jehovah carries majesty in it, the name Father, carries mercy in it.

Qu. 1. *In what sense is God a Father?*

Ans. 1. By creation; it is he that hath made us, Acts xvii. 28. 'We are his offspring,' Mal. ii. 10. 'Have we not all one Father?' Hath not one God created us? but there is little comfort in this; for so God is Father to the devils by creation; but he that made them will not save them.

2. God is a Father by election, having chosen a certain number to be his children, whom he will entail heaven upon, Eph. i. 4. 'He hath chosen us in him.'

3. God is a Father by special grace; he consecrates the elect by his Spirit, and infuseth a supernatural principle of holiness, therefore they are said to be born of God, 1 John iii. 9. Such only as are sanctified can say. 'Our Father which art in heaven.'

Qu. 1. *What is the difference between God being the Father of Christ, and the Father of the elect?*

Ans. God is the Father of Christ in a more glorious transcendent manner. Christ hath the primogeniture; he is the eldest Son, a Son by eternal generation, Prov. viii. 23. 'I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.' Isa. liii. 8. 'Who shall declare his generation?' Christ is a Son to the Father; yet so as he is of the same nature with the Father, having all the communicable properties of the God-head belonging to him: but we are sons of God by adoption and

grace, Gal. iv. 5. 'That we might receive the adoption of sons.'

Qu. 3. *What is that which makes God our Father?*

Ans. Faith: Gal. iii. 26. 'Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.' An unbeliever may call God his Creator, and his Judge, but not his Father. Faith doth legitimate us, and make us of the blood-royal of heaven: 'Ye are the children of God by faith.' Baptism makes us church-members, but faith makes us children: without faith the devil can shew as good a coat of arms as we.

Qu. 4. *How doth faith make God to be our Father?*

Ans. As faith is an uniting grace; by faith we have coalition and union with Christ and so the kindred comes in; being united to Christ, the natural Son, we become adopted sons: God is the Father of Christ; faith makes us Christ's brethren, Heb. ii. 11. and so God comes to be our Father.

Qu. 5. *Wherein doth it appear that God is the best Father?*

Ans. 1. In that he is most ancient, Dan. vii. 9. 'The ancient of days did sit.' A figurative representation of God who was before all time, this may cause veneration.

2. God is the best Father, because he is perfect, Mat. v. 48. 'Your Father which is in heaven is perfect;' he is perfectly good. Earthly fathers are subject to infirmities: Elias (though a prophet) 'was a man of like passions,' Jam. v. 17. but God is perfectly good. All the perfection we can arrive at in this life is sincerity: we may a little resemble God, but not equal him; he is infinitely perfect.

3. God is the best Father, in respect of wisdom, 1 Tim. i. 17. 'The only wise God.' He hath a perfect idea of wisdom in himself: he knows the fittest means to bring about his own designs; the angels light at his lamp. In particular, this is one branch of his wisdom, that he knows what is best for us. An earthly parent knows not, in some intricate cases, how to advise his child, or what may be best for him to do: but God is a most wise father, he knows what is best for us, he knows what comfort is best for us; he keeps his cordials for fainting, 2 Cor. vii. 6. 'God who comforteth them that are cast down:' he knows when affliction is best for us, and when it is fit to give a bitter potion, 1 Pet. i. 6. 'If need be, ye are in heaviness.' He is the only wise God; he knows how to make evil things work for good to his children, Rom. viii. 28. He can make a sovereign treacle of poison: thus he is the best Father for wisdom.

4. He is the best Father, because the most loving, 1 John iv. 16. 'God is love.' He who causeth bowels of affection in others, must needs have more bowels himself: *quod efficit tale*; the affections in parents are but marble and adamant, in con-

parison of God's love to his children : he gives them the cream of his love, electing love, saving love, Zeph. iii. 17. ' He will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing : ' no father like God for love ; if thou art his child, thou canst not love thy own soul so entirely as he loves thee. )

5. God is the best Father, for riches : God hath land enough to give all his children, he hath unfearchable riches, Eph. iii. 8. He gives the hidden manna, the tree of life, rivers of joy, God hath treasures that cannot be completed, gates of pearl : who ever saw gates of pearl ? pleasures that cannot be ended. Earthly fathers, if they should be ever giving, they would have nothing left to give : God is ever giving to his children, yet hath not the less : his riches are imparted not impaired : like the sun that still shines, yet hath not the less light. He cannot be poor who is infinite. Thus God is the best Father ; he gives more to his children, than any father or prince can bestow.

6. God is the best Father, because he can reform his children. A father, when his son takes bad courses, knows not how to make him better ; but God knows how to make the children of the election better ; he can change their hearts. When Paul was breathing out persecution against the faints, God soon altered his course, and set him a praying, Acts ix. 11. ' Behold, he prayeth.' None of those who belong to the election are so rough-cast and unhewn, but God can polish them with his grace, and make them fit for the inheritance.

7. God is the best Father, because he never dies, 1 Tim. vi. 16. ' Who only hath immortality.' Earthly fathers die, and their children are exposed to many injuries, but God lives for ever, Rev. i. 8. ' I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.' God's crown hath no successors.

Qu. 6. *Wherein lies the dignity of such as have God for their Father ?*

Ans. 1. They have greater honour than is conferred on the princes of the earth ; they are precious in God's esteem, Isa. xliii. 4. ' Since thou wast precious in my eyes, thou hast been honourable ; ' the wicked are dross, Ps. cxix. 119. and chaff, Ps. i. 4. but God numbers his children, among his jewels, Mal. iii. 17. He writes all his children's names in the book of life, Phil. iv. 9. ' Whose names are in the book of life.' Among the Romans the names of their senators were written down in a book, *patres conscripti* : God enrolls the names of his children, and will not blot their names out of the register, Rev. iii. 5. ' I will not blot his name out of the book of life.' God will not be ashamed of his children. Heb. xi. 16. ' God is not ashamed to be called your God.' One might think it were something below God, and he might disdain to father

such children as are dust and sin mingled : but he is not ashamed to be called our God ; and that we may see he is not ashamed of his children, he writes his own name upon them, Rev. iii. 12. ‘ I will write upon him the name of my God ;’ that is, I will openly acknowledge him before all the angels to be my child : I will write my name upon him, as the son bears his father’s name ; what an honour and dignity is this ?

2. God confers honourable titles upon his children : he calls them the excellent of the earth, Pf. xvi. 2. or the magnificent, as Junias renders it. They must needs be excellent, who are *e regio sanguine nati*, of the blood-royal of heaven ; they are the spiritual phoenixes of the world, the glory of the creation. God calls his children his glory, Isa. xlv. 13. ‘ Israel my glory.’ God honours his children with the title of kings, Rev. i. 6. ‘ And hath made us kings.’ All God’s children are kings ; though they have not earthly kingdoms, yet, 1. They carry a kingdom about with them, Luke xvii. 21. ‘ The kingdom of God is within you ;’ grace is a kingdom set up in the hearts of God’s children ; they are kings to rule over their sins, to bind those kings in chains, Pf. cxlix. 8. 2. They are like kings ; they have their *insignia regalia*, their ensigns of royalty and majesty. 1. They have their crown ; in this life they are kings in a disguise ; they are not known, therefore they are exposed to poverty and reproach ; they are kings in a disguise ; 1 John iii. 2. ‘ Now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.’ Why, what shall we be ? Every son of God shall have his crown of glory, 1 Pet. v. 4. and white robes, Rev. vi. 11. Robes signify dignity, and white signifies sanctity.

3. This is their honour who have God for their Father they are all heirs : the youngest son is an heir. 1. God’s children are heirs to the things of this life : God being their Father, they have the best title to earthly things, they have a sanctified right to them ; though they have often the least share, yet they have the best right ; and they have a blessing with what they have, *i. e.* God’s love and favour. Others may have more of the venison, but God’s children have more of the blessing : thus they are heirs to the things of this life. 2. They are heirs to the other world ; ‘ heirs of salvation,’ Heb. i. 14. ‘ Joint heirs with Christ,’ Rom. viii. 17. They are co-sharers with Christ in glory. Among men commonly the eldest son carries away all, but God’s children are all joint-heirs with Christ, they have a co-partnership with him in his riches. Hath Christ a place in the celestial mansions ? so have the saints, John xiv. 2. ‘ In my Father’s house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you.’ Hath he his Father’s love ? so have they, Pf. cxlvi. 8. John xvii. 26. ‘ That the love wherewith thou hast

loved me, may be in them.' Doth Christ sit upon a throne? so do God's children, Rev. iii. 21. What an high honour is this?

4. God makes his children equal in honour to the angels, Luke xx. 36. They are equal to the angels: nay those saints, who have God for their father, are in some sense superior to the angels; for Jesus Christ having taken our nature, *naturam nostram nobilitavit*, Aug. hath ennobled and honoured it above the angelical, Heb. ii. 16. God hath made his children, by adoption, nearer to himself than the angels. The angels are the friends of Christ, believers are the members of Christ, and this honour have all the saints. Thus you see the dignity of such as have God for their Father. What a comfort is this to God's children, who are here despised, and loaded with calumnies and invectives? 1 Cor. iv. 14. 'We are made as the filth of the world,' &c. But God will put honour upon his children at the last day, and crown them with immortal bliss, to the envy of their adversaries.

Qu. 7. *How may we know that God is our Father? All cannot say, 'Our Father:' the Jews boasted that God was their Father, John viii. 56. 'We have one Father, even God.' Christ tells them their pedigree, ver. 44. 'Ye are of your father the devil.' They who are of satanical spirits, and make use of their power to beat down the power of Godliness, cannot say, God is their Father, they may say, Our father which art in hell. Well then how may we know that God is our Father?*

Ans. (1.) By having a filial disposition: this is seen in four things, 1. To melt in tears for sin: a child weeps for offending his father. When Christ looked on Peter, and he remembered his sin in denying Christ, he fell a weeping. Clemens Alexandrinus reports of Peter, he never heard a cock crow, but he wept. This is a sign that God is our Father; when the heart of stone is taken away, and there is a gracious thaw in the heart; it melts in tears for sin; and he who hath a child-like heart, mourns for sin in a spiritual manner, as it is sin: he grieves for it, 1. As it is an act of pollution. Sin deflowers the virgin-soul; it defaceth God's image; it turns beauty into deformity; 'tis called the 'plague of the heart,' 1 Kings viii. 38. It is the spirits of evil distilled. A child of God mourns for the defilement of sin; sin hath a blacker aspect than hell. 2. He who hath a child-like heart, grieves for sin, as it is an act of enmity. Sin is diametrically opposite to God. It is called a walking contrary to God, Lev. xxvi. 40. 'If they shall confess their iniquity and that they have walked contrary to me.' Sin doth all it can to spight God; if God be of one mind, sin will be of another; sin would not only unthrone God, but it strikes at his very being; if sin could help it, God should be no longer God. A

child-like heart grieves for this ; O, faith he, that I should have so much enmity in me, that my will should be no more subdued to the will of my heavenly Father ! This springs a leak of godly sorrow. 3. A child-like heart weeps for sin, as it is an act of ingratitude ; sin is an abuse of God's love ; it is taking the jewels of God's mercies, and making use of them to sin : God hath done more for his children than others ; he hath planted his grace, and given them some intimations of his favour ; and to sin against kindness, dyes a sin in grain, and makes it crimson : like Absalom, who, as soon as his Father kissed him, and took him into favour, plotted treason against him : nothing so melts a child-like heart in tears, as sins of unkindness : O that I should sin against the blood of a Saviour, and the bowels of a Father ! I condemn ingratitude in my child, yet I am guilty of ingratitude against my heavenly Father : this opens a vein of godly sorrow, and makes the heart bleed afresh : certainly this evidenceth God to be our Father, when he hath given us this child-like frame of heart, to weep for sin as it is sin, an act of pollution, enmity, ingratitude : a wicked man may mourn for the bitter fruit of sin, but only a child of God can grieve for the odious nature of sin. (1.) A filial (or child-like) disposition is to be full of sympathy : we lay to heart the dishonours reflected upon our heavenly Father, when we see God's worship adulterated, his truth mingled with the poison of error, it is as a sword in our bones, to see God's glory suffer, Ps. cxix. 258. ' I beheld the transgressors and was grieved : Homer describing Agamemnon's grief when he was forced to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia, brings in all his friends weeping and condoling with him ; so, when God is dishonoured we sympathize, and are as it were clad in mourning. A child that hath any good nature, is cut to the heart to hear his father reproached : an heir of heaven takes a dishonour done to God more heinous than a disgrace done to himself.

(3.) A filial disposition, is to love our heavenly father ; he is unnatural that doth not love his father. God who is crowned with excellency, is the proper object of delight : and every true child of God faith, as Peter, ' Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.' But who will not say he loves God ? if ours be a true genuine love to our heavenly Father, it may be known, 1st, By the effects : 1. Then we have an holy fear ; there is a fear which ariseth from love to God, that is, we fear the loss of the visible tokens of God's presence, 1 Sam. iv. 18. ' Eli's heart trembled for the ark.' It is not said his heart trembled for his two sons Hophni and Phineas ; but his heart trembled for the ark, because the ark was the special sign of God's presence ; and if that were taken, the glory was departed. He who loves his heavenly Father, fears lest the tokens of his presence should be



removed, lest profaneness should break in like a flood, lest popery should get head, and God should go from a people : the presence of God in his ordinances is the glory and strength of a nation. The Trojans had the image of Pallas, and they had an opinion that as long as that image was preserved among them, they should never be conquered : so long as God's presence is with a people, so long they are safe ; every true child of God fears lest God should go, and the glory depart. Try by this, whether we have a filial disposition : do we love God, and doth this love cause fear and jealousy ? are we afraid lest we should lose God's presence, lest the Sun of righteousness remove out of our horizon ? Many are afraid lest they should lose some of their worldly profits, but not lest they lose the presence of God ; if they may have peace and trading, they care not what become of the ark of God. A true child of God fears nothing so much as the loss of his father's presence, Hos. ix. 12. ' Wo to them when I depart from them.' 2. Love to our heavenly Father is seen by loving his day, Isa. lviii. 13. ' If thou call the sabbath a delight.' The ancients called this *regina dierum*, the queen of days. If we love our Father in heaven, we spend this day in devotion, in reading, hearing, meditating ; on this day manna falls double. God sanctified the sabbath ; he made all the other days in the week, but he hath sanctified this day ; this day he hath crowned with a blessing. 3. Love to our heavenly Father is seen by loving his children, 1 John v. 1. ' Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.' If we love God, the more we see of God in any the more we love them ; we love them though they are poor : a child loves to see his father's picture, though hung in a mean frame ; we love the children of our father, though they are persecuted, 1 Tim. i. 16. ' Onesiphorus was not ashamed of my chain.' Constantine did kiss the hole of Paphnusus' eye, because he suffered the loss of his eye for Christ : it appears they have no love to God, who have no love to his children ; they care not for their company : they have a secret disgust and antipathy against them : hypocrites pretend great reverence to the saints departed, they canonize dead saints but persecute living : I may say of these, as the apostle, Heb. xii. 8. ' They are bastards not sons.' 4th Effect of love, if we love our heavenly Father, then we will be advocates for him, and stand up in the defence of his truth ; he who loves his father will plead for him when he is traduced and wronged ; he hath no child-like heart, no love to God, who can hear God's name dishonoured, and be silent. Doth Christ appear for him on earth ? Such as dare not own God and religion in times of danger, God will be ashamed to be called their God ; it would be a reproach to him to have such children as will not own him. 2dly, A child-like

love to God is known, as by the effects, so by the degree ; it is a superior love. We love our Father in heaven above all other things ; above estate, or relations, as oil runs above the water, Pf. lxxiii. 25. A child of God seeing a supereminency of goodness, and a constellation of all beauties in God, he is carried out in love to him in the highest measure : as God gives his children such a love as he doth not bestow upon the wicked, electing love ; so God's children give such a love as they bestow upon none else, adoring love ; they give him the flower and spirits of their love ; they love him with a love joined with worship, this spiced wine they keep only for their Father to drink of, Cant. viii. 2. (4.) A child-like disposition is seen in honouring our heavenly Father, Mal. i. 6. ' A son honoureth his father.'

*Qu. How do we shew our honour to our Father in heaven ?*

*Ans.* 1. By having a reverential awe of God upon us, Lev. xxv. 17. ' Thou shalt fear thy God.' This reverential fear of God, is when we dare do nothing that he hath forbidden in his word, Gen. xxxix. 6. ' How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' It is the part of the honour a son gives to a father, he fears to displease him. (2.) We shew our honour to our heavenly Father, by doing all we can to exalt God, and make his excellencies shine forth ; though we cannot lift up God higher in heaven, yet we may lift him higher in our hearts, and in the esteem of others. When we speak well of God, set forth his renown, display the trophies of his goodness ; when we ascribe the glory of all we do to God, when we are the trumpeters of God's praise ; this is an honouring our Father in heaven, and a certain sign of a child-like heart, Psal. l. 23. ' Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me.'

2. We may know God is our Father, by our resembling of him : the child is his father's picture, Jud. viii. 18. ' Each one resembled the children of a king : ' every child of God resembles the king of heaven. Herein God's adopting children and man's differ : a man adopts one for his son and heir, that doth not at all resemble him ; but whosoever God adopts for his child, is like him ; he not only bears his heavenly Father's name, but image, Col. iii. 10. ' And have put on the new man, which is renewed after the image of him that created him.' He who hath God for his Father, resembles God in holiness : holiness is the glory of the God-head, Exod. xv. 11. The holiness of God is the intrinsic purity of his essence. He who hath God for his Father, partakes of the divine nature ; though not of the divine essence, yet of the divine likeness : as the seal sets its print and likeness upon the wax, so he who hath God for his Father, hath the print and effigies of his holiness stamped upon him, Pf. cvi. 16. ' Aaron the saint of the Lord.' Wicked men desire to be like God hereafter in glory, but do not affect to be

like him here in grace; they give it out to the world that God is their Father yet have nothing of God to be seen in them, they are unclean: they not only want his image, but hate it.

3. We may know God is our Father, by having his Spirit in us: 1. By having the intercession of the spirit; 'tis a spirit of prayer, Gal. iv. 6. 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' Prayer is the soul's breathing itself into the bosom of its heavenly Father: none of God's children are born dumb; *Implet Spiritus Sanctus organum suum, & tanquam pila chordarum tangit Spiritus, Dei corda sanctorum*, Prosper. Acts xi. 11. 'Behold he prayeth:' but it is not every prayer evidenceth God's Spirit in us. Such as have no grace may excel in gifts, and affect the hearts of others in prayer, when their own hearts are not affected; as the lute makes a sweet sound in the ears of others, but itself is not sensible: how therefore shall we know our prayers are indited by God's Spirit, and so he is our Father.

*Ref.* 1. When they are not only vocal, but mental; when there are not only gifts but groans, Rom. viii. 26. The best music is in consort; the best prayer is when the heart and tongue join together in consort.

2. When they are zealous and fervent, Jam. v. 16. 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' The eyes melt in prayer, the heart burns. Fervency is to prayer, as fire to the incense; it makes it ascend to heaven as a sweet perfume.

3. When prayer hath faith sprinkled in it; prayer is the key of heaven, and faith is the hand that turns it, Rom. viii. 15. 'We cry, Abba, Father.' 'We cry,' there is fervency in prayer; 'Abba, Father,' there is faith. Those prayers suffer shipwreck, which dash upon the rock of unbelief. Thus we may know God is our Father, by having his Spirit praying in us; as Christ interceeds above, so the Spirit interceeds within.

1. By having the renewing of the Spirit, which is nothing else but regeneration, which is called a being born of the Spirit, John iii. 5. This regeneration work of the Spirit is a transformation, or change of nature, Rom. xii. 2. 'Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.' He who is born of God, hath a new heart: new, not for substance but for qualities. The strings of a viol may be the same, but the tune is altered. Before this regeneration, there are spiritual pangs, much heart-breaking for sin. Regeneration is called a circumcision of the heart, Col. ii. 11. In circumcision there was a pain in the flesh; so in this spiritual circumcision there is a pain in the heart, there is much sorrow arising from the sense of guilt and wrath. The jailor's trembling, Acts xvi. 30. was a pang in the new birth. God's spirit is a spirit of bondage, before it be a

spirit of adoption. This blessed work of regeneration spreads over the whole soul: it irradiates the mind, it consecrates the heart, and reforms the life: tho' regeneration be but in part, yet it is in every part, 1 Thess. v. 13. regeneration is the signature and engraving of the Holy Ghost upon the soul; the new born Christian is bespangled with the jewels of the graces, which are the angels' glory. Regeneration is the spring of all true joy: at our first birth we come weeping into the world, but at our new birth there is cause of rejoicing: for now, God is our Father, and we are begotten to a lively hope of glory, 1 Pet. i. 3. We may try by this our relation to God. Hath a regenerating work of God's Spirit passed upon our souls? are we made of another spirit, humble and heavenly? this is a good sign of sonship, and we may say, 'Our father which art in heaven.' 3. By having the conduct of the Spirit; we are led by the Spirit, Rom. viii. 14. 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' God's Spirit doth not only quicken us in our regeneration, but leads us on till we come to the end of our faith, salvation. It is not enough the child have life, but he must be led every step by the nurse, Hos. xi. 3. 'I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms.' Their arms, as the Israelites had the cloud and pillar of fire to go before them, and be a guide to them; so God's Spirit is a guide to go before us, and lead us into all truth, and counsel us in all our doubts, and influence us in all our actions, Ps. lxxiii. 24. 'Thou shalt guide me by thy counsels.' None can call God Father, but such as have the conduct of the Spirit. Try then what spirit you are led by: such as are led by a spirit of envy, lust, avarice, these are not led by the Spirit of God; it were blasphemy for them to call God Father: these are led by the spirit of Satan and may say, "Our Father which art in hell." 4. By having the witness of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 16. 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' This witness of the Spirit, suggesting that God is our Father, is not a vocal witness, or voice from heaven: 'the Spirit in the word witnesseth:' the Spirit, in the word faith, he who is so qualified who is a hater of sin, and a lover of holiness, is a child of God, and God is his Father: If I can find such qualifications wrought, here is the Spirit witnessing with my spirit, that I am a child of God. Besides, we may carry it higher; the Spirit of God witnesseth to our spirit, by making more than ordinary impressions upon our hearts, and giving some secret hints and whispers, that God hath purposes of love to us: here is a concurrent witness of the Spirit with conscience, that we are heirs of heaven, and God is our Father; this witness is better felt than expressed: this witness scatters doubts and fears, silenceth temptations. But what shall one do that hath

not this witness of the Spirit? if we want the witness of the Spirit, let us labour to find the work of the Spirit: if we have not the Spirit testifying, labour to have it sanctifying, and that will be a support to us.

4. If God be our Father, we are of peaceable spirits, Matth. v. 9. 'Blessed are the peace-makers, they shall be called the children of God.' Grace infuseth a sweet, amicable disposition; it files off the ruggedness of men's spirits: it turns the lion-like fierceness into a lamb-like gentleness, Isa. xi. 7. They who have God to be their Father, follow peace as well as holiness. God the Father is called the 'God of peace,' Heb. xiii. 20. God the Son, the 'prince of peace,' Isa. ix. 6. God the Holy Ghost is a 'Spirit of peace:' it is called 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' Eph. iv. 3. The more peaceable, the more like God. It is a bad sign God is not their Father, 1*st*, Who are fierce and cruel, as if, with Romulus, they had sucked the milk of an wolf, Rom. iii. 17. 'The way of peace have they not known,' they sport in mischief; these are they who are of a persecuting spirit as Maximinus, Dioclesian, Antiochus, who (as Eusebius) took more tedious journeys, and ran more hazards in vexing and persecuting the Jews, than any of his predecessors had done in getting of victories. These furies cannot call God Father; if they do, they will have as little comfort in saying Father, as Dives had in hell, when he said, 'Father Abraham,' Luke xvi. 24. 2*d*<sup>y</sup>, Who are makers of divisions? Rom. xvi. 17. 'Mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them.' Such as are born of God, are makers of peace: what shall we think of such as are makers of divisions? will God father these? the devil made the first division in heaven; they may call the devil father: they may give the cloven foot in their coat of arms: their sweetest music is in discord; they unite to divide. Samson's fox tails were tied together, only to set the Philistines corn on fire, Judges xv. 5. Papists unite, only to set the church's peace on fire. Satan's kingdom grows up by divisions. St. Chrysostom observes of the church of Corinth, when many converts were brought in, Satan knew no better way to damn up the current of religion, than to throw in an apple of strife, and divide them into parties: one was for Paul, and another for Apollos, but few for Christ. Would not Christ have his coat rent, and can he endure to have his body rent? Sure God will never father them who are not sons of peace: of all them whom God hates, he is named for one, 'who is a sower of discord among brethren,' Prov. vi. 19.

5. If God be our Father: then we love to be near God, and have converse with him. An ingenuous child delights to approach near to his father, and go into his presence. David envied the birds that they built their nests so near God's altars,

when he was debarred his Father's house, Psal. lxxxiv. 3. True saints love to get as near to God as they can : in the word they draw near to his holy oracle, in the sacrament they draw near to his table ; a child of God delights to be in his Father's presence ; he cannot stay away long from God : he sees a sabbath day approaching, and rejoiceth : his heart hath been often melted and quickened in an ordinance ; he hath tasted the Lord is good, therefore he loves to be in his Father's presence ; he cannot keep away long from God. Such as care not for ordinances cannot say, ' Our Father which art in heaven.' Is God their Father, who cannot endure to be in his presence ?

*Use. I. Of instruction.* See the amazing goodness of God, that is pleased to enter into this sweet relation of a Father. God needed not to adopt us, he did not want a Son but we wanted a Father. God shewed power in being our Maker, but mercy in being our Father : when we were enemies, and our hearts stood out as garrisons against God, that he should conquer our stubbornness, and of enemies make us children, and write his name, and put his image upon us, and bestow a kingdom of glory ; what a miracle of mercy is this ! Every adopted child may say, ' Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,' Mat. xi. 26.

*2d, Branch, or Inference.* If God be a Father, then hence I infer, Whatever he doth to his children, is love.

1. If he smiles upon them in prosperity, it is love : they have the world not only with God's leave, but with his love. God saith to every child of his, as Naaman to Gehazi, 2 Kings v. 23. ' Be content, take two talents.' So saith God to his child, ' I am thy Father, take two talents.' Take health, and take my love with it : take an estate and take my love with it : take two talents : God's love is a sweetening ingredient into every mercy.

*Qu. How doth it appear that a child of God hath worldly things in love ?*

*Ans.* 1. Because he hath a good title to them. God is his Father, therefore he hath a good title. A wicked man hath a civil title to the creature, but no more ; he hath it not from the hand of a father : he is like one that takes up cloth at the draper's, and it is not paid for ; but a believer hath a good title to every foot of land he hath ; his Father hath settled it upon him.

2. A child of God hath worldly things in love, because they are sanctified to him, (1.) They make him better, and are loadstones to draw him nearer to God. (2.) He hath his Father's blessing with them. A little blest is sweet, Exod. xxiii. 25. ' He shall bless thy bread and thy water.' Esau had the venison, but Jacob got the blessing. While the wicked have

their meat sauced with God's wrath, Psal. lxxvii. 30, 31. believers have their comforts seasoned with a blessing. It was a secret blessing from God made Daniel's pulse nourish him more, and made him look fairer than they that ate of the king's meat, Dan. i. 15.

3. A child of God hath worldly things in love, because whatever he hath is an earnest of more : every bit of bread is a pledge and earnest of glory.

(2.) God being a Father, if he frown, if he dip his pen in gall, and write bitter things ; if he correct, 'tis in love : a father loves his child as well when he doth chastise and discipline him, as when he settles his land on him, Rev. iii. 19. 'As many as I love, I rebuke.' Afflictions are sharp arrows (saith Gregory Nazianzen) but they are shot from the hand of a loving Father. *Correctio est virtutes gymnasium* ; God afflicts with the same love he gives Christ ; he doth it to humble and purify : gentle correction is as necessary as daily bread ; nay, as needful as ordinances, as word and sacraments. There is love in all, God smites, that he may save.

(3.) God being a Father, if he desert and hide his face from his child, it is in love. Desertion is sad in itself, a short hell, Job vi. 9. When the light is withdrawn, dew falls. Yet we may see a rainbow in the cloud, the love of a Father in all this. 1<sup>st</sup>, God hereby quickens grace. Perhaps grace lay dormant, Cant. v. 2. It was as fire in the embers ; and God withdraws comfort, to invigorate and exercise grace : faith is a star sometimes shines brightest in the dark night of desertion, Jonah ii. 4. 2<sup>dly</sup>, When God hides his face from his child, yet still he is a Father, and his heart is towards his child : as Joseph, when he spake roughly to his brethren, and made them believe he would take them for spies ; still his heart was full of love, and he was fain to go aside and weep : so God's bowels yearn to his children, when he seems to look strange, Isa. liv. 8. 'In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.' Though God may have the look of an enemy, yet still he hath the heart of a father.

3<sup>d</sup>, Branch, or Inference. Learn hence the sad case of the wicked : they cannot say 'Our Father in heaven ;' they may say, Our Judge, but not, 'Our Father ;' they fetch their pedigree from hell, John viii. 44. 'Ye are of your father the Devil.' Such as are unclean and profane, are the spurious brood of the old serpent, and it were blasphemy for them to call God Father. The case of the wicked is deplorable : if they are in misery, they have none to make their moan to ; God is not their Father, he disclaims all kindred with them, Mat. vii. 23. 'I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity :' the wicked, dying in their sin, can expect no mercy from God

as a Father: many say, He that made them will save them; but, Isa. xxvii. 11. 'It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them, will not have mercy on them.' Tho' God was their Father by creation, yet because they were not his children by adoption, 'therefore he that made them would not save them.'

*Use II. Of exhortation.* To persuade all who are yet strangers to God, to labour to come into this heavenly kindred; never leave till you can say, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'

*Qu. But will God be a Father to me, who have profaned his name, and been a great sinner?*

*Ans.* If thou wilt now at last seek to God by prayer, and break off thy sins, God hath the bowels of a Father for thee, and will in no wise cast thee out. When the prodigal did arise and go to his father, 'his father had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him,' Luke xv. 10. Though thou hast been a prodigal, and almost spent all upon thy lusts, yet, if thou wilt give a bill of divorce to thy sins, and flee to God by repentance, know that he hath the bowels of a father; he will embrace thee in the arms of his mercy, and seal thy pardon with a kiss. What tho' thy sins have been heinous? the wound is not so broad as the plaister of Christ's blood. The sea covers great rocks: the sea of God's compassion can drown thy great sins; therefore be not discouraged, go to God, resolve to cast thyself upon his fatherly bowels; God may be entreated of thee, as he was of him. Manassah, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 13.

*Use III. Of comfort.* To such as can upon good grounds call God Father. There's more sweetness in this word Father, than if we had ten thousand worlds. David thought it a great matter to be son-in-law to a king, 1 Sam. xviii. 18. 'What is my father's family, that I should be son-in-law to the king?' But what is it to be born of God, and have God for our Father?

*Qu. Wherein lies the happiness of having God for our Father?*

*Ans.* 1. If God be our Father, then he will teach us. What father will refuse to counsel his son? doth God command parents to instruct their children, Deut. iv. 10. and will not he instruct his? Isa. xlviii. 17. 'I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit.' Psal. lxxi. 17. 'O God, thou hast taught me from my youth.' If God be our Father, he will give us the teachings of his Spirit; 'The natural man receives not the things of God, neither can he know them,' 1 Cor. ii. 14. The natural man may have excellent notions in divinity, but God must teach us to know the mysteries of the gospel after



a spiritual manner. A man may see the figures upon a dial, but he cannot tell how the day goes, unless the sun shine : we may read many truths in the Bible, but we cannot know them savingly, till God, by his Spirit, shine upon our soul. God teacheth not only our ear, but our heart : he not only informs our mind, but inclines our will ; we never learn till God teach us. If God be our Father, he will teach us how to order our affairs with discretion, Ps. cxii. 5. How to carry ourselves wisely, 1 Sam. xviii. 5. 'David behaved himself wisely.' He will teach us what to answer when we are brought before governors ; he will put words into our mouths, Matth. x. 18, 19, 20. 'Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake : but take no thought how or what ye shall speak : for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.'

2. If God be our Father, then he hath bowels of affection towards us. If it be so unnatural for a father but to love his child, can we think God can be defective in his love ? All the affections of parents come from God, yet are but a spark from his flame. He is the Father of mercies, 2 Cor. i. 3. He begets all the mercies and bowels in the creature ; his love to his children, is a love which passeth knowledge, Eph. iii. 19. It exceeds all dimensions ; it is higher than heaven, it is broader than the sea. That you may see God's fatherly love to his children ; 1. Consider God makes a precious valuation of them, Isa. xliii. 4. 'Since thou wast precious in my sight.' A father prizeth his child above his jewels ; their names are precious, for they have God's own name written upon them, Rev. iii. 12. 'I will write upon him the name of my God.' Their prayers are a precious perfume ; their tears God's bottles, Ps. lvi. 8. God esteems his children as a crown of glory in his hands, Isa. lxxv. 3. (2.) God loves the places they were born in the better for their sakes, Ps. lxxxvii. 6. 'Of Zion it shall be said, This man was born there ;' this and that believer was born there : God loves the ground his children tread upon ; hence Judea, the seat of God's children and chosen, God calls a delightful land, Mal. iii. 12. It was not only pleasant for situation and fruitfulness, but because God's children, who were his *Hephzibah*, or delight, lived there. (3.) He chargeth the great ones of the world not to prejudice his children : their persons are sacred, Ps. cv. 14. 'He suffered no man to do them wrong : yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed.' By anointed, is meant the children of the high God, who have the unction of the Spirit, and are set apart for God. (4.) God delights in their company, he loves to see their countenance, and hear their voice, Cant. ii. 14. He cannot refrain long from their company ; let but two or

three of his children meet and pray together, he will be sure to be among them, Mat. xviii. 20. 'Where two or three are met together in my name, I am in the midst of them.' (5.) God bears his children in his bosom, as a nursing-father doth the sucking-child, Numb. xi. 12. Isa. xlvi. 4. 'To be carried in God's bosom, shews how near his children lie to his heart. (6.) God is full of solicitous care for them, 1 Pet. v. 7. 'He careth for you.' His eye is still upon them, they are never out of his thoughts. A father cannot always take care for his child, he sometimes is asleep; but God is a Father that never sleeps, Pl. cxxi. 4. 'He neither slumbereth nor sleepeth.' (7.) He thinks nothing too good to part with to his children; he gives them the kidneys of the wheat, and honey out of the rock, and 'Wine on the lees well refined,' Isa. xxv. 6. He gives them three jewels more worth than heaven, the blood of his Son, the grace of his Spirit, the light of his countenance. Never was there such an indulgent, affectionate Father. (8.) If God hath one love better than another, he bestows it upon them: they have the cream and quintessence of his love; 'He will rejoice over thee, he will rest in his love,' Zeph. iii. 17. God loves his children with such a love as he loves Christ, John xvii. 26. It is the same love, for the unchangeableness of it; God will no more cease to love his adopted sons, than he will to love his natural Son.

3. If God be our Father, he will be full of sympathy, Pl. ciii. 13. 'As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' Jer. xxxi. 20. 'Is Ephraim my dear son? my bowels are troubled for him.' God pities his children in two cases; (1.) In cases of infirmities. (2.) Injuries.

(1.) In case of infirmities. If the child be deformed or hath any bodily distemper, the father pities it: If God be our Father, he pities our weaknesses; and he so pities them as to heal them, Isa. lvii. 18. 'I have seen his ways, and will heal him.' As God hath bowels to pity, so he hath balsam to heal.

(2.) In case of injuries. Every blow of the child goes to the father's heart; when the saints suffer, God doth sympathize, Isa. lxiii. 9. 'In all their afflictions he was afflicted.' He did, as it were, bleed in their wounds. 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' When the foot was trod on, the head cried out, Judges x. 19. 'God's soul was grieved for the children of Israel.' As when one string in a lute is touched, all the rest of the strings sound; when God's children are stricken, his bowels sound, Zech. ii. 8. 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of my eye.'

4. If God be our Father, he will take notice of the least good he sees in us: if there be but a sigh for sin, God hears it, Pl. xxxviii. 9. 'My groaning is not hid from thee.' If there be

but a penitential tear comes out of our eye, God sees it, Isa. xxxviii. 5. 'I have seen thy tears.' If there be but a good intention, God takes notice, 1 Kings viii. 18. 'Whereas it was in thy heart to build an house to my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.' God punisheth intentional wickedness, and crowns intentional goodness, 'Thou didst well that it was in thine heart.' God takes notice of the least *scintilla*, the least spark of grace in his children, 1 Pet. iii. 6. 'Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord : ' the Holy Ghost doth not mention Sarah's unbelief or laughing at the promise ; he puts a finger upon the scar, winks at her failing, and only takes notice of the good that was in her, her obedience to her husband ; ' she obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.' Nay, that good which the saints scarce take notice of in themselves, God in a special manner observes, Matth. xxv. 35. 'I was an hungred and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink.' 'Then shall the righteous say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred and fed thee ?' They did as it were overlook and disclaim their own works of charity, yet Christ doth take notice, 'I was an hungred and ye fed me.' What comfort is this ! God spies the least good in his children ; he can see a grain of corn hid under chaff, grace hid under corruption.

5. If God be our Father, he will take all we do in good part. Those duties we ourselves censure, God will crown. When a child of God looks over his best duties, he sees so much sin cleaving to them, that he is even confounded ; Lord, saith he, there is more sulphur than incense in my prayers. But for your comfort, if God be our Father, he will crown those duties which you yourselves censure ; God sees there is sincerity in the hearts of his children, and this gold, (though light) shall have grains of allowance : though there may be defects in the services of God's children, yet God will not cast away their offering, 2 Chron. xxx. 20. 'The Lord healed the people.' The tribes of Israel being straitened in time, wanted some legal purifications ; yet, because their hearts were right God healed them ; he pardoned them. God accepts of the good will, 2 Cor. viii. 12. A father takes a letter from his son kindly, though there are blots or bad English in it. What blemishes are there in our heavenly things ; Yet our Father in heaven accepts ; saith God, it is my child and he will do better ; I will look upon him, through Christ, with a merciful eye.

6. If God be our Father, then he will correct us in measure, Jer. xxx. 11. 'I will correct thee in measure ;' And that two ways ; 1<sup>st</sup>, It shall be in measure, for the kind ; God will not lay upon us more than we are able to bear, 1 Cor. x. 13. He knows our frame, Ps. ciii. 14. He knows we are not steel or marble, therefore will deal gently, he will not over-afflict : as

the physician that knows the temper of the body, will not give physic too strong for the body : nor will he give one drachm or scruple too much. God hath not only the title of a father, but the bowels of a father ; he will not lay too heavy burdens on his children, lest their spirits fail before him. *2dly*, He will correct in measure for the duration ; he will not let the affliction lie on too long, Pf. cxxv. 3. ‘ The rod of the wicked, shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.’ It may be there, and not rest, Isa. lvii. 16. ‘ I will not contend for ever.’ Our heavenly Father will love for ever, but he will not contend for ever. The torments of the damned are for ever, Rev. xiv. 11. ‘ The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.’ The wicked shall drink a sea of wrath, but God’s children only taste of the cup of affliction, and their heavenly Father will say, *transeat calix*, ‘ let this cup pass away from them,’ Isa. xxxv. 10. A sting a wing.

7. If God be our Father, he will intermix mercy with all our afflictions : if he gives us wormwood to drink, he will mix it with honey. In the ark, the rod was laid up, and manna ; with our Father’s rod there is always some manna.’ ‘ Ather’s shoes were iron and brass, but his foot was dipt in oil,’ Gen. xxxiii. 24. Affliction is the shoe of brass that pincheth ; but there is mercy in the affliction, there is the foot dipt in oil. When God afflicts the body, he gives peace of conscience ; there is mercy in the affliction. An affliction comes to prevent falling into sin ; there is mercy in an affliction. Jacob had his thigh hurt in wrestling ; there was the affliction : but when he saw God’s face, and received a blessing from the angel, Gen. xxxii. 30. There was mercy in the affliction. In every cloud a child of God may see a rainbow of mercy shining. As the limner mixeth dark shadows and bright colours together ; so our heavenly Father mingles the dark and bright together, crosses and blessings ; and is not this a great happiness, for God thus to chequer his providences, and mingle goodness with severity ?

8. If God be our Father, the evil one shall not prevail against us. Satan is called the evil one, emphatically : he is the grand enemy of the saints : and that both in a military sense, as he fights against them with his temptations ; and in a forensical or law sense, as he is an accuser, and pleads against them ; yet neither way shall he prevail against God’s children. As for his shooting his fiery darts, God will bruise Satan shortly under the saint’s feet, Rom. xvi. 20. As for his accusing, Christ is advocate for the saints, and answers all bills of indictment brought in against them. God will make all Satan’s temptations promote the good of his children, *1<sup>st</sup>*, As they set them more praying, 2 Cor. xii. 8. Temptation is a medicine for security. *2dly*, As they are a means to humble them, 2 Cor. xii. 7. ‘ Lest

I should be exalted above measure, there was given me a thorn in the flesh.' The thorn in the flesh was a temptation ; this thorn was to prick the bladder of pride. *3dly*, As they establish them more in grace : a tree shaken by the wind is more settled and rooted : the blowing of a temptation doth but settle a child of God more in grace. Thus the evil one, Satan, shall not prevail against the children of God.

9. If God be our Father, no real evil shall befall us, Ps. xci.

10. 'There shall no evil befall thee.' It is not said, no trouble : but, no evil : God's children are privileged persons ; they are privileged from the hurt of every thing, Luke x. 19. 'Nothing shall by any means hurt you.' The hurt and malignity of the affliction is taken away : affliction to a wicked man hath evil in it ; it makes him worse, Rev. xvi. 9. 'Men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God.' But no evil befalls a child of God, he is bettered by affliction, Heb. xii. 10. 'That ye may be made partakers of his holiness.' What hurt doth the furnace to the gold ? It only makes it purer : What hurt doth afflictions to grace ? Only refine and purify it. What a great privilege is this, to be freed, though not from the stroke of affliction, yet from the sting ! No evil shall touch a saint : when the dragon hath poisoned the water, they say, the unicorn with his horn doth draw out the poison : Christ hath drawn out the poison of every affliction, that it cannot prejudice a child of God. Again, no evil befalls a child of God, because no condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. 'No condemnation to them in Christ Jesus.' God doth not condemn them, nor conscience doth not condemn them. Both jury and judge acquit them ; then no evil befalls them, for nothing is really an evil but that which damns.

10. If God be our Father, this may make us go with cheerfulness to the throne of grace : were a man to petition his enemy, there were little hope : but when a child petitions his father, he may work with confidence to speed. The word father works upon God, it toucheth his very bowels. What can a father deny his child ? 'If a son ask bread will he give him a stone ?' Matth. vii. 9. This may embolden us to go to God for pardon of sin, and further degrees of sanctity. We pray to a Father of mercy, sitting upon a throne of grace, Luke xi. 13. 'If ye then being evil know to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Spirit to them that ask him ?' This did quicken the church, and add wings to prayer, Isa. lxiii. 15. 'Look down from heaven.' ver. 16. 'Doubtless thou art our Father.' Who doth God keep his mercies for, but his children ? Three things may cause boldness in prayer : we have a Father to pray to, and the Spirit to help us to pray, and an Advocate to present our prayers. God's

children should in all their troubles, run to their heavenly Father, as that sick child, 2 Kings iv. 19. 'He said unto his father, my head my head.' So pour out thy complaint to God in prayer, 'Father, my heart my heart: my dead heart, quicken it; my hard heart, soften it in Christ's blood. Father, my heart, my heart.' Sure God, that hears the cry of the ravens, will hear the cry of his children.

11. If God be our Father, he will stand between us and danger; a father will keep off danger from his child. God calls himself *Scutum*, a shield; a shield defends the head, guards the vitals; God shields off danger from his children, Acts xviii. 10. 'I am with thee, and none shall set on thee to hurt thee.' God is an hiding-place, Ps. xxvii. 5. God preserved Athanasius strangely; he put it into his mind to depart out of the house he was in, the night before the enemy came to search for him. As God hath a breast to feed, so he hath wings to cover his children, Ps. xci. 4. 'He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.' God appoints his holy angels to be a life-guard about his children,' Heb. i. 14. Never was any prince so well guarded as a believer. The angels, 1st, Are a numerous guard, 2 Kings vi. 17. 'The mountain was full of horses of fire round about Elisha.' The horses and chariots of fire were the angels of God, to defend the prophet Elisha. 2dly, A strong guard; one angel, in a night, slew an hundred and fourscore and five thousand, 2 Kings xix. 32. If one angel slew so many, what would an army of angels have done? 3dly, The angels are a swift guard; they are ready in an instant to help God's children: therefore they are described with wings, to shew their swiftness; they fly to our help, Dan. ix. 21, 23. 'At the beginning of thy supplication the commandment came forth, and I am come to thee?' Here was a swift motion for the angel to come from heaven to earth between the beginning and ending of Daniel's prayer. 4thly, The angels are a watchful guard; not like Saul's guard, asleep when their lord was in danger, 1 Sam. xxvi. 12. The angels are a vigilant guard, they watch over God's children to defend them, Psal. xxxiv. 7. 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him.' There is an invisible guardianship of angels about God's children.

12. If God be our Father, we shall not want any thing that he sees is good for us, Psal. xxxiv. 10. 'They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.' God is pleased sometimes to keep his children to hard commons, but it is good for them: sheep thrive best on short pasture; God sees too much may not be good: plenty breeds surfeit. *Luxuriant animi rebus secundis*. God sees it good sometimes to diet his children, and keep them short, that they may run the heavenly race the bet-

ter : it was good for Jacob there was a famine in the land : it was a means to bring him to his son Joseph : so it is that God's children sometimes see the world's emptiness, that they may acquaint themselves more with Christ's fulness. If God see it be good for them to have more of the world they shall have it : God will not let them want any good thing.

13. If God be our Father, all the promises of the Bible belong to us : God's children are called ' heirs of the promise,' Heb. vi. 17. A wicked man can lay claim to nothing in the Bible but the curses ; he hath no more to do absolutely with the promises, than a plowman hath to do with the city charter : the promises are children's bread : the promises are *mulctralia Evangelii*, the breasts of the gospel milking out consolations ; and who are to suck of these breasts but God's children ? The promise of pardon is for them, Jer. xxiii. 8. ' I will pardon all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me.' The promise of healing is for them, Isa. lvii. 18. The promise of salvation, Jer. xxiii. 6. The promises are supports of faith : they are God's sealed deed ; they are a Christian's cordial. O the heavenly comforts which are distilled from the limbec of the promises ! St. Chrysostom compares the scriptures to a garden, the promises are the fruit trees that grow in this garden : a child of God may go to any promise in the Bible, and pluck comfort from it : he is an heir of the promise.

14. God makes all his children conquerors : 1. They conquer themselves ; *fortior est qui se quam qui fortissima vincit maenia*. The saints conquer their own lusts ; ' they bind these princes in fetters of iron,' Ps. cxlix. 8. Though the children of God may sometimes be foiled, and lose a single battle, yet not the victory. 2. They conquer the world : The world holds forth her two breasts of profit and pleasure, and many are overcome by it ; but the children of God have a world-conquering faith, 1 John v. 4. ' This is the victory over the world, even your faith.' 3. They conquer their enemies ; how can that be, when they oft take away their lives ? 1. They conquer, by not complying with them : the three children would not fall down to the golden image, Dan. iii. 18. They would rather burn than bow ; here they were conquerors. He who complies with another's lust, is a captive ; he who refuseth to comply is a conqueror.

(2.) God's children conquer their enemies by heroic patience. A patient Christian, like the anvil, bears all strokes invincibly : thus the martyrs overcame their enemies by patience. Nay, ' God's children are more than conquerors.' Rom. viii. 37. ' We are more than conquerors.' How are God's children more than conquerors ? Because they conquer without loss, and because they are crowned after death which other conquerors are not.

15. If God be our Father he will now and then send us some tokens of his love. God's children live far from home, and meet sometimes with coarse usage from the unkind world; therefore God, to encourage his children, sends them sometimes tokens and pledges of his love: What are these? He gives them a return of prayer, there is a token of love; he quickens and enlargeth their hearts in duty, there is a token of love; he gives them the first fruits of his Spirit which are love tokens, Rom. viii. 23. As God gives the wicked the first fruits of hell, horror of conscience and despair: so he gives his children the first fruits of his Spirit, joy and peace, which are foretastes of glory; some of God's children having received these tokens of love from their heavenly Father, have been so transported, that they have died for joy, as the glass oft breaks with the strength of the wine put into it.

16. If God be our Father, he will indulge and spare us, Mal. iii. 17. 'I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.' God's sparing his children, imports this, his clemency towards them; he doth not punish them as he might, Ps. ciii. 10. 'He hath not dealt with us according to our sins.' We oft do that which merits wrath, grieve God's Spirit, relapse into sin; God passeth by much, and spares us; God did not spare his natural Son, Rom. viii. 32. Yet he will spare his adopted sons; God threatened Ephraim, to make him as the chaff driven with the whirlwind, but he soon repented, Hos. xiii. 4. 'Yet I am the Lord thy God,' ver. 10. 'I will be thy king.' Here God spared him, as a father spares his son. Israel oft provoked God with their complaints, but God used clemency toward them, he oft answered their murmurings with mercies; here he spared them as a father spares his son.

17. If God be our Father, he will put honour and renown upon us at the last day. 1. He will clear the innocence of his children. God's children in this life are strangely misrepresented to the world? They are loaded with invectives, they are called factious, seditious: Elijah, the troubler of Israel: Luther was called the trumpet of rebellion; Athanasius was accused to the emperor Constantine, to be the raiser of tumults; the primitive Christians were accused to be *infanticidii incestue rei*, killers of their children, guilty of incest; as Tertullian, reported St. Paul to be a petulant person, Acts xxiv. 4. Famous Wickliff, called the idol of the heretics, and that he died drunk. If Satan cannot defile God's children, he will disgrace them; if he cannot strike his fiery darts into their conscience, he will put a dead fly into their name: but God will one day clear his children's innocence, he will roll away their reproach; as God will make a resurrection of bodies, so of names, Isa. xxv. 8. 'The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the re-



buke of his people shall he take away.' God will be the saints' compurgator, Pf. xxxvii. 6. 'He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light.' The night casts its dark mantle upon the most beautiful flowers; but the light comes in the morning and dispels the darkness, and every flower appears in its orient brightness. So the wicked may by misreports darken the honour and repute of the saints: but God will dispel this darkness, and cause their names to shine forth: 'He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light.' As God did stand up for the honour of Moses, when Aaron and Miriam went about to eclipse his fame, Numb. xii. 8. 'Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?' So will God say one day to the wicked, wherefore were ye not afraid to defame and traduce my children? They having my image upon them, how durst ye abuse my picture? At last God's children shall come forth out of all their calumnies, as a 'dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold,' Pf. lxxviii. 13. 2. God will make an open and honourable recital of all their good deeds: as the sins of the wicked shall be openly mentioned, to their eternal infamy and confusion; so all the good deeds of the saints shall be openly mentioned, 'and then shall every man have praise of God, 1 Cor. iv. 5. Every prayer made with melting eyes, every good service, every work of charity, shall be openly declared before men and angels, Matth. xxv. 35. 'I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink; naked, and ye clothed me.' Thus God will set a trophy of honour upon all his children at the last day; 'then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father,' Matth. xiii. 43.

18. If God be our Father, he will settle good land of inheritance upon us, 1 Pet. i. 4. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled.' A father may be fallen to decay, and have nothing to leave his son but his blessing; but God will settle an inheritance on his children, and an inheritance no less than a kingdom, Luke xii. 32. 'It is your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom.' This kingdom is more glorious and magnificent than any earthly kingdom; it is set out by pearls and precious stones, the richest jewels, Rev. xii. 19. What are all the rarities of the world to this kingdom? the coasts of pearl, the islands of spices, the rocks of diamonds? In this heavenly kingdom is that which is satisfying, unparalleled beauty, rivers of pleasure, and this for ever, Pf. xvi. 11. 'At thy right-hand are pleasures for evermore.' Heaven's eminency is its permanency; and this kingdom God's children shall enter into immediately after death: there is a sudden transition and passage from death to glory,

2 Cor. v. 9. 'Absent from the body, present with the Lord.' God's children shall not stay long for their inheritance; it is but twinkling, and they shall see God. How may this comfort God's children, who perhaps are low in the world? Your Father in heaven, will settle a kingdom upon you at death, such a kingdom as eye hath not seen; he will give you a crown not of gold, but glory: he will give you white robes lined with immortality. 'It is your Father's good pleasure, to give you a kingdom.'

19. If God be our Father, it is comfort, 1. In case of loss of relations: hast thou lost a father? Yet, if thou art a believer, thou art no orphan, thou hast an heavenly Father, a father that never dies, 1 Tim. vi. 16. 'Who only hath immortality.' 2. It is comfort, in case of death; God is thy Father, and at death thou art going to thy Father: well might Paul say 'death is yours,' 1 Cor. iii. 2. It is your friend, that will carry you home to your father. How glad are children when they are going home? This was Christ's comfort at death, he was going to his Father, John xvi. 28. 'I leave the world, and go to the Father.' And, John xx. 17. 'I ascend to my Father.' If God be our Father, we may with comfort at the day of death, resign our souls into his hand: so did Christ, Luke xxiii. 46. 'Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.' If a child hath any jewel, he will, in time of danger, put it into his father's hands, where he thinks it will be kept most safe: our soul is our richest jewel; we may at death resign our souls into God's hands, where they will be safer than in our own keeping; 'Father into thy hands I commend my Spirit.' What a comfort is this, death carries a believer to his Father's house, 'where are delights unspeakable and full of glory!' How glad was old Jacob, when he saw the waggons and chariots to carry him to his son Joseph? The text saith, 'His spirit revived,' Gen. xlv. 27. Death is a triumphant chariot, to carry every child of God to his father's mansion-house.

20. If God be our Father, he will not disinherit his children; God may for a time desert them, but not disinherit them. The sons of kings have sometimes been disinherited by the cruelty of usurpers: as, Alexander the Great, his son was put by his just right, by the violence and ambition of his father's captains: but what power on earth shall hinder the heirs of the promise from their inheritance; men cannot, and God will not cut off the entail. The Arminians hold falling away from grace, and so a child of God may be defeated of his inheritance: but I shall shew that God's children can never be degraded nor disinherited, their heavenly Father will not cast them off from being children. 1. It is evident God's children cannot be finally disinherited, by virtue of the eternal decree of heaven. God's de-

cree is the very pillar and basis on which the saints' perseverance depend; God's decree ties the knot of adoption so fast that neither sin, death nor hell, can break it asunder, Rom. viii. 30. 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called,' &c. Predestination is nothing else but God's decreeing a certain number to be heirs of glory, on whom he will settle the crown; whom he predestinates, he glorifies. What shall hinder God's electing love, or make his decree null and void? 2. Besides God's decree, he hath engaged himself by promise, that the heirs of heaven shall never be put by their inheritance. God's promises are not like blanks in a lottery, but as a sealed deed which cannot be reversed: the promises are the saints' royal charter; and this is one promise, that their heavenly Father will not disinherit them, Jer. xxxii. 40. 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' God's fidelity, which is the richest pearl of his crown, is engaged in this promise for his children's perseverance; 'I will not turn away from them.' A child of God cannot fall away, while he is held fast in these two arms of God, his love, and his faithfulness. 3. Jesus Christ undertakes, that all God's children by adoption shall be preserved, in a state of grace, till they inherit glory: as the heathens feigned of Atlas, that he did bear up the heavens from falling; Jesus Christ is that blessed Atlas, that bears up the saints from falling away.

Qu. *How doth Christ preserve the saints' graces, till they come to heaven?*

Ans. 1. *Influxu Spiritus.* Christ carries on grace in the souls of the elect, by the influence and co-operation of his Spirit: Christ doth, *Spiritu*, continually excite and quicken grace in the godly: his Spirit doth blow up the sparks of grace into a holy flame; *Spiritus est vicarius Christi*; the Spirit is Christ's vicar on earth, his proxy, his executor, to see that all that Christ hath purchased for the saints be made good: Christ hath obtained an inheritance incorruptible for them, 1 Pet. i. 4. and the Spirit of Christ is his executor, to see that this inheritance be settled upon them. 2. Christ carries on perseveringly in the souls of the elect, *vi orationis*, by the prevalency of his intercession, Heb. vii. 25. 'He ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Christ prays that every saint may hold out in grace till he comes to heaven; can the children of such prayers perish? If the heirs of heaven should be disinherited, and fall short of glory, then God's decree must be reversed, his promise broken, Christ's prayer frustrated, which were blasphemy to imagine. 4. That God's children cannot be disinherited, or put by their right to the crown of heaven, is evident from their mystical union with Christ. Believers are incorporated into

Christ, they are knit to Christ, as the members to the head, by the nerves and ligaments of faith, so that they cannot be broken off, Eph. i. 22, 23. 'The church which is his body.' What was once said of Christ's natural body, is as true of his mystical, 'A bone of it shall not be broken.' As it is impossible to sever the leaven and the dough when they are once mingled and kneaded together; so it is impossible, when Christ and believers are once united, that they should never, by the power of death or hell, be separated. Christ and his spiritual members make one Christ: now, is it possible that any part of Christ should perish? How can Christ want any member of his body mystical, and be perfect? Every member is an ornament to the body, and adds to the honour of it: how can Christ part with any mystical member, and not part with some of his glory too? So that by all this it is evident, that God's children must needs persevere in grace, and cannot be disinherited. If they could be disinherited, then the scripture could not be fulfilled, which tells us of glorious rewards for the heirs of promise, Psal. lviii. 11. 'Doubtless there is a reward for the righteous.' Now, if God's adopted children should fall away finally from grace, and miss of heaven, what reward were there for the righteous? and Moses did indiscreetly to look for the recompence of the reward, and so there would be a door opened to despair.

*Obj. This doctrine of God's children persevering, and having the heavenly inheritance settled on them, may cause carnal security, and make them less circumspect in their walking.*

*Ans.* Corrupt nature may, as the spider, suck poison from this flower; but a sober Christian, who hath felt the efficacy of grace upon his heart, dares not abuse this doctrine: he knows perseverance is attained in the use of means, therefore he walks holily, that so in the use of means he may arrive at perseverance. St. Paul knew that he should not be disinherited, and that nothing could separate him from the love of Christ: but who more holy and watchful than he? 1 Cor. ix. 27. 'I keep under my body;' and, Phil. iii. 14. 'I press towards the mark.' God's children have that holy fear in them, which keeps them from security and wantonness; they believe the promise, therefore they rejoice in hope; they fear their hearts, therefore they watch and pray. Thus you see what strong consolation there is for all the heirs of the promise. Such as have God for their Father are the happiest persons on earth; they are in such a condition that nothing can hurt them; they have their Father's blessing, all things conspire for their good; they have a kingdom settled on them, and the entail can never be cut off. How may God's children be comforted in all conditions, let the times be what they will? their Father is in heaven, he rules all: if troubles arise, they shall but carry God's children so much the sooner to

their Father. The more violently the wind beats against the sails of a ship, the sooner the ship is brought to the haven; and the more fiercely God's children are assaulted, the sooner they come to their Father's house, 1 Thess. iv. 18. 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

*Use 4. Of exhortation.* Let us behave and carry ourselves as the children of such a Father, in several particulars.

1. Let us depend upon our heavenly Father in all our straits and exigencies: let us believe that he will provide for us. Children rely upon their parents for the supply of wants: if we trust God for salvation, shall we not trust him for a livelihood! There is a lawful provident care to be used, but beware of a distrustful care, Luke xii. 24. 'Consider the ravens, they neither sow nor reap, and God feedeth them.' Doth God feed the birds of the air, and will he not feed his children? Ver. 27. 'Consider the lilies how they grow; they spin not: yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' Doth God clothe the lilies, and will he not clothe his lambs? Even the wicked taste of God's bounty, Psal. lxxiv. 7. 'Their eyes stand out with fatness.' Doth God feed his slaves, and will not he feed his family? God's children may not have so liberal a share in the things of this life, but little meal in the barrel; they may be drawn low, but not drawn dry; they shall have so much as God sees is good for them, Psal. xxxiv. 10. 'They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.' If God gives them not *ad voluntatem*, he will *ad sanitatem*; if he gives them not always what they crave, he will give them what they need; if he gives them not a feast, he will give them a *viaticum*, a bait by the way: let God's children therefore depend upon God's fatherly providence; give not way to distrustful thoughts, distracting cares, or indirect means; God can provide for you without your sins, 1 Pet. v. 7. 'Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.' An earthly parent may have affection for his child, and would provide for him, but sometimes he is not able; but God can create a supply for his children; yea, he hath promised a supply, Psalm xxxvii. 3. 'Verily thou shalt be fed.' Will God give his children heaven, and will he not give them enough to bear their charges thither? Will he give them a kingdom, and deny them daily bread? O depend upon your heavenly Father; he hath said, 'He will never leave you, nor forsake you,' Heb. xiii. 5.

2. If God be our Father, let us imitate him: the child doth not only bear his father's image, but doth imitate him in his speech, gesture, behaviour: if God be our Father, let us imitate him, Eph. v. 4. 'Be ye followers of God as dear children.'

1. Imitate God in forgiving injuries, Isa. xlv. 23. 'I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions.' As the sun scat-

ters not only thin mists, but thick clouds, so God pardons great offences ; imitate God in this, Eph. iv. 32. ‘ Forgiving one another.’—Cranmer was a man of a forgiving spirit, he did bury injuries, and requite good for evil ; he who hath God for his Father, hath God for his pattern. 2. Imitate God in works of mercy ; He looseth the prisoners, Psal. cxlvi. 7. ‘ He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing,’ Psal. cxlv. 16. He drops his sweet dew as well upon the thistle as the rose ; Imitate God in works of mercy ; relieve the wants of others, be rich in Good works, Luke vi. 36. ‘ Be merciful as your Father also is merciful.’ Be not so hard-hearted, as to shut the poor out of the lines of communication. Dives denied Lazarus a crumb of bread, and Dives was denied a drop of water.

3. If God be our Father, let us submit patiently to his will : if he lay his strokes on us, they are the corrections of a Father, not the punishments of a judge ; this made Christ so patient, John xviii. 11. ‘ Shall I not drink the cup which my Father hath given me ?’ He sees we need affliction, 1 Pet. i. 6. he appoints it as a diet-drink to purge and sanctify us, Isa. xxvii. 9. therefore dispute not but submit, Heb. xii. 9. ‘ We had fathers of the flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence ;’ they might correct out of an humour but God doth it for our profit, Heb. xii. 10. Therefore say, as Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. ‘ It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good.’ What gets the child by struggling, but more blows ? What got Israel by their murmuring and rebellion, but a longer and more tedious march, and at last their carcases fell in the wilderness.

4. If God be our Father, let this cause in us a child-like reverence, Mal. i. 6. ‘ If I be a Father, where is my honour ?’ This is a part of the honour we give to God, when we reverence and adore him : if you have not always a child-like confidence, yet always preserve a child-like reverence. And how ready are we to run into extremes, either to despond or grow wanton ? Because God is a Father, therefore do not think you may be secure and take liberty to sin ; if you do, God may carry it so as if he were no Father ; he may throw hell into your conscience. When David presumed upon God’s paternal affection, and began to wax wanton under mercy, God made him pay dear for it, he withdrew the sense of his love ; and though he had the heart of a Father, yet he had the look of an enemy. David prayed, ‘ Cause me to hear the voice of joy.’ Psal. li. 8. He lay several months in desertion, and it is thought he never recovered his full joy to the day of his death. Oh keep alive holy fear ; with a child-like confidence, preserve an humble reverence : the Lord is a Father, therefore love to serve him ; he is the mighty God, therefore fear to offend him.

5. If God be our Father, let us walk obedientially, 1 Pet. i. 14. 'As obedient children.' When God bids you be humble and self-denying, deny yours, part with your bosom-sin : be sober in your attire, favoury in your speeches, grave in your deportment, obey your Father's voice ; open to God, as the flower opens to the sun : as you expect your Father's blessing, obey him in whatever he commands, first and second table duties. A lutanist, that he may make sweet music, toucheth upon every string of the lute ; the ten commandments are like a ten-stringed instrument, touch upon every string, obey every commandment, or you cannot make sweet melody in religion. Obey your heavenly Father, though he commands things contrary to flesh and blood. 1. When he commands to mortify sin, that sin which hath been dear to you : pluck out this right eye, that you may see the better to go to heaven. 2. When he commands you to suffer for him, be ready to obey, Acts xxi. 13. Every good Christian hath a spirit of martyrdom in him, and is ready rather to suffer for the truth, than the truth should suffer. Luther said, he had rather be a martyr, than a monarch, Peter was crucified with his head downwards, as Eusebius. Ignatius called his chains, his spiritual pearls, and did wear his fetters as a bracelet of diamonds. This is to carry it as God's children, when we obey his voice, and count not our lives dear, so that we may shew our love to our heavenly Father, Rev. xii. 11. 'They loved not their lives to the death.'

6. If God be your Father, shew it by your cheerful looks that you are the children of such a Father. Too much drooping and despondency disparageth the relation you stand in to God. What though you meet with hard usage in the world ? You are now in a strange land, far from home ; it will be shortly better with you, when you are in your own country, and your Father hath you in his arms. Doth not the heir rejoice in hope ? shall the sons of a king walk dejected ? 2 Sam. xiii. 4. 'Why art thou, being the king's son, lean ?' is God an unkind Father ? are his commands grievous ? hath he no land to give to his heirs ? Why then do God's children walk so sad ? Never had children such privileges as they who are of the seed-royal of heaven, and have God for their Father ; they should rejoice therefore, who are within a few hours to be crowned with glory.

7. If God be our Father, let us honour him by walking very holily, 1 Pet. i. 16. 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' A young prince asking a philosopher how he should behave himself, the philosopher said, *Memento te filium esse regis*—Remember thou art a king's son : do nothing but what becomes the son of a king : so remember you are the adopted sons and daughters of the high God, do nothing unworthy of such a relation. A debauched child is the disgrace of his father. Is this thy son's

coat ? said they to Jacob, when they brought it home dipped in blood, Gen. xxxviii. 32. so when we see a person defiled with malice, passion, drunkenness, we may say, is this the coat of God's adopted son ? doth he look as an heir of glory ? It is a blaspheming the name of God, to call him Father, yet live in sin. Such as profess God is their Father, yet live unholily, they will slander and defraud ; these are as bad to God as heathens, Amos ix. 7. - ' Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians to me, O children of Israel, saith the Lord ? ' The Ethiopians were uncircumcised, a base, ill-bred people ; when Israel grew wicked, they were no better to God than Ethiopians. Loose scandalous livers under the gospel are no better in God's esteem than Pagans and Americans ; nay, they shall have an hotter place in hell. O let all who profess God to be their Father, honour him by their unspotted lives. Scipio abhorred the embraces of an harlot, because he was the general of an army : abstain from all sin, because you are born of God, and have God for your Father, 1 Thess. v. 21. ' Abstain from all appearance of evil.' It was a saying of Augustus, an emperor should not only be free from crimes, but from the suspicion of them. By an holy life you would bring glory to your heavenly Father, and cause others to become his children : *Est pallax virtutis odor*. Causinus in his hieroglyphics speaks of a dove, whose wings being perfumed with sweet ointments, did draw the other doves after her ; the holy lives of God's children is a sweet perfume to draw others to religion, and make them to be of the family of God. Justin Martyr saith, " That which converted him to Christianity, was the beholding the blameless lives of the Christians."

8. If God be our Father, let us love all that are his children, Pf. cxxxiii. 1. ' How pleasant is it for brethren to dwell together in unity ? ' it is compared to ointment, ver. 2. for the sweet fragraney of it, 1 Pet. ii. 17. ' Love the brotherhood.' *Idem est motus animae in imaginem et rem*. The saints are the walking pictures of God : if God be our Father, we love to see his picture of holiness in believers ; we pity them for their infirmities, but love them for their graces ? we prize their company above others, Pf. cxix. 63. It may justly be suspected that God is not their Father, who love not God's children ; though they retain the ' communion of saints ' in their creed, yet they banish the communion of saints out of their company.

9. If God be our Father, let us shew heavenly mindedness : they who are born of God, do set their affections on things that are above, Col. iii. 2. O ye children of the high God ! do not disgrace your high birth by sordid covetousness. What, a son of God, and a slave to the world ! what sprung from heaven, and buried in the earth ! For a Christian, who pretends to de-



rive his pedigree from heaven, yet wholly to mind earthly things, is to debase himself : as if a king should leave his throne to follow the plough, Jer. xlv. 5. ' Seekest thou great things for thyself ? ' As if the Lord had said, ' What thou Barak, thou who art born of God, a-kin to angels, and by thy office a Levite, dost thou debase thyself, and spot the silver wings of thy grace, by belining them with earth ? Seekest thou great things ? Seek them not. ' The earth chokes the fire : earthliness chokes the fire of good affections.

10. *ult.* If God be our Father, let us own our heavenly Father in the worst times ; stand up in his cause, defend his truths. Athanasius owned God, when most of the world turned Arians. If sufferings come, do not deny God : he is a bad son, who denies his father. Such as are ashamed of God in times of danger, God will be ashamed to own them for his children, Mark viii. 38. ' Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels. ' So I have done with the first part of the preface, ' Our Father. '

II. The second part of the preface (which I shall briefly touch on) is, ' Which art in heaven. ' God is said to be in heaven, not that he is so included there, that he is no where else ; for the ' heaven of heavens cannot contain him, ' 1 Kings viii. 27. But, the meaning is, God is chiefly resident in the empyrean heaven, which the apostle calls ' the third heaven, ' 2 Cor. xii. 2. there God doth most give forth glory to his saints and angels.

Qu. *What may we learn from this, that God is in heaven ?*

Ans. 1. Hence we learn that we are to raise our minds in prayer above the earth. God is no where to be spoken with, but in heaven. God never denied that soul his suit, who went as far as heaven to ask it.

2. We learn from God's being in heaven, his sovereign power. *Hoc vocabulo intelligitur omnia subesse ejus imperio*, Calvin. Psal. cxv. 3. ' Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatever he pleased. ' God being in heaven governs the universe, and orders all occurrences here below for the good of his children : when the saints are in straits and dangers, and see no way of relief, he can send from heaven, and help them, Ps. lvii. 3. ' He shall send from heaven, and save me. '

3. We learn God's glory and majesty : he is in heaven ; therefore ' he is covered with light, ' Psal. civ. 2. ' Clothed with honour, ' Psal. civ. 1. and is as far above all worldly princes, as heaven is above earth.

4. We learn, from God's being in heaven, his omniscience ; ' All things are naked, and unmasked in his eye, ' Heb. iv. 13.

Men plot and contrive against the church ; but God is in heaven, and they do nothing but what our Father sees. If a man were on the top of a tower or theatre, he might thence see all the people below : God is in heaven, as in an high tower or theatre, and he sees all the transactions of men. The wicked make wounds in the backs of the righteous, and then pour in vinegar ; God writes down their cruelty, Exod. iii. 7. ‘ I have seen the afflictions of my people.’ God is in heaven, and he can thunder out of heaven upon his enemies, Psal. xviii. 13. ‘ The Lord thundered in the heavens ; yea, he sent out arrows, and scattered them, and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.’

5. We learn, from God’s being in heaven, comfort for the children of God ; when they pray to their Father, the way to heaven cannot be blocked up. One may have a father living in foreign parts, but the way, both by sea and by land, may be so blocked up, that there is no coming to him : but thou faint of God, when thou prayest to thy Father, he is in heaven ; and though thou art never so confined, thou mayest have access to him. A prison cannot keep thee from thy God : the way to heaven can never be blocked up.

So I have done with the word Father : I shall next speak of the pronoun, ‘ Our Father.’ In the first there is an appellation, Father ; in the second, an appropriation, ‘ Our Father.’ Christ, by this word (Our), would teach us thus much ; ‘ That in all our prayers to God, we should act faith.’ Our Father ; Father, denotes reverence ; Our Father, denotes faith. In all our prayers to God, we should exercise faith, ‘ Our Father.’ Faith is that which baptiseth prayer, and gives it a name ; it is called the ‘ prayer of faith,’ James v. 15. Without faith it is speaking, not praying. Faith is the breath of prayer ; prayer is dead, unless faith breathe in it. Faith is a necessary requisite in prayer. The oil of the sanctuary was made up of several sweet spices, ‘ pure myrrh, cassia, cinnamon,’ Exod. xxx. 23. Faith is the chief spice, or ingredient into prayer, which makes it go up to the Lord, as sweet incense, Jam. i. 6. ‘ Let him ask in faith,’ Mat. xxi. 22. ‘ Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.’ *Invoco te, Domine, quanquam languida et imbecilla fide, tamen fide ;* ‘ Lord, (said St. Cruxiger) I pray, though with a weak faith, yet with faith.’ Prayer is the gun we shoot with, fervency is the fire that dischargeth it, and faith is the bullet which pierceth the throne of grace : prayer is the key of heaven, faith is the hand that turns it ; ‘ pray in faith,’ ‘ Our Father.’ Faith must take prayer by the hand, or there is no coming nigh to God ; prayer without faith is unsuccessful. If a poor handy-craftsman, that lives by his labour, hath spoiled his tools, that he cannot work, how

shall he subsist? Prayer is the tool we work with, which procures all good for us: but unbelief spoils and blunts our prayers, and then we can get no blessing from God: a prayer that is faithless is fruitless. As Joseph said, 'You shall not see my face, unless you bring your brother Benjamin with you,' Gen. xlii. 3. So prayer cannot see God's face, unless it bring its brother faith with it. What is said of Israel, 'They could not enter in because of unbelief,' Heb. iii. 19. is as true of prayer, it cannot enter into heaven because of unbelief. This makes prayer often suffer shipwreck, because it dasheth upon the rock of unbelief. O sprinkle faith in prayer. We must say, 'Our Father.'

Qu. 1. *What doth praying in faith imply?*

Ans. Praying in faith implies the having of faith; the act implies the habit. To walk implies a principle of life; so to pray in faith implies an habit of grace. None can pray in faith but believers.

Qu. 2. *What is it to pray in faith?*

Ans. 1. To pray in faith, is to pray for that which God hath promised; where there is no promise, we cannot pray in faith.

2. To pray in faith, is to pray in Christ's meritorious name, John xiv. 13. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.' To pray in Christ's name, is to pray in the hope of confidence of Christ's merit. When we present Christ to God in prayer; when we carry the Lamb slain in our arms; when we say "Lord, we are sinners, but here is our surety: for Christ's sake be propitious:" this is coming to God in Christ's name; and this is to pray in faith.

3. To pray in faith is, in prayer to fix our faith on God's faithfulness, believing that he doth hear, and will help; this is a taking hold of God, Isa. lxiv. 7. By prayer we draw nigh to God, by faith we take hold of him, 2 Chron. xiii. 14. 'The children of Judah cried unto the Lord;' and this was the crying of faith, ver. 18. 'They prevailed, because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers.' Making supplication to God, and staying the soul on God, is praying in faith. To pray, and not rely on him for the granting our petitions, *irresio Dei est*, faith Pelican; "it is to abuse and put a scorn on God." By praying, we seem to honour God, by not believing we affront him. In prayer we say, Almighty, merciful Father; by not believing, we blot out all his titles again.

Qu. 3. *How may we know that we do truly pray in faith? We may say, 'Our Father,' and think we pray in faith, when it is in presumption; how therefore may we know that we do indeed pray in faith?*

Ans. 1. When our faith in prayer is humble: a presumptuous person hopes to be heard in prayer, for some inherent worthi-

ness in himself; he is so qualified, and hath done God good service, therefore he is confident God will hear his prayer: see an instance, Luke xviii. 11, 12. 'The Pharisee stood and prayed thus, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust: I fast twice in the week; I give tythes of all I possess.' This was a presumptuous prayer; but a sincere heart doth as well act humility in prayer as faith, Luke xviii. 13. 'The publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.' 'God be merciful,' there was faith; 'to me a sinner,' there was humility and a sense of unworthiness.

2. We may know we pray in faith, when though we have not the present thing we pray for, yet we believe God will grant, therefore we will stay his leisure. A Christian having a command to pray, and a promise, he is resolved to follow God with prayer, and not give over: as Peter, he knocked, yet the door was not opened; but he continued knocking, and at last it was opened, Acts xii. 16. So a Christian prays and prays, but hath no answer; but he will continue knocking at heaven's door, knowing an answer will come, Psal. lxxxvi. 7. 'Thou wilt answer me.' Here is one that prays in faith. Christ saith, 'Pray and faint not,' Luke xviii. 1. A believer, at Christ's word, lets down the net of prayer, and though he catch nothing, he will cast the net of prayer again, believing that mercy will come. Patience in prayer is nothing but faith spun out.

*Use I.* It reproves them that pray in formality, not in faith; they question whether God hears or will grant, James iv. 3. 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.' He doth not say, ye ask that which is unlawful; but, ye ask amiss, and therefore they receive not. Unbelief clips the wings of prayer, that it will not fly to the throne of grace; the rubbish of unbelief stops the current of prayer.

*Use II.* Of exhortation. Let us set faith a-work in prayer, [Our Father.] The husbandman sows in hope: prayer is the seed we sow; when the hand of faith scatters this seed, it brings forth a fruitful crop of blessing, prayer is the ship we send out to heaven; when faith makes an adventure in this ship, it brings home large returns of mercy. O pray in faith, say, 'Our Father.' And that we may act faith in prayer, consider,

(1.) God's readiness to hear prayer. *Deus paratus ad vota exaudienda*, Calvin. Did God forbid all addresses to him, it would put a damp upon the trade of prayer; but God's ear is open to prayer. It is one of the names by which God is known, Psal. xlv. 2. 'O thou that hearest prayer.' The Aediles among the Romans had their doors always standing open, that all who had petitions might have free access to them. God is

both ready to hear, and grant prayer: this may encourage faith in prayer, And, whereas some may say, they have prayed, but have had no answer. 1. God may hear prayer, though he do not presently answer: we write a letter to a friend, he may have received it, though we have yet had no answer of it. Perhaps thou prayest for the light of God's face; God may lend thee an ear, though he doth not shew thee his face: 2. God may give an answer to prayer, when we do not perceive it. His giving an heart to pray, and inflaming the affections in prayer, is an answer of prayer, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. 'In the day that I cried, thou answeredst me and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.' David's inward strength was an answer of prayer, therefore let God's readiness to hear prayer encourage faith in prayer.

2. That we may act faith in prayer, consider, we do not pray alone; Christ prays over our prayers again; Christ's prayer is the ground why our prayer is heard. Christ takes the dross out of our prayer, and presents nothing to his Father but pure gold. Christ mingles his sweet odours with the prayers of the saints, Rev. v. 8. Think of the dignity of his person, he is God; and the sweetness of his relation, he is a son. O what encouragement is here, to pray in faith? Our prayers are put into the hand of a Mediator. Christ's prayer is mighty and powerful.

3. We pray to God for nothing but what is pleasing to him, and he hath a mind to grant: if a son ask nothing but what his father is willing to bestow, this may make him go to him with confidence. When we pray to God for holy hearts, there is nothing more pleasing to him. 1 Theff. iv. 3. 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification,' We pray that God would give us an heart to love him, and there is nothing he more desires than our love. How may this make us pray in faith, when we pray for nothing but what is acceptable to God, and which he delights to bestow!

4. To encourage faith in prayer, consider the many sweet promises that God hath made to prayer. The cork keeps the net from sinking; the promises are the cork to keep faith from sinking in prayer. God hath bound himself to us by his promises: the Bible is bespangled with promises made to prayer, Isa. xxx. 19. 'He will be very gracious to thee at the voice of thy cry. The Lord is rich unto all that call upon him.' Rom. x. 12. Jer. xxix. 13. 'Then shall he find me when ye search for me with all your heart,' Psal. xlv. 14. 'He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him.' The Tyrians tied their god Hercules with a golden chain that he should not remove: God hath tied himself fast to us by his promises: How should these ani-

mate and spirit faith in prayer? Faith gets strength in prayer, by sucking from the breast of a promise.

5. That we may act faith in prayer, consider, Jesus Christ hath purchased that which we pray for; we may think the things we ask for in prayer too great for us to obtain, but they are not too great for Christ to purchase; we pray for pardon, Christ hath purchased it in his blood; we pray for the Spirit to animate and inspire us, the sending down of the Holy Ghost into our hearts is the fruit of Christ's death, John xvi. This may put life into our prayers, and make us pray in faith; because the things we ask in prayer, though they are more than we deserve, yet not more than Christ hath purchased for us.

6. To make us pray in faith, consider there is such a bountifulness in God, that he often exceeds the prayers of his people; he gives them more than they ask! as Hannah asked a son, and God gave her not only a son, but a prophet. Solomon asked wisdom, and God gave him not only wisdom, but riches and honour besides; Jacob prayed that God would but give him food and raiment, and the Lord increased his pilgrim's staff into two bands, Gen. xxxii. 10. God is often better to us than our prayers, as when Gehazi asked but one talent, Naaman would needs force two upon him, 2 Kings v. 23. We ask one talent of mercy, and God gives two talents. The woman of Canaan asked but a crumb, namely, to have the life of her child; and Christ gave her more, he sent her home with the life of her soul.

7. The great success the prayer of faith hath found; like Jonathan's bow, it hath not returned empty. *Vocula pater dicta in corde*, faith Luther. This little word, father, pronounced in faith, hath overcome God, Gen. xxxii. 11. 'Deliver me, I pray thee.' And this was mixed with faith in the promise, ver. 12. 'Thou saidest I will surely do thee good:' and this prayer had power with God, and prevailed, Hos. xii. 4. The prayer of faith hath opened prison-doors, stopt the chariot of the sun, locked and unlocked heaven, James v. 17. The prayer of faith hath strangled the plots of enemies in the birth, it hath routed their forces; Moses' prayer against Amalek did more than Joshua's sword; and may not this hearten and corroborate faith in prayer?

8. If all this will not prevail, consider how heartless and comfortless it is to pray, and not in faith: the heart misgives secretly, God doth not hear, nor will he grant. Faithless praying must needs be comfortless; for there is no promise made to unbelieving prayer. It is sad sailing where there is no anchoring, and sad praying where there is no promise to anchor upon, James i. 7. The disciples toiled all night and caught nothing: the unbeliever toils in prayer and catcheth nothing; he receives not

any spiritual blessings, pardon of sin, or grace : as for the temporal mercies the unbeliever hath, he cannot look upon them as the fruit of prayer, but as the overflowings and spillings of God's bounty, oh therefore labour to exert and put forth faith in prayer.

*Obj. But there is so much sin cleaves to my prayer, that I fear it is not the prayer of faith, and God will not hear it.*

*Ans.* If thou mournest for this, it hinders not but that thy prayer may be in faith, and God may hear it : weakness in prayer shall not make void the saints' prayers, Psalm xxxi. 22. 'I said in my haste, I am cut off.' There was much unbelief in this prayer : 'I said in my haste : ' in the Hebrew, 'in my trembling.' David's faith did tremble and faint, yet God heard his prayer. The saints' passions do not hinder the saints' prayers, James v. 17. Therefore be not discouraged ; though sin will cleave to thy holy offering, yea these two things may comfort, thou mayest pray with faith, though with weakness ; and God sees the sincerity, and will pass by the infirmity.

*Qu. How shall we do to pray in faith ?*

*Ans.* Implore the Spirit of God : we cannot say, 'our Father,' but by the Holy Ghost. God's Spirit helps us, not only to pray with sighs and groans, but with faith. The Spirit carries us to God, not only as to a Creator, but a Father, Gal. iv. 6. 'He hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' 'Crying' there the Spirit causeth us to pray with fervency : 'Abba, Father,' there the Spirit helpeth us to pray with faith. Prayer is the key of heaven, the Spirit helps faith to turn this key, and then it unlocks heaven.

## OF THE FIRST PETITION IN THE LORD'S PRAYER.

MARTH. vi. 9. *Hallowed be thy Name.*

HAVING spoken of the introduction to the Lord's prayer, 'after this manner pray ye : ' and the preface, 'Our Father which art in heaven ; ' I come now thirdly to the prayer itself, which consists of seven petitions : a short body of divinity is contained in them. I begin with the first petition.

I. 'Hallowed be thy name.' In the Latin, it is, *sanctificetur nomen tuum*, sanctified be thy name. In this petition, 'hallowed be thy name,' we pray, that God's name may shine forth gloriously, and that it may be honoured and sanctified by us, in the whole course and tenor of our lives. It was the angels' song, 'glory be to God in the highest ; ' that is, let his name be