

2. Let us go to God for grace; he is called "the God of all grace," 1 Pet. v. 10. We could lose grace of ourselves, but we cannot find it of ourselves. The sheep can wander from the fold, but cannot return without the help of the shepherd; go to the God of all grace; God is the first planter, the promoter, the perfecter of grace; God is the Father of lights, James i. 17. He must light up this candle of grace in the soul; grace is in his gift; it is not an impropriation, but a donative: O then go to God in prayer, lay thy heart before him; Lord, I want grace; I want an humble, believing heart, and thou art "the God of all grace, all my springs are in thee." O enrich me with grace, deny me not this before I die: what is gold in the bag, if I have no oil in the lamp? give me "that anointing of God." I read in thy word of "the fruits of the Spirit;" Lord, my heart is a barren soil, plant some of these supernatural fruits in me, that I may be more useful and serviceable; Lord, I cannot be put off with other things. Who wilt thou give grace to, if not to such as ask, and are resolved not to give over asking?

3. If you would have grace, engage the prayers of others in your behalf; he is like to be rich, who hath several stocks going; he is in the way of spiritual thriving, who hath several stocks of prayer going for him. If you had a child that were sick, you would beg the prayers of others; thou hast a soul that is sick, sick of pride, lust, "sick unto death;" O beg the prayers of godly friends, that God will heal thee with his grace; a Moses and Jacob have much power with God: believers can prevail sometimes not only for themselves, but for their friends, James v. 16. A godly man's prayers may

do you more good than if he should bestow upon you all his lands of inheritance.

4. If you would have grace, frequent the means of grace, lie at the pool of Bethesda, wait at the posts of wisdom's door. Inward grace is wrought by outward means; the preaching of the word is God's engine that he useth for working grace; it is called "the rod of his strength," Psal. cx. 2. and "the breath of his lips," Isa. xi. 4. By this he causeth breath to enter; out of this golden pipe of the sanctuary, God empties the golden oil of grace into the soul; the ministry of the gospel is called "the ministry of the Spirit," 2 Cor. viii. because the Spirit of God ordinarily makes use of this to work grace; this ministry of the Spirit is to be preferred before the ministry of angels.

Quest. Why is the word preached the ordinary means to convey grace? why not conference or reading?

Ans. The reason is, because God hath appointed it to this end, and he will grace his own ordinances, 1 Cor. i. 21. "it pleased God." What reason could be given why the waters of Damascus should not have as sovereign virtue to heal Naaman's leprosy as the waters of Jordan? only this, because the Lord did appoint and sanctify the one to this work, and not the other; if therefore we would have grace, let us wait where the manna falls, and there expect the dew of the Spirit to fall with manna; the power of God goes along with his word.

How should we delight in ordinances! Sleidan saith there was a church in France formerly, which the Protestants called Paradise; as if they thought themselves in paradise while they were in the house of God; those ordinances should be our paradise which are "the power of God to salvation."

THE TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BLOSSOMING, AND BRINGING FORTH FRUIT.

PHIL. i. 11. "*Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*"

THE blessed apostle in this chapter makes a solemn prayer to God for these Philippians; and amongst the rest, he puts up two rare petitions for them.

1. That they might be sincere. Verse 10.

2. That they might be fruitful, in the words of the text, "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness," &c. Where is observable,

1. The matter, "Being filled with fruits."

2. The manner of production, "by Jesus Christ."

3. The end, "which are to the glory and praise of God."

Doctrine from whence this great truth doth result, "That Christians should above all things endeavour after fruitfulness." The saints are called "trees of righteousness," Isa. lxi. 3. These rational trees must not only bring forth leaves, but fruit; "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness." For the further amplifying of this, there are two things to be inquired into.

1. How a Christian brings forth fruit.

2. What is the fruit he brings forth.

1. How a Christian brings forth fruit. I answer; he brings forth fruit "in the vine;" by nature we are barren; there is not one good blossom growing on us; but when by faith we are ingrafted into Christ, then we grow and fructify, John xv. 4. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." Jesus Christ is that blessed root which shoots up that sap of grace into his branches. The Pelagians tell us we have sufficiency of ourselves to bring forth good fruit: but how improper is this? doth not the root contribute to the branches? is it not of Christ's precious fulness that we receive? John i. 16. Therefore it is observable Christ calls the spouse's grace his grace, Cant. v. 1. "I have gathered my myrrh with my spice." Christ saith not, thy myrrh, but my myrrh. If the saints bear any spiritual fruit, they are beholden to Christ for it, it is his myrrh, Hos. xiv. 8. "From me is thy fruit found."

2. What that fruit is which a good Christian brings forth. Answer; it is

1. Inward fruit. 2. Outward fruit. 3. Kindly fruit. 4. Seasonable fruit.

1. A Christian brings forth inward fruit: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith," Gal. v. 22. Thus fruit is sweet, and mellow, growing under the Sun of righteousness; this is that ripe fruit God delights to taste of, Micah vii. 1.

2. A Christian brings forth outward fruit.

(1.) The fruit of good discourse, Prov. xv.

4. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life." Gracious speeches fall from the lips of a godly man, as fruit from a tree.

(2.) The fruit of good works, Col. i. 10. God will say at the last day, show me thy faith by thy works, James ii. 18. A true saint doth all the good he can, "honouring the Lord with his substance;" he knows he is to be in the world but a while, therefore lives much in a little time, and crowds up a great deal of work in a little room; it was Christ's speech not long before his suffering, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," John xvii. 4. How can they be said to finish their work, that never yet began a good work?

3. A Christian brings forth kindly fruit. The godly man bringeth forth his fruit, Psal. i. 3. That is, he brings forth that fruit which is proper for him to bear. But what is this kindly and proper fruit? I answer, when we are good in our callings and relations: in a magistrate, justice is kindly fruit, Deut. xvi. 19. in a minister, zeal, Acts xvii. 16. in a parent, instruction, Deut. iv. 10. in a child, reverence, Eph. vi. 1. in a master, good example, Gen. xviii. 19. Eph. vi. 9. in a servant, obedience, 1 Pet. ii. 18. in the husband, love, Eph. v. 25. in the wife, submission, Eph. v. 22. in a tradesman, diligence, Exod. xx. 9. in a soldier, innocence, Luke iii. 14. A tree of God's planting brings forth his fruit, that which is suitable and proper. I shall never believe him to be good, that doth not bear kindly fruit; a good Christian, but a bad master; a good Christian, but a bad parent, doth not sound well. That minister can no more be good which wants zeal, than that wine is good which wants spirits; that magistrate can no more be good which wants justice, than that pillar is good which is not upright. That child can no more be good who doth not honour his parent, than a traitor can be said to be loyal. When Absalom did rise up in rebellion against his father, the mule which he rode upon (as if she were weary of carrying such a burden) resigns up her load to the great thick oak, and there left him hanging by the head betwixt heaven and earth, as neither fit

to ascend the one, nor worthy to tread upon the other.

Let Christians be persuaded to bring forth proper and genuine fruit, and shine forth in their relations: consider,

1. He who is not good in his relations, goes under the just suspicion of an hypocrite; let a man seem to be a penitent, or zealot, yet if he bear not fruit proper to his station, he is no tree of righteousness, but some wild degenerate plant. There are some will pray, hear sermons, discourse well; this is good: but "what means the bleating of the sheep?" they are not good in their relations; this discovers they are foundered and unsound. A good Christian labours to fill his relations, and to go through all the parts of religion, as the sun through all the signs of the zodiac. I like not those Christians, who, though they seem to be travelling to heaven, yet leave the duties of their relations as a *terra incognita*, which they never come near.

2. The excellency of a Christian is to bring forth proper fruit; wherein lies the goodness of a member in the body, but to discharge its proper office? the eye is to see, the ear to hear, &c. So the excellency of a Christian is to bring forth that fruit which God hath assigned to him: what is a thing good for which doth not do its proper work? what is a clock good for that will not strike? what is a ship good for that will not sail? what is a rose good for that doth not smell; what is that professor good for that doth not send forth a sweet perfume in his relation? the commendation of a thing is when it puts forth its proper virtue.

3. Not to bring forth suitable fruit, spoils all the other fruit which we bring forth. If a man were to make a medicine, and should leave out the chief ingredient, the medicine would lose its virtue. If one were to draw a picture, and should leave out an eye, it would spoil the picture; there are many to whom Christ will say at the day of judgment as to the young man, Luke xviii. 22. "Yet lackest thou one thing." Thou hast prayed, and fasted, and heard sermons, "yet lackest thou one thing," thou hast not been good in thy relations.

4. Relative graces do much beautify and set off a Christian: it is the beauty of a star

to shine in its proper orb; relative grace doth bespangle a Christian.

5. A good Christian brings forth seasonable fruit, Psal. i. 3. he that bringeth forth fruit in his season; every thing is beautiful in his time, Eccl. iii. 11. That may be good at one time, which at another may be out of season. There is a great deal of skill in the right timing of a thing; duties of religion must be performed in the fit juncture of time.

1. Christian duties that relate to our neighbour must be observed in their season.

(1.) Our reproving others must be seasonable. Reproof is a duty; when we see others walk irregularly, like soldiers that march out of rank and file, we ought mildly, yet gravely, to tell them of their sin, Lev. xix. 17. but let this fruit be brought forth in its season.

[1.] Do it privately; Matt. xviii. 15. "Go and tell him his faults between him and thee alone."

[2.] Do it when thou seest him in the best temper, not when his passions are up; that were pouring oil on the flame; but when his spirit is meekened and calmed; you put the seal on the wax when it is soft and pliable; there is a time when men's spirits are more flexible and yielding; now is the fittest time to stamp a reproof upon them, and it is likeliest to take impression. When Abigail reproved Nabal, it was in the right season; not when he was in wine, but when he was in his wits, and was fit to hear a reproof, 1 Sam. xxv. 37.

[3.] Another season for reproof is in the time of affliction: Affliction tames men's spirits, and now a word of reproof spoken prudentially may work with the affliction: a bitter potion is not refused if in case of extremity of pain. Affliction opens the ear to discipline.

(2.) Our comforting others must be seasonable; Prov. xv. 23. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it?" When we see one fallen into sin, and with Peter weeping bitterly, O now a word of comfort will do well. The incestuous Corinthian being deeply humbled, the apostle calls for oil and wine to be poured into his wounds; 2 Cor. ii. 7. "Ye ought rather to comfort him,"

and the reason is given, "lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up of sorrow." When the soul is wounded for sin, now bring the mollifying ointment of a promise, Jer. iii. 1. hang out free grace's colours, display the glory of God's attributes, his mercy and truth to the sinner; when the spirit is broken, a word of comfort spoken in season, is the putting it in joint again, this is to bring forth seasonable fruit, when we give wine to them that are of a heavy heart; "Pleasant words are as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul." Job's friends pretended to comfort him, but instead of pouring oil into the wound, they poured in vinegar.

2. Duties of religion that relate to God must be performed in their season.

(1.) Mourning for sin is a duty; God loves a contrite heart; Psal. li. 17. how powerful with God is the weeping rhetoric that a poor sinner useth! but yet there is a time when weeping may not be so seasonable; when God hath given us some eminent signal deliverance, and this mercy calls aloud to us to rejoice, but we hang our harps on the willows and sit weeping; this sadness is fruit out of season; there was a special time at the feast of tabernacles, when God called his people to rejoicing; "Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God, and thou shalt surely rejoice."

Now, if the Israelites had sat heavy and disconsolate at that time when God called them to rejoicing, it had been very unseasonable, like mourning at a wedding; when we are called to thanksgiving, and we mingle our drink with tears, is not this to be highly unthankful for mercy? God would have his people humble, but not ungrateful. It is the devil's policy either to keep us from duty, or else to put us upon it when it is least in season.

(2.) Rejoicing is a duty; Psal. xxxiii. 1. But when God by some special providence calls us to weeping, now joy is unseasonable; this is that which God complains of, Isa. xxii. 12. "In that day did the Lord of hosts call to weeping, and behold joy and gladness," &c. Œcolampadius and others think it was in the time of king Ahaz, when the signs of God's anger, like a blazing star, did appear; now to be given to mirth was

very unseasonable, ver. 14. "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts;" it is a concise form of an oath, as if God had said, I swear it shall not by any prayer or sacrifice be expiated; the fruit of joy must be brought forth in its season. To read at home, when the word is a-preaching, or the sacrament celebrating, is unseasonable, nay sinful, as Hushai said, 2 Sam. xvii. 7. "The counsel is not good at this time:" one duty is to prepare for another, but not to jostle out another; fruit must put forth seasonably. The great God who hath appointed the duties of his worship, hath appointed also the time. If, when public ordinances are administered, any person, whether out of pride or sloth, shall stay at home, though he may have his private devotions, yet he brings forth fruit out of season, and let that man know he shall bear his sin.

Let all the trees of righteousness bring forth seasonable fruit; in prosperity be thankful, in adversity patient. "To every thing there is a season," Eccl. iii. 1. The Psalmist saith, "He appointed the moon for seasons," Psal. civ. 19.

To excite to seasonable fruit, consider,

1. The seasonableness of a thing puts a value and preciousness upon it. Duties of religion performed in their season are glorious.

2. Creatures, by the instinct of nature, observe their season; Jer. viii. 7. "Yea the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle," &c. and shall not Christians observe their seasons, when to mourn, when to rejoice?

3. Duties of religion not well timed are dangerous: mourning in a time of joy, private duties in time of public, is unseasonable, and will prove prejudicial.

Use 1. Inform. It shows us who is a Christian in God's calendar, namely, the fruit-bearing Christian. As soon as the sap of grace is infused, it puts forth itself in evangelical fruit. No sooner was Paul converted, but he became a plant of renown, he did bring forth rare fruit, humility, faith, heavenly-mindedness; he was one of the most fruitful trees that ever God planted in his vineyard. The jailer, when God had

changed him from a wild tree, to a tree of righteousness, brought forth sweet and generous fruit. How kindly did he use the apostles? he set meat before them, and washed their wounds; he who was before their jailer, becomes now their nurse and physician.

Use 2. Reproof. Here is an indictment against three sorts.

Branch 1. Such as bring forth no fruit; Hos. x. 1. "Israel is an empty vine." O how many unfruitful hearers are there, who evaporate into nothing but froth and fume, being like those ears which run out all into straw! they give God neither the early fruit nor the latter. There are many Christians like arbours, covered only with the leaves of profession; they may be compared to the wood of the vine, which is good for nothing, Ezek. xv. 2. He who hath not the fruits of the Spirit, hath not the Spirit, and "he who hath not the Spirit is none of Christ's," Rom. viii. 9. and if he be not Christ's, whose is he then? I fear the sin of this age is unfruitfulness. Never more labouring in God's vineyard, and yet never less fruit; instead of the fig-tree and the pomegranate, we have abundance of barren willows growing among us; ministers say they fear they "spend their labour in vain;" many are perverted, few converted. To the unfruitful Christian let me say four things.

1. Unfruitfulness is a shame: barrenness of old was counted a great shame. For a tree in winter to be unfruitful is no great wonder; but in the spring and summer, to be without fruit, is a reproach to the tree: so, in the winter of ignorance and popery, to have less fruit was less culpable; but in the spring-time of the gospel, when the Sun of Righteousness hath shined so gloriously in our horizon, now to be without fruit is a reproach not to be wiped away.

2. What account can the unfruitful Christian give to God? God will come with this question, Where is your fruit? a godly man dies full of fruit; Job v. 26. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in full age, like as a shock of corn," &c. The unfruitful Christian comes to his grave, not as a shock of corn, but as a bundle of straw, fit only for the fire; it is good to bethink ourselves what

answer we shall give to God for our barrenness. The Lord hath planted us in a rich soil; he may say to us as to his vineyard, Isa. v. 1. "My beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, and he fenced it, and planted it with the choicest vine," &c. "and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes," (in a hill) hilly places are judged the fittest for vines to grow in, Psal. lxxx. 10. there the sun comes best, and is of more force for ripening the grapes.

In a fruitful hill, that is in a very fat, rich soil. So may God say to us, I have planted you in a hilly place, you have been higher than the nations round about you, you have even been lifted up to heaven with ordinances; the sunbeams of mercy, and Sion's silver drops, have fallen upon you; but where is your fruit? your enjoyments are great, but what are your improvements? whom God finds without fruit, he leaves without excuse.

3. They that do not bring forth good fruit, shall never taste of the fruits that grow in heaven. Heaven is the garden of God, the paradise of pleasure, where the most rare delicious fruits grow; there are fruits that the angels themselves delight to feed on: now, if you do not bring God *your* fruit, you shall never taste *his* fruit: you that do not bring forth the fruits of righteousness, shall never taste the fruits of paradise. O present Christ with your sweet spices, give him your myrrh, your spiced wine; your myrrh, that is, repentance; this, though it be bitter to you, is sweet to Christ. Those who have no myrrh or wine to give to God, shall never feed upon the Tree of Life, which bears several sorts of fruit.

4. Think of the heavy doom which will be passed upon the unfruitful person, Matt. xxv. 30. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." This man had not embezzled his talent, but because he did not trade with it, and bring forth fruit, he is therefore sentenced.

Branch 2. It reproves such as bring forth evil fruit. They are not the trees of the garden, but the wilderness; their hearts are a fruitful soil for sin, they bring forth pride, malice, superstition, &c.

Branch 3. It reproves such as bring forth good fruit, but to a bad end, Hos. x. 1. "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself:" a man had as good bring forth no fruit, as bring forth fruit unto himself.

Quest. What is it for one to bring forth fruit unto himself?

Ans. When all the good he doth is for the magnifying of himself; the worm of pride gets into his fruit and spoils it. Prayer is good; but when a man prays only to show his parts, this is to bring forth fruit unto himself: some pride it in their humbling confessions, which is as if Benhadad's servants had been proud when they came before the king with ropes upon their heads, 1 Kings xx. 31. Works of mercy are good, but when a man gives alms, not so much to feed the poor, as to feed his pride, now he brings forth fruit to himself, and this fruit is worm-eaten. God will say to all such self-seekers, as once he did to the people of the Jews, Zech. vii. 5. "When ye fasted and mourned, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?" Sinners, did ye not bring forth fruit unto yourselves?

Use 3. Exhort. Branch 1. Let this exhort all to fruitfulness. How happy were it, if it might be said of us as of Joseph, Gen. xlix. 22. "Joseph is a fruitful bough?" We love to see every thing fruitful: if there be a tree in our orchard, though with ever such fair leaves, we value it not unless there be fruit; when you come into your garden, you complain if you see no fruit; such a root is set, but it doth not grow; we love to see fruitfulness every where, and why not in our hearts? O let the precious grapes and figs we bear, evidence that we are trees of God's planting. We often plant trees to be a shade to the house; God cares for no such trees as are only for shade, he loves fruit. Arabia is called Felix, because of the sweet fruits which grow there, frankincense, with other perfumes and spices. That Christian may be entitled Felix, happy, that hath the sweet fruits of the Spirit growing in his heart; be fruit-bearing trees. This is the emblem of a good Christian, he is never without fruit, either blooming in his affections, or fructifying in his conversation.

That I may persuade Christians to fruitfulness, I desire them to weigh these five things.

1. Fruit is that which God expects from us, we are his plantations; and, "Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?" 1 Cor. ix. 7. Let us not be as Pharaoh's kine, which devoured the fat, and yet still were lean; let us not be still devouring sermons, yet never the fatter.

2. Fruitfulness is one of the most distinctive characters of a Christian; Prov. xii. 12. "The root of the righteous yieldeth fruit." Fruitfulness differeth a saint from a hypocrite? the hypocrite is all for show and pretence, he hath fair leaves, but the "root of the righteous yieldeth fruit;" fruit can no more be separated from faith, than moisture from the air, it is the very definition of a branch in Christ, "it bears fruit," John xv. 2. As a man differs from a beast by reason, a beast differs from a plant by sense, a plant differs from a stone by vegetation; so a good Christian differs from a hypocrite by fruit. Fruitfulness puts a difference between the sound tree and the hollow tree.

Quest. But may not hypocrites bring forth fruit?

Ans. 1. They do not bring forth fruit in the Vine; they bring forth in the strength of parts, not in the strength of Christ.

2. Hypocrites bring forth something like fruit, but it is not the right fruit.

1. The fruit they bear is not sweet. The crab may bear fruit as well as the pearmain; but this excels in sweetness. The hypocrite may pray and give alms as well as a child of God, but there is a difference in the fruit; the fruit of the regenerate is mellow, it is sweetened with faith, it is ripened with love. The hypocrite's fruit is sour and harsh; he doth not bring forth pomegranates, but crabs, not figs, but wild grapes.

2. The seeming fruit of hypocrites dies and comes to nothing, John xv. 6. "He is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." The hypocrite's fruit is like the grass upon the house tops, which withereth before it groweth up. Psal. exxix. 6. Matt. xiii. 6.

3. Fruitfulness adorns a Christian; the fruit adorns the tree; a fruit-bearing Christian is an ornament to religion; the more

fruitful the branch is, the more fair to look on. A dead tree, as it is unserviceable, so it is uncomely. A Christian, decked with the fruits of righteousness, is beautiful and glorious.

4. Fruitfulness is a good evidence to show for heaven; the fruits of love, humility, good works, are (as St Bernard saith) seeds of hope, signs of predestination, the happy presages of future glory. The righteousness of faith is always accompanied with the fruits of righteousness. He that can show good fruit, goes full sail to heaven.

5. God delights in his fruitful trees; when his garden flourisheth he will walk there; he who curseth the barren tree, will taste of the fruitful tree, Cant. v. 1. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice."

2. *Branch.* It exhorts them that do bear fruit, that they would bring forth more fruit; do not think you have fruit enough, but bring forth further degrees of sanctity, John xv. 2. "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." Grace is like the morning light which increaseth more and more to the full meridian of glory. Christians should be like that ground in the parable which brought forth "some sixty, some an hundred fold," Matt. xiii. 8. He who hath a little gold, labours to increase it; and is not grace more precious than gold? some Christians have a little fruit, and they think that is well; like trees that have an apple or two growing upon them to show that they are of the right kind, Isa. xvii. 6. "Two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough." They are like the church of Philadelphia which had "a little strength," Rev. iii. 8. so they have a little faith, a spark of love. Christ chides a little faith, Matth. xiv. 31. Christians should increase with the increase of God, Col. ii. 19. Christ compares the breasts of the spouse to clusters of grapes, for fruitfulness, Cant. vii. 7. O labour to be Christians of degrees; the apostle prays for the Philippians that their love might abound "yet more and more," Phil. i. 9.

Now that I may press Christians who have fruit, to bring forth more fruits of patience, humility, love, &c. Consider,

1. This is the end why we have new cost laid out upon us, that we should bring forth more fruit. The Lord is still manuring us; not a week, not a day, but he is at new cost with us, he rains down golden showers; and why is God at all this charge with us, but that we may bring forth more fruit?

2. The fuller we are of fruit, the more we are like Christ, who was "full of grace and truth," John i. 14. he received the Spirit without measure," John iii. 34. This tree of life was ever bearing; and he brought forth several sorts of fruit, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, &c. The more we are filled with the fruits of righteousness, the more we resemble the Sun of Righteousness. We were elected to this end, to be made like Christ, Rom. viii. 30. and then are we most like this blessed Vine when we bear full clusters.

3. The more fruit a Christian brings forth, the more will Christ love him. "Now, saith Leah, will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons," Gen. xxix. 34. When we bear much fruit, now will Christ's heart be joined to us. Christ will pardon a weak faith, he will honour a great faith. It was not a sparkle of faith Christ commended in Mary Magdalene, but love flaming, Luke vii. 74. "she loved much." Christians, would you be like that beloved disciple which "leaned on the bosom of Jesus?" would you have much love from Christ? let him have much fruit from you.

4. Bearing much fruit will usher in abundance of comfort into the soul in these two exigencies.

(1.) In the hour of tentation. Satan will be sure to besiege the weakest Christian; all his darts fly that way, and a strong tentation may overcome a weak faith; but a flourishing faith stands like a cedar, and is not blown down by the wind of tentation; a strong faith can stop the mouth of the devil, that roaring lion, 1 Pet. v. 9.

(2.) Store of fruit will give comfort in the hour of death; a little grace will make us above the fear of death; O what joy will it be on the deathbed, when a Christian can bring his sheaves full of corn! when he can show his five talents that he hath gained by

trading! when there is not only a drop or two of oil, but his lamp full of oil! what though the devil show God our debts, if we can show him our fruit. O how sweet will death be! it will not be a destruction, but a deliverance.—Death, like a whirlwind, may blow down the tree of the body, but it cannot blast the fruit of our graces. The trees of righteousness carry their fruit with them, Rev. xiv. 13. “Their works follow them.” The Christian who abounds in holiness may say as Simeon, Luke ii. 29. “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.” He who bears but a little fruit departs in safety; but he who bears much fruit departs in peace.

5. Consider what need we have to be putting forth still more fruit; our graces are yet in their nonage; indeed in heaven this doctrine will be out of season, we shall not need to hear it; then we shall have done growing, being arrived at our full stature; then our light shall be clear, and our love perfect; but while we live here, there is something “lacking in our faith,” 1 Thess. iii. 10. therefore we had need increase the stock of grace, and bring forth more fruit. Our grace is eclipsed with sin, our faith is full of unbelief; now as when the sun is eclipsed, it is by degrees getting out of the eclipse, and it shines brighter and brighter, till it recovers its perfect lustre; so it must be with us, we must be getting out of the eclipse till once we shall arrive at our perfect lustre in glory.

6. He who doth not increase to more fruitfulness will soon be on the losing hand; he that hath not more faith will quickly have less; “Thou hast left thy first love.” It is with grace as it is with fire; if it be not blown up and increased, it will soon decay. Such as thrive not in their spiritual estate, we may perceive sadly to decline. Though a Christian cannot lose the seed of grace, yet he may lose the actings of grace, and the comfort; therefore bring forth more fruit: no sooner doth a Christian begin to stand still, but you may perceive him going backward.

7. The more your fruit is increased, the more your glory is increased; he whose pound gained ten, was made ruler over ten

cities. If you would have your crown hung full of jewels, let your boughs be hung full of fruit.

Use 4. Direction. The last use is of direction. I shall lay down some means to fruitfulness.

1. Be sensible of unfruitfulness. Many might have been fruitful in grace, if they had not conceited themselves so; he that thinks himself fruitful enough, is barren enough; be sensible of your wants; it is better to complain than presume.

2. If you would be fruitful, remove those things which will hinder fruitfulness.

(1.) Cherishing any secret lust in the heart; sin lived in, is like vermin to the tree, which destroys the fruit; grace cannot thrive in a sinful heart.

(2.) The love of riches; “The cares of the world choked the seed,” Matt. xiii. The love of sin poisons the fruit, the love of riches chokes it.

3. The third means to fruitfulness is weeping for sin. Moisture helps germination in trees; holy tears do water the trees of God, and make them more fruitful. Mary Magdalene, a weeping plant, how fruitful was she in love to Christ? moist grounds, as your marshes, are most fertile: the soul that is moistened and steeped in tears, is most frugiferous: never did David’s graces flourish more, than when he watered his couch with tears.

4. If you would be fruitful, often apply the blood of Christ, and the promises.

(1.) Apply the blood of Christ. Naturalists say, that blood applied to the root of some trees makes them bear better. Sure I am, the blood of Christ applied to the heart, makes it flourish more in holiness. None so fruitful as a believer; “I know,” saith St Paul, “whom I have believed;” there was the applying blood to the root of the tree, and how fruitful was he in zeal, love to Christ, heroic courage! He that believes Christ died for him, never thinks he can do or suffer enough for Christ. When we read and pray, now we do but water the branches; when we believe, now we water the root of the tree and make it fruitful.

(2.) Apply the promises. Husbandmen have an art to comfort the spirits of the root

to make the tree bear better: apply the promises; these are for comforting the spirits of a Christian, and then he puts forth fruit more vigorously. It is an experiment in nature, the root of the pine tree watered with wine, doth cause it to flourish; the promises are as wine to water the trees of righteousness, whereby they spread and augment more in grace. Ever preserve the spirits of the tree if you would have it bear; a pensive dejected soul is less fruitful; but when through the promises, a Christian's heart is cheered and comforted, now he is enriched with pleasant fruits; he is like a tree laden with fruit.

5. Another means to fruitfulness is humility. The low grounds are most fruitful: "The valleys are covered with corn," Psal. lxxv. 13. The humble heart is the fruitful heart. The largest and fairest fruits of the Spirit grow in a lowly Christian; 1 Pet. v. 5. "God gives grace to the humble." Saint Paul calls himself the least of saints, yet he was the chief of the apostles. The Virgin Mary was low in her own eyes, but this lowly plant did bear that blessed Vine which brought the fruit of salvation into the world.

6. If you would be fruitful in grace, be much in good conference; Mal. iii. 16. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." There is an observation some have concerning the sympathy of plants; some plants will bear better near other trees than when they grow alone, as is seen in the myrtle and olive: this holds true in divinity; the trees of righteousness, when they associate and grow near together, thrive best in godliness. The communion of saints is an excellent means for fruitfulness. Christians increase one another's knowledge, strengthen one another's faith, clear one another's evidences. When the trees planted in God's orchard stand at a distance, and grow strange one to another, they are less fruitful.

7. If you would be fruit-bearing trees, be near the water of the sanctuary; Jer. xvii.

8. "He shall be like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out the roots by the river; her leaf shall be green, nor shall it cease from yielding fruit." The word

preached will not only make us knowing Christians, but growing Christians. Ministers are compared to clouds, Isa. v. 6. their doctrine drops as the rain, and makes the trees of God fruitful. I wonder not that they are barren trees and nigh unto cursing, that are not under the droppings of the sanctuary; a Christian can no more be fruitful without ordinances, than a tree without showers.

8. And lastly, if you would fructify apace, go to God and desire him to make you fruitful; God is called the husbandman, John xv. 1. and he hath an art above all other husbandmen; they can plant and prune trees, but if they be dead they cannot make them bear. God can make the barren tree bear, he can put life into a dead tree, Eph. ii. 5. It is not Paul's planting, but the Spirit's watering, must give the increase.

Pray to God to make you fruitful, though it be by affliction; oftentimes God makes us grow in grace this way, Heb. xii. 11. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." The bleeding vine bears best: it is an observation that the pulling off some of the blossoms of a tree makes the fruit fairer; the reason is, because the sap hath the less to nourish; some writers say, they have known a tree by having too many blossoms, hath blossomed itself dead. The notion holds true in a spiritual sense; God, by pulling off some of the blossoms of our comforts, makes us bring forth fairer fruit; some have so blossomed in prosperity, that they have blossomed themselves into hell. It is an ancient experiment, that the planting some tender trees near the west sun doth them hurt, and parcheth the fruit, the sun being so extremely hot: too much prosperity, like the west sun, doth Christians much hurt, and parcheth all good affections, Jer. xxii. 21. O pray to God that he would make you fruitful, though it be by bleeding. Say, as Luther, Lord, wound where thou wilt, prune and cut me till I bleed, so that I may "have my fruit unto holiness, and my end everlasting life." Rom. vi. 22.