

believing. You have here had the mystery of salvation by Christ opened up at large. May the Lord himself open your understandings to understand it, and your hearts to receive it; and save you from slighting it: for so it will be a witness against you.

OF CHRIST THE ONLY REDEEMER OF GOD'S ELECT.

GAL. iv. 4, 5.—*When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

WE are now to speak of the Mediator of the new covenant, Jesus Christ, and to consider our Redeemer in his person, offices, and states. As to the first of these, it is plainly taught in the text.

In the former chapter, and in the first part of this, the apostle insists upon the church's freedom from the Mosaic dispensation, which was a very toilsome and burdensome service. This he illustrates by the similitude of a pupil and his tutors, ver. 1, 2. and then he applies it in the following verse, (1.) To the church's bondage under the Old Testament dispensation, when she was in her infant state, kept in subjection under that rigid and strict administration, which served for a rudiment, whereby she was instructed for the most part by resemblances taken from earthly things. (2.) To her freedom from that bondage under the New Testament, in the words of our text. Where we have,

1. The season in which this freedom or redemption was brought about: *When the fulness of the time was come*, says the apostle. God wrought this deliverance for his people in the time that he had pitched and resolved upon, as the most fit and proper time for it.

2. We have the means of this deliverance, namely Christ's incarnation, and manifestation in the flesh; *God sent forth his own Son, made of a woman*. He sent his own Son into the world, the second person of the glorious and adorable Trinity, who was incarnate in a miraculous way, being conceived in the womb of a virgin, without the company of a man.

3. We have the condition in which Christ came; *made under the law*. Being made flesh, he subjected himself both to the precepts and to the curse of the law. He fulfilled all righteousness, and gave complete satisfaction to all the demands of the law in the holiness and integrity of his life, and he bore the punishment threatened for sin, in the bloody and cruel sufferings which he endured in his death.

4. The freedom and deliverance itself : *God sent forth his Son*, thus qualified, *to redeem them that were under the law* ; that is, to free all the elect from the curse and punishment that was due to them for the transgression of it. Hence it is said, Gal. iii. 13. ' Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' He freed the whole church from that rigour and servitude under which she was as to her outward state. And hereby also was procured to believers *the adoption of sons* : by which we are to understand, not only the benefit of adoption itself, which was the privilege of believers under the Old Testament as well as now under the New, but also and chiefly a clearer manifestation of that privilege, and a more free use and fruition of it. They have now a more full and plentiful measure of the Spirit than believers had under the Old Testament dispensation.

The doctrine arising from the text is,

Doctr. ' The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew that the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Illustrate this grand truth, that Jesus Christ, being the eternal Son of God, became man.

III. Prove that Christ is God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew, that the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, Let us consider the titles and names of our Redeemer.

1. He is called *Lord*, because of his absolute and universal sovereignty and dominion over all the creatures. ' He is Lord of all,' says the apostle, Acts x. 36. His dominion extendeth to all things in heaven, earth, and hell ; ' He hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all,' Psal. ciii. 19. He is the sole monarch of the whole world, and all the princes and potentates in the earth are but his deputies and vicegerents. He is ' the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,' as the apostle justly styles him, 1 Tim. vi. 15. He hath a natural and essential right and authority over all things as he is God, equal with the Father ; and he hath a delegated authority as Mediator. The government belongs to him originally as God, and derivatively as God-man, Mediator. He holds his crown by immediate tenure

from Heaven. He is declared to be King by the decree and appointment of the Father, Psal. ii. 6. God hath invested him with a royal authority over all the creatures. It is said, that 'he hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the Head over all things to the church,' Eph. i. 22. He rules from sea to sea, and to the ends of the earth, yea, to the utmost bounds of God's creation. All the creatures are subject to his dominion, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate, angels, devils, men, seas, storms and tempests, all obey him. But in a special manner he is King in Zion; he reigns and rules in the church, and sways his royal sceptre there. He is Lord of all the creatures by creation, of the elect by redemption, and of believers by their voluntary resignation and surrender of themselves unto him.

2. He is called *Jesus*, because he is the Saviour of the elect world, and delivers them from sin and wrath. This was declared by an angel to the virgin Mary before his conception in her womb, Luke i. 31. 'Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus.' This was revealed to Joseph in a dream, Matth. i. 21. The name *Jesus* is there interpreted to signify a Saviour; and the angel of the Lord, a messenger sent from God, is the expositor. Christ was sent by his Father to be the Saviour of the elect. Now, a Saviour in the proper signification of the word, is one that delivereth from evil. Accordingly Christ not only saves his people from the worst of evils, but bestows upon them the greatest of good. He delivers them from the guilt, stain, and dominion of sin, the wrath of God, the malediction and accusations of the law, and eternal death and misery; and he gives them grace and righteousness, eternal life and glory. He is a Saviour to protect and defend, and a Saviour to bless and save them, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. He is the only Saviour of lost sinners, and there is no salvation but through him, Acts iv. 12.

3. He is called *Christ*, because he was anointed unto his office by the Father. This title very fitly followeth the former. *Jesus* implies his office in general, and *Christ* his designation or ordination to his office. He is an anointed Saviour. This is frequently expressed in the scripture, Psal. xlv. 7. 'God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' Isa. lxi. 1. 'The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek,' &c. Acts x. 38. 'God appointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power.' From all which places we see, that Christ's anointing is not to be understood literally, but by a trope and figure, the sign being put for the thing signified. Several persons were anointed of old, as wrestlers among the Gentiles; which may be ap-

plied to Christ, who was to conflict and wrestle with all the powers of hell and the world, with all the oppositions and difficulties that were in the way of man's salvation. But this term of anointing is rather taken from the customs of the ceremonial law. There were three sorts of persons commonly anointed among the Jews; as kings. Thus Saul, David, Solomon, &c. were anointed with material oil; and hence were called *the Lord's anointed*.—Priests. All the priests that ministered in the tabernacle or temple were anointed, and chiefly the high priest, who was a special figure and type of Christ.—The prophets. Hence God gave Elijah a commission to go and anoint Elisha to be prophet in his room, 1 Kings xix. 16. As oil strengthened and suppld the joints, and made them agile and fit for exercise, so it denoted a designation and fitness in a person for the function to which he was appointed. Thus Christ, because he was not to be a typical Prophet, Priest, or King, was not typically, but spiritually anointed; not with a sacramental, but real unction; not of men, but immediately of God. There are two things implied in the anointing of Christ.

(1.) It implies the Father's fitting and furnishing him with all things necessary, that he might be a complete Redeemer to his people. As God gave him a body and human nature, that he might be capable to suffer; so he filled and replenished his soul with all the gifts and graces of his Spirit. Hence it was promised of old concerning him, 'that the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' The Psalmist tells us, that he was 'fairer than the sons of men, and grace was poured into his lips.' He, 'received not the Spirit by measure,' but was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. All this was the Father's work, and therefore he saith, 'Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth,' Isa. xlii. 1.

(2.) It implies the Father's giving him a commission to redeem poor sinner's from hell and wrath. He was invested with a fulness of authority and power for this very end. And therefore in scripture he is said to be *sealed*, as having his commission under the great seal of Heaven. Hence he says, Isa. lxi. 1. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me,' &c. Every thing that Christ did in bringing about the redemption of an elect world, was given him in commission. His coming to the world in the fulness of time was by the order and appointment of the Father. So he shews, John viii. 42. 'I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.' The business on which he came was determined by Heaven. So in the text it is said,

God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, to redeem them that were under the law, &c. His death and bloody sufferings, which were the price of man's redemption, and the ransom of their souls, were enjoined by the Father. Hence says he, John x. 18. 'This commandment, (viz. relating to laying down his life,) have I received of my Father.'

Secondly, We may consider his office and work in the general. He is called the Mediator, which properly signifies a midsmen, that travels betwixt two persons who are at variance to reconcile them. Now, Christ is Mediator, (1.) In respect of his person, being a middle person betwixt God and man, participating of both natures. (2.) In respect of his office; being a middle person dealing betwixt God and man, in the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King. Which will be more particularly illustrated in the sequel.

He is the Redeemer. To *redeem* is to buy a thing again, as the nearest a-kin was to buy again the mortgaged land, and so to rescue and deliver from poverty, and misery, and bondage. This is the import of the word in the original. The elect are the redeemed: it is all they, and they only, as was proved before.

This redemption imports, (1.) That the elect were first the Lord's by creation, his property, and bound to serve and obey him. (2.) That they were sold, and in a state of bondage, in their natural condition, slaves to sin and Satan, the captives of the mighty; prisoners to the law, and obnoxious to the justice of God. (3.) That they are recovered or redeemed from this state of vassalage, captivity and slavery, by the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are redeemed by him two ways.

1. By price or purchase, laying down his life a ransom for them. He came to 'give his life a ransom for many,' Matth. xx. 28; that is to die in the stead of his people. His life intervened as a price to obtain their redemption. Hence is that note in the song of the redeemed, Rev. v. 9. 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.' They were fallen under the dominion of Satan, and liable to eternal death, and could not obtain their liberty by escape, or by mere force and power; for they were arrested and detained prisoners by order of divine justice: so that till God the Supreme Judge was satisfied, there could be no discharge. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ hath procured their deliverance by his death and bloody sufferings. Hence the apostle says, Col. i. 14. 'We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' No less than the precious blood of Christ, who was God and man in one person, could be a sufficient price for the redemption of poor captive sinners.

2. By power and conquest. By his death on the cross he spoiled principalities and powers. And he manifested this power in his ascension; for when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive. And in the day of power he redeems his people from the slavery of sin and Satan, the curse of the law, from the sting of death, and the wrath of God; and puts them in possession of a full salvation.

The former, viz. redeeming by price or purchase, Christ doth as a Priest, the latter as a Prophet and King. Both were absolutely necessary: for without a ransom justice would not quit us nor let us go: and without overcoming or conquering power, the elect, while slaves to sin and Satan, will not quit their master, nor accept of liberty.

This redemption of elect souls was agreed upon by the Father and the Son in the covenant of grace from eternity. It was first proclaimed to fallen man in the first promise, Gen. iii. 15. that 'the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent;' it was shadowed forth under the Old Testament by sacrifices, burnt-offerings, &c; the price was actually paid on the cross, when he 'made peace through the blood thereof,' Col. i. 20; and the powerful delivery is made in the conversion of the elect, the day of God's power, when the captives are delivered, their chains knocked off, and they are rescued from the miserable bondage in which they lay. And although Christ's blood was not actually shed under the Old Testament, yet the elect, during that dispensation, were delivered by the same redemption which we are now partakers of, Heb. xi. 39, 40.

Thirdly, That Jesus Christ, and he only, is the Redeemer promised as the true Messiah, is evident, in that all the things that are the marks and characters of the Redeemer agree to him, and him only. He was to be of the tribe of Judah, and of the house of David, to be born of a virgin, to be Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature and on our side, to be born in Bethlehem, to make a mean appearance, to be despised and rejected of men, to be crucified on an accursed tree, to be buried in a grave, to rise again the third day, to ascend into heaven, and sit at the right hand of God, till his enemies be made his footstool. It is evident from comparing the Old Testament with the New, that all these characters agree to Jesus Christ, and him only; and none other but one who possessed these characters could be our Redeemer.

II. Our next business is to illustrate this grand truth, That Jesus Christ, being the eternal Son of God, became man.

First, Christ is the eternal Son of God. And in this he differs from all God's other sons.

1. From angels, who are called 'the sons of God,' Job xxxviii. 7. They were filled with joy, and shouted with a triumphant voice, when they saw the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, appearing so illustriously in the work of creation, when God laid the foundations of the earth. Now, the angels are called the sons of God.

(1.) Because they had their whole being from him. They are his sons by creation; in which sense also Adam is called 'the son of God,' Luke iii. 38.

(2.) Because of their great and mighty power. Hence they are styled, 'principality, and power, and might, and dominion,' Eph. i. 21. They are like him in power and dignity.

(3.) Because they serve him as sons, cheerfully, willingly, and readily. They do not obey as slaves, or servants, or the best of servants; but they obey as children. They go his errands with a filial cheerfulness and delight. 'A son honoureth his father,' saith the Lord. It should be the temper and disposition of every son to do so. This is not only the disposition of angels, but they have actually done it, and may say unto God, as the elder brother is brought in saying in the parable, Luke xv. 'Lo these many years have we been with thee,' even ever since the creation of the world, 'and have never transgressed nor neglected thy commandments at any time.'

(4.) Because of the great privileges which God bestows upon them. He uses them as his sons and children. They are his courtiers, and near to his person, and always surround his throne, and behold his face. They are continually under the meridian beams of his ravishing and life-giving countenance.

(5.) Because of their likeness to God in essence. He is a spirit, an incorporeal and immaterial being, and angels are spiritual and incorporeal substances. Though the difference between God and them be as great as can be conceived, yea truly inconceivable; God being the creating spirit, and they created spirits; God being an infinite spirit, and they but finite ones; yet the angels bear a resemblance to God in their essence, as well as in their qualifications, and may upon that account also be called the sons of God: but they are only the sons of God by creation: Whereas Christ is his Son by an eternal and ineffable generation. Christ alone is the Son of God by nature.

2. Believers are called the sons of God, John i. 12. And they are so by adoption and regeneration, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Believers differ from the angels in this; for they do not stand in need of regeneration, or any gracious change to be wrought in them: for as they were created holy and pure beings, so they have continued in that

integrity and holiness with which they were made, and have not lost it: and therefore Christ is no Redeemer to them.

3. Christ differs both from angels and saints in this, that he is the eternal and only-begotten Son of God, as the scripture verifies, Matth. iii. 17. and xvii. 5.

Now, that the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, is the eternal Son of God, or was begotten of the Father from all eternity, is clear from the holy scriptures; for to divine revelation alone are we indebted for the knowledge of this important truth. To this end let us consider, Psal. ii. 7. 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' This passage is applied to Christ in several places of the New Testament. The word, 'this day,' doth not denote a certain time when this generation began, but is used to express the eternity thereof. And that which is eternal is expressed by that term, to shew and hold forth unto us, that all things past and to come are present with God in regard of his eternity. There is no succession in eternity, no yesterday nor to-morrow; but it is all as one continued day or moment, without any succession or change. Therefore the generation of the Son being eternal, it is rightly designed by this term. And although in this and the following verses we have a declaration of God's decree and appointment concerning the advancement of Christ to his Mediatorial throne and kingdom; yet in this verse, the generation of the Son is not mentioned as a part of that decree, but only as the ground and foundation thereof. For unless Christ had been the Son of God by eternal generation, he could not have been our Mediator and Redeemer; nor could he have obtained a throne and kingdom as such. And this eternal generation of the Son was solemnly declared by his resurrection from the dead. This is the apostle's scope when he says, 'We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,' Acts xiii. 32, 33. He might well say, this scripture, Psal. ii. 7. was fulfilled by raising Christ from the dead, because by his resurrection the truth of it was openly proclaimed and declared to the world, as the same apostle tells us, Rom. i. 4.

We may argue for this likewise from Micah v. 2. 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.' This text is applied to Christ, Matth. ii. 6; and that it must be understood of him, and of no other, is plain, because he

is promised as the King and Ruler of his church: and in the following verses there is ascribed unto him the calling of the Gentiles, invincible power and majesty in his providential dispensations, doctrine, and miracles, and an universal kingdom and government over Jews and Gentiles through the earth. Now, there is a twofold going forth here attributed to him. The first is external and visible, namely, his going forth from the city of Bethlehem, by being born of a virgin. This is a temporal generation, and is therefore spoken of as a thing to come, 'He shall come forth unto me.' But lest any should look on him as a mere man, and as one that began to be at his incarnation, therefore a second going forth is mentioned, which is internal and eternal: 'Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,' or 'from the days of eternity,' as it is in the original text. These words design his eternal generation, as being begotten of the Father from all eternity; for he could not go forth from the Father from everlasting but by generation.

This truth is further clear from Christ's being called *the Son of God*. He is often so designed in scripture. The Father did solemnly proclaim him to be so by an audible voice from heaven, both at his baptism and his transfiguration. He is the Son of God in a most proper and singular manner, viz. by the Father's communicating the divine essence to him by eternal generation. This name given to Christ is more excellent than any name given to the angels, though they are also called the sons of God, Heb. i. 4, 5. 'For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee?' He is so the Son of God, as on that account he is equal with the Father. Therefore, when he told the Jews, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' it is said, 'The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God,' John v. 17, 18. The Jews concluded from what he had said, that he made himself equal with God. And their conclusion was very just: for he did not find fault with them for so doing, nor charge them with reproaching him; nor doth he clear any mistake about it, as certainly he would have done, if they had been in any. Therefore what they conclude from his discourse is plainly asserted by the apostle, Phil. ii. 6. in these words, 'He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.' So that Christ's scope and design, John v. is plainly to shew, that he was the Son of God in such a manner, that he was the same in substance with the Father, and equal with him in dignity and glory.

And as to the nature of this generation, our blessed Lord himself doth in some measure explain it to us, so far as we are capable to apprehend this great mystery, when he tells us, John. v. 26. 'As

the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' So that to beget the Son, is to give to the Son to have life in himself, as the Father hath life in himself; which doth necessarily import a communication of the same individual essence. For to have life in himself was an essential attribute of God; *i. e.* to have life independently, of and from himself; and to be the source and fountain of life to all the creatures, is a perfection proper to God, inseparable from his nature, yea, the very same with his essence. And therefore the Father cannot give it, unless he give the essence itself: and he cannot give the essence by way of alienation, for then he himself would cease to be God; nor by way of participation, seeing the divine nature is one, and cannot be divided. Therefore it must be by way of communication. So that the generation of the Son is that eternal action of the Father, whereby he did communicate to the Son the same individual essence which he himself hath, that the Son might have it equal with himself. But as to the manner of this generation, or communication of the divine essence of the Son, it is altogether ineffable and inconceivable to us. It is simply impossible for poor weak worms, such as we are, to understand or explain wherein it consists. It is not natural, but supernatural, and wholly divine, and therefore incomprehensible by us. Yea, it is incomprehensible even by the angels themselves, who far exceed men in intellectual abilities. We may justly hereunto apply what we have, Isa. liii. 8. 'Who shall declare his generation?' This whole mystery is incomprehensible by us: we ought humbly and reverently to adore what we cannot comprehend. There is a communication of the whole essence or Godhead from the Father to the Son, in receiving whereof the Son doth no more lessen or diminish the majesty or Godhead of the Father, than the light of one candle doth the light of another from which it is taken. Whereupon the council of Nice said well, that Christ is God of God, light of light, very God of very God, not proceeding but begotten. Hence it is clear, that he had a being before he was born of a virgin, yea from eternity; and that he is the true God, and the most high God, equal with the Father, Phil. ii. 6. John i. 1.; for no being can be eternal but God.

Secondly, The Son of God became man. It was not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, that was incarnate, but the Son, John i. 14. 'The word was made flesh.' He was 'God manifested in the flesh,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. But though he was from eternity God, yet the world had lasted well nigh four thousand years ere he became man.

Thirdly, Why did it behove Christ, in order to be our Redeemer, to be God and man? he could not be our Redeemer, if he had not been both.

1. He behoved to be God, (1.) That he might be able to bear the weight of the infinite wrath of God due to the elect's sins, and come out from under that heavy load, Acts ii. 24. (2.) That his temporary sufferings might be of infinite value, and afford full satisfaction to the law and justice of God, Heb. ix. 14. In these respects none other but one who was God could redeem us.

2. He behoved to be man, (1.) That he might be capable to suffer death, Heb. ii. 14. (2.) That the same nature which sinned might suffer, Ezek. xviii. 4. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' (3.) That he might be a merciful High Priest, Heb. ii. 16, 17. and that we might have comfort and boldness of access to the throne of grace having an High Priest of our own nature as our Intercessor there.

III. I come now to prove, that Christ is God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person. Christ is God and man by a personal union of two natures. The two natures in Christ remain distinct: the Godhead was not changed into the manhood, nor the manhood into the Godhead: for the scripture speaks of these as distinct, Rom. i. 3. 1 Pet. iii. 18. Heb. ix. 14.; and of two wills in Christ, a human and a divine, Luke xxii. 42. These natures remain still with their distinct properties, that as the divine nature is not made finite, so neither is the human nature adorned with the divine attributes. It is not omnipotent, 2 Cor. xiii. 4.; nor omnipresent, John xi. 15; nor omniscient, Mark xiii. 22. &c. Yet are they not divided; nor is Christ two persons, but one; even as our soul and body though distinct things, make but one person. This is clear from the text, which shews that the Son of God was made of a woman; which seeing it cannot be understood of his divine nature, but of the human, it is plain that both natures make but one person. And elsewhere he is described as one person consisting of two natures, Rom. i. 3. and ix. 5. And it was necessary that the natures should be distinct; because otherwise, either the Divinity would have advanced his humanity above the capacity of suffering, or his humanity depressed his Divinity below the capacity of meriting. And it was necessary that he should be one person; because otherwise his blood had not been the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. nor of the Son of God, 1 John i. 7. and so not of infinite value. Wherefore Christ took on him the human nature, but not a human person.

Lastly, Christ was, and so will continue God and man for ever. This union never was dissolved. He died in our flesh to save us; he rose again in it, and ascended to heaven in it, and will continue ever in it, Heb. vii. 24. It will be a part of the happiness of the saints after the resurrection, that they shall feed their eyes for ever in beholding the glorified body of the blessed Redeemer.

I shall finish this subject with a few inferences.

1. The redemption of the soul is precious. The salvation of sinners was a work greater than the making of the world. The powerful word commanded, and the universe sprung up into being; but much more was to be done ere a sinner could be saved from wrath. The eternal Son of God must become man, lay aside the robes of his glory, and clothe himself with the infirmities of human nature, and in that nature purchase redemption by the price of his matchless blood for poor miserable prisoners, and deliver them from the pit of hell and wrath by an exertion of his almighty power.

2. See here the wonderful love and grace of God in sending his own Son to be the Redeemer of sinful men. It was he that contrived this method of redemption, in the adorable depths of his infinite wisdom. He pitched upon his own Son as the only fit person to set miserable captives free. He fitted and furnished him for this work, and sent him to the world with full power and authority to go about it. It was God the Father that was gracious to sinners, saying, 'Deliver them from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.' What an illustrious display of the astonishing love and grace of God is it, that he should have remembered them in their low estate, and laid help on one that is mighty to save them. To enlarge upon this a little further, I offer a twofold consideration.

(1.) Who he was that was sent and came into the world to redeem the elect; not an angel or archangel, nor any of the glorious seraphims that stand about God's throne. Indeed, if it had been so, divine love, even in this, had infinitely advanced itself, that God should be pleased to spare one of his own retinue from attending on him, and give such a glorious servant as an angel is, for the redemption of such a rebellious and miserable worm as man. But O! how may it raise and heighten our admiration, when we consider that it was not an angel, if he had been capable for the mighty task, but the Lord of angels, not a servant but a Son, that the Father plucked from his own bosom, and sent upon this business! He spoke to him as it were to this purpose. 'Go haste thee down to the earth: for there are thousands of miserable creatures sinning themselves down to hell, and must for ever fall under the strokes of my dreadful and incensed justice; step thou in between them and it, and receive the blows thyself; die thou under the hand of vindictive justice; that they may be saved and live.' When God tried Abraham's obedience, he aggravates his command by many piercing words, which must needs tenderly touch, and greatly affect, the heart of a compassionate father, Gen. xxii. 2. 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land

of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering,' &c. It greatly heightened Abraham's obedience, that notwithstanding of all aggravations, yet he was willing to sacrifice his beloved Son upon God's command. Just so here God heightens and sets forth his matchless love towards us. He takes his own Son, his only Son, the Son of his eternal delight and love, and cheerfully offers him up as a sacrifice for the sins of men. This is the greatest instance of the love of God that ever was given.

(2.) God's love is exalted here, in that he freely sent his only begotten Son to be the Redeemer of an elect world. He was God's free gift, or else he could never have been obtained. If devils and men had joined their forces, and combined all their strength and power, and thus made an assault upon heaven, yet they could never have plucked the Son of God's love from his eternal embraces. God gave Christ freely to redeem a sinful world, not only without, but against all merit and desert in them, nay, unasked and unsolicited to do so. From all eternity God foresaw that they would despise and reject his Son, so that they would shed his precious blood, and then trample it under their feet, as an unholy thing; yet such was the height of his astonishing love, that he bestowed him freely upon them.

(3.) See the matchless love of the Son of God to poor sinners. It was love that induced him to substitute himself in their room, and to undertake to pay their ransom. He 'loved me (says Paul), and gave himself for me,' Gal. ii. 20. His love in this, as the apostle speaks passeth knowledge. How cheerfully did he engage to make his soul an offering for sin, that thereby he might pay their ransom! Though he knew the difficulty of the work, and the greatness of that wrath which he was to bear, yet he cheerfully complied with the first motion of it that was made unto him by the Father. He knew very well, what a vast burden of sin was to be laid upon him, and the dreadfulness of that wrath he was to undergo; yet he did not shrink from the imputation of the one, nor from the suffering of the other. He was willing to be reproached, that we might be glorified; to become poor, that we might be made rich; to be accused and condemned, that we might be justified; to enter into prison, that we might go free; and to die a cursed ignominious death, that we might live, and reign in honour for ever. O how great was his love to poor sinful men!

4. All who live and die out of Christ must perish; for there is no other Mediator between God and men but the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom for sinners, and invites sinners to come and take the benefit thereof. Now, if men will not come unto him,

that they may have life, their blood must be on their own heads. Christ is the only ordinance of God for life and salvation, and if men will slight and despise this ordinance, they must perish in their sins; for there is no other way of being saved but by him. If sinners will not enter by this door in time, the door of heaven will be shut against them for ever.

5. How highly is our nature exalted and dignified in the person of the Lord Jesus! He took not on him the nature of angels, a nature far superior to the human, but the seed of Abraham, and united it to his divine person. In that nature he performed his whole Mediatory undertaking, and wears it in his exalted state. It is corrupt in the multitude of those that partake of it, yet it is pure and spotless in Christ the Redeemer. Man's nature became so depraved and abominable by Adam's transgression, that it could never again appear before God; but in Christ it is so perfectly pure, that it was capable of an immediate union with the Godhead in his person. Though it be low and mean in itself, yet it is highly honoured and exalted in its union with the Son of God; and shall be the object of the delightful sight and admiration of the redeemed from among men through eternal ages.

6. It is impious and absurd to ascribe any part of man's redemption to any other. In the close of his sufferings on the cross, he cried with a loud voice, 'It is finished,' and gave up the ghost; intimating, that he had then perfected and completely finished the great work of redemption committed to and undertaken by him. It is therefore dishonourable to Christ, and dangerous for men, to join any thing of their own to his righteousness, in point of justification before God. The blessed Redeemer will never endure it. It reflects upon his Mediatory undertaking. If he be the only Redeemer of God's elect, then certainly there can be no other. If he hath finished that work, then there is no need of our additions. And if that work be not finished by him, how can it be finished by men? It is simply impossible for any creature to finish that which Christ himself could not. But men would fain be sharing with him in this honour, which he will never endure. He is the only Saviour of sinners; and he will never divide the glory of it with us. Men would fain have something of their own to atone offended justice. There is a legal strain, a strong bias towards the first covenant, running in the hearts of all men by nature. We would do something for ourselves, and are unwilling to be obliged to another for our deliverance from that wretched condition that sin hath brought us into. 'What good thing shall I do (said the young man in the gospel) that I may have eternal life.' But all our righteousnesses are but

as filthy rags. Though your heads were waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears, and you should weep day and night continually; nay, though you should weep tears of blood, all would be in vain; for it could not cleanse you from the guilt and pollution of the least sin. To depend upon anything that ever he did, or can possibly do, is but like the setting up of a paper-wall to keep off a devouring fire: for it cannot screen you from the consuming flames of God's wrath and fiery indignation. 'By the works of the law (says the apostle), no flesh can be justified.'

7. *Lastly*, If ye would be delivered from the state of sin and misery into which ye are brought by your fall in the first Adam, come unto and accept of the Lord Jesus Christ as your Redeemer. God has laid help for you upon this mighty One, who is both able and willing to save all that come unto God by him. Close with him by faith, and you shall be redeemed from the guilt of sin, have its power subdued in you, and at last be delivered from the inbeing of it, and from all the penal consequences and effects thereof. He is now saying, Behold me, behold me; O do not refuse him, lest ye perish for ever.

OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION.

LUKE i. 35.—*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

THESE words are the angel's answer to Mary, who, understanding the angel as speaking of a thing presently to be done before Joseph and she should come together, desires to know how she, being a virgin, should conceive. Here,

1. The angel tells her how she should 'conceive and bring forth a Son,' namely by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the power of the Highest, the Spirit of God being the true God, and so the Highest. The author of this conception is the Holy Ghost, not to exclude the Father and the Son, who also concurred to this work, as to all works without God himself; and besides the power of all the three persons is one. But it is appropriated to the Spirit, as creation to the Father, and redemption to the Son, so the consummation of all things to the Spirit. The way of the Spirit's powerful working to this miraculous conception, is denoted by two words. One is, *that the Holy Ghost should come upon her*, not in an ordinary way, as