

2. That repentance which is not evangelical and true is little worth. You must have more than Judah's repentance, if ever you see heaven.

3. To pretend to repentance, and never forsake sin, is vain.

4. To leave sin, and not take up the contrary duties, is not repentance.

5. Go to the Lord by faith for the grace of repentance.

OF CHRIST'S ORDINANCES IN GENERAL.

ISA. xii. 3.—*Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*

THIS song looks to the days of the gospel, wherein Christ having come and purchased salvation, the tidings of it are carried through the world in the gospel, and it is communicated to Jews and Gentiles through the means of grace. Here we have,

1. A benefit to be had in the church, *water*, i. e. gospel grace, the benefits of Christ's redemption, as suitable to needy, fainting souls, as water to the thirsty. See John iv. 14. and vii. 37.

2. The way of its communication to poor sinners. It is to be *drawn out of the wells of salvation*. These are gospel-ordinances, the wells in this valley of Baca for the life of souls, and refreshment of spiritual travellers. All the elect capable to draw, do draw out of them. This is the sense, whether the allusion be to the wells in the wilderness for the Israelites, or to the Jews fetching water out of the spring of Siloam at the feast of tabernacles in the night, with mirth and music, to the temple, and pouring it on the altar.

The text furnishes this doctrine.

DOCT. 'The Lord's ordinances are the wells of salvation to the elect.' Or, 'The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are, his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.'

Here I shall shew,

I. What is understood by a means of salvation.

II. What are these means of salvation.

III. What makes any ordinance a mean of grace.

IV. To whom are the Lord's ordinances made effectual.

V. Whence their efficacy proceeds.

VI. Deduce an inference or two.

I. I am to shew, what is understood by a means of salvation. It is that by and through which the Lord Jesus doth by his Spirit convey grace and salvation into a soul. That is a mean or mids betwixt the Lord and the soul, which he uses for communication of grace from himself to the soul, 1 Cor. i. 21. 'For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' Chap. iii. 5. 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?' The which may be used with expectation of good thereby. These means are some of them outward, some inward; some ordinary, others extraordinary.

II. I come now to shew, what these means of salvation are.

1. The inward means is faith, Heb. iv. 2. 'Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' This ordinarily requires an outward means to work it by. But being wrought, it is the great inward means of communication betwixt Christ and the soul. This is the mean of entering us into the covenant, of repentance, justification, reconciliation, sanctification, &c. It is the bucket whereby one draws the water out of the wells of salvation; and the want of it in most that come to them, makes them go away without water.

2. Extraordinary means are whatsoever the Lord in his sovereign wisdom is pleased to make use of extraordinarily for conveying grace into the hearts of his elect, as he did a voice from heaven for the conversion of Paul, Acts ix. 4, 5. None can limit sovereignty. He may use what means he will, and bring about his purposes of grace by means unknown to us. What means the Lord makes use of in the case of elect idiots, such as are deaf or blind, and so incapable of reading or hearing the word, and yet may get grace and be saved, who can determine? Or perhaps he does it without means altogether. But,

3. The outward and ordinary means are the Lord's own ordinances, Rom. x. 14, 15. 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' They are called outward, because they are something without ourselves; ordinary, because though ordinarily the Lord makes use of them for these holy ends, yet he has not tied himself to them, but may work without them, as seems good in his sight, Acts ix. 4, 5. Now these are,

1st, In the general, all the ordinances of God without exception, which he has set up in his church for that end, namely, the word, sacraments, prayer, church-communion or fellowship, Acts ii. 42; which being managed by mutual instruction, admonition, consolation, and watching over one another, are of great use to promote the salvation of souls; church-government, discipline, and censures, Matth. xviii. 17: religious fasting, 1 Cor. vii. 5; singing of psalms, Eph. v. 19; swearing by the name of God, when duly called thereto, Deut. vi. 13; and whatsoever are God's institutions in his church.

2dly, The most special means of grace and salvation are the first three, the word, sacraments, and prayer, Acts ii. 42.

(1.) The word preached or read. This has been a well of salvation to many, and a means of grace, Acts ii. 41. About three thousand souls together drank of this well, and lived. It is the seed which the new creature is formed of; and though a despised ordinance, yet the great means of God's appointment for bringing sinners into a state of grace, 1 Cor. i. 21. forecited.

(2.) The sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper. In both, the people of God have drank to the salvation of their souls, though they are not converting ordinances, but sealing ones, supposing the efficacy of the word to precede; as is evident in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts viii. 39. 1 Cor. x. 16.

(3.) Prayer, public, private, and secret. This is a very special means of grace, and a most ordinary way of communion betwixt Christ and a soul. So that one no sooner grows concerned about his soul, but he uses this means, as Saul did, of whom it is said, Acts ix. 11. 'Behold, he prayeth.' It is a means by which divine influences have flowed plentifully to many a soul, and none of the Lord's people can live without it.

III. I shall now shew, what makes any ordinance a mean of grace, a well of salvation, out of which one may in faith look to draw water for his soul, or get spiritual good by. The Papists and church of England think human institution sufficient, else they had never made so many significant ceremonies and actions in religion, for which there is no divine warrant, as crossing in baptism, kissing the book in swearing, &c. In the use of which they think one has ground to expect good to his soul; but all these, being but human ordinances and inventions of men, are not means of grace, but of sinning; not wells of salvation, but broken cisterns, that can hold no water; nay, they are rather puddles, that defile the soul, instead of nourishing it. For,

1. No ordinance whatsoever can avail without a particular blessing; for the efficacy of ordinances is not natural, or from them-

selves. Now, men cannot annex a blessing to their ordinances and institutions, to make them effectual for the good of souls, though both church and state join for it. And we have no ground to expect the Spirit's working with tools that are not of his own making. Therefore their institution is vain, and their use too, Matth. xv. 9. 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'

2. Men's institutions or ordinances, in respect of God, are forbidden, and condemned by the Lord's word, namely, in the second commandment. The want of a divine warrant is sufficient to condemn any thing of this sort, if it be never so likely in the eyes of human wisdom, Matth. xv. 9. just quoted. See Jer. xxxii. 35. 'And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination to cause Judah to sin.' And they must needs be blasted institutions, since the institution is an invading of Christ's royal prerogative, Matth. xxviii. 20; who has directed his servants to teach his people to 'observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded.'

3. Men's use of them is not only useless, but worse, not only to no good purpose, but to ill purpose; for the using of them is will-worship, which is sinning against the Lord, Col. ii. 20—23. 'Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not, taste not, handle not: which are all to perish with the using), after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.' It provokes God, and brings on wrath on the users of them, Hos. v. 11, 12. 'Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment; because he willingly walked after the commandment. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth: and to the house of Judah as rottenness.'

That which makes any ordinance a means of grace or salvation, what one may justly look for good of to his soul, is divine institution only, Matth. xxviii. 20. forecited: therefore the first question in all ordinances ought to be, 'Whose is this image and superscription?' That appointment is to be found in the Lord's word, Isa. viii. 20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' That is 'sufficient to make the man of God perfect,' 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17; and therefore contains the whole ordinances he is to meddle with

for the salvation of himself or others. The institution of some ordinances is more clear in the word than others; but whatever ordinance has divine warrant, express or by good consequence, is a divine ordinance and means of grace. And to these his own ordinances the Lord has confined us, Deut. iv. 2. 'Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.'

IV. I proceed to consider, to whom the Lord's ordinances are made effectual.

1. Not to all who partake of them, Isa. liii. 1. 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' Many come to these wells who never taste of the water. I think it an unwarrantable expression, that all God's ordinances do attain their end, in the salvation or damnation of all that come under them; for damnation is not the end of any of God's ordinances, but salvation. And the scriptures adduced to prove it, viz. Isa. lv. 10, 11. 'For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it;' 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. 'For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death; to the other the savour of life unto life: and who is sufficient for these things?' will not prove it; for the former respects only God's end in sending his word, the other the event, but neither of them the end of the ordinance. Damnation is the effect or consequence of the contempt or misimprovement of ordinances, but by no means the end thereof.

2. But to all the elect they are effectual, unto whom they come, Acts xiii. 48. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' John x. 26. 'Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.' To the elect only they are effectual for their salvation, which is their end.

V. I am to shew, whence the efficacy of ordinances proceeds. It does not proceed from any virtue in themselves, or in him that administers them, but from the Spirit of the Lord working in them and by them, 1 Cor. iii. 7. But this I shall speak to more largely in a posterior discourse.

I conclude with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Sad is the case of those who are in such a wilderness, as

there are no wells in, nor any of God's ordinances. 'Where no vision is, the people perish.' This is the dismal case of the Pagan world. Which should move us to pray that the Lord may send the light of the gospel to these dark places of the earth.

2. The filling up of the wells in a land, by removing ordinances from a people, is a sad stroke. Where the word and sacraments are not, there is no church there; and consequently God has no people to save there. O let us cry to the Lord, that this may never be our unhappy case.

3. The defiling of the wells is a sad matter for those who drink of them, whether it be by error in doctrine, superstition in worship, or uninstituted government of the church: but worst of all, where they are poisoned with damnable heresies and idolatry, as in the apostate church of Rome. Let us pray for, and strive to maintain, purity of doctrine, worship, and government.

4. Heinous is the sin of the neglect or contempt of the wells of salvation, which God has opened unto them. Let despisers and neglecters of ordinances consider this, and what they will answer when God rises up to call them to an account. Alas! this is one of the great grounds of the Lord's controversy with the present generation, which loudly calls to deep humiliation before him.

5. Great is the sin and loss of those who come to the wells, but never draw of the water nor taste it: who are never bettered by ordinances, but remain as dead and unconcerned about their souls as if the means of salvation were not vouchsafed to them.

6. *Lastly*, Prize the ordinances. Prepare for them, and duly improve them; remember they are the ordinary means of salvation: therefore seek to enjoy God, and to have communion with him, in them, otherwise they will be in vain as to you.

HOW THE WORD IS MADE EFFECTUAL TO SALVATION.

EPH. vi. 17.—*The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

IN these words we have, (1.) A particular piece of the Christian armour recommended, *the word of God*, the revelation of his mind communicated to us in the scriptures, with which every one who minds for heaven should be familiarly acquainted. (2.) A particular piece of its commendation; it is *the sword of the Spirit*; i. e. it is that which the Spirit of the Lord uses in fighting the battles of the Lord, and conquering an elect world to Christ, and bringing them, through