

SERMON XXIX.

Of the Imitation of CHRIST in holiness of Life, and the necessity of it in Believers.

I JOHN ii. 6.

He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked.

THE express and principal design of the apostle, in this chapter, is to propound marks and signs, both *negative* and *positive*, for the trial and examination of men's claims to Christ; amongst which (not to spend time about the coherence) my text is a principal one; a trial of men's interest in Christ, by their imitation of Christ. It is supposed by some expositors, that the apostle, in laying down this mark, had a special design to overthrow the wicked doctrine of the Carpocratians, who taught (as Epiphanius relates it) that men might have as much communion with God in sin as in duty. In full opposition to which the apostle lays down this proposition, wherein he asserts the necessity of a Christ-like conversation in all that claim union with him, or interest with him. The words resolve themselves into two parts, viz.

1. A claim to Christ supposed.

2. The only way to have our claim warranted.

First, We have here a claim to Christ supposed; "if any man say he abideth in him." Abiding in Christ is an expression denoting proper and real interest in Christ, and communion with him; for it is put in opposition to those temporary, light, and transient effects of the gospel, which are called a morning dew, or an early cloud; such a receiving of Christ as that, Mat. xiii. 21. which is but a present flash, sudden and vanishing; abiding in Christ notes a solid, durable, and effectual work of the Spirit, thoroughly and everlastingly joining the soul to Christ. Now, if any man, whosever he be (for this indefinite is equivalent to an universal term) let him never think his claim to be good and valid, except he take this course to adjust it.

(2.) *Secondly*, The only way to have this claim warranted, and that must be by *so walking even as he walked*; which words carry in them the necessity of our imitation of Christ. But it is not to be understood indefinitely and universally of all the works or actions of Christ, some of which were extraordinary and miraculous; some purely mediatory, and not imitable by us: In these paths no Christian can follow Christ; nor may so much as attempt to walk as he walked. But the words point at the ordinary and imitable

ways and works of Christ; therein it must be the care of all to follow him, that profess and claim interest in him; they must so walk as he walked, this [so] is a very bearing word in this place; the emphasis of the text seems to lie in it; however, certain it is that this *so walking*, doth not imply an equality with Christ in holiness and obedience; for as he was filled with the Spirit without measure, and anointed with that oil of gladness above his fellows; so the purity, holiness, and obedience of his life are never to be matched, or equalized by any of the saints. But this *so walking*, only notes a sincere intention, design, and endeavour to imitate and follow him in all the paths of holiness and obedience, according to the different measures of grace received. The life of Christ is the believer's copy, and though the believer cannot draw one line or letter exact as his copy is, yet his eye is still upon it, he is looking unto Jesus, Heb. xii. 2. and labouring to draw all the lines of his life, as agreeably as he is able, unto Christ his pattern.

Hence the observation is,

Doct. That every man is bound to the imitation of Christ, under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ.

The saints imitation of Christ is solemnly enjoined by many great and express commands of the gospel; so you find it, 1 Pet. i. 15. "But as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation:" So Eph. v. 1, 2. "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." "Christians (saith * Bernard) receive this name from Christ; and it is very meet that as they inherit his name, so they should also imitate his holiness." Now to state the method of this discourse, it will be needful to discuss and open three things in the doctrinal part.

1. What the saints imitation of Christ supposes and comprizes.
2. In what particulars they are especially bound to imitate Christ.
3. Why no claim to Christ is valid without this imitation of him.

And then apply the whole in divers uses.

(1.) *First*, What the saints imitation of Christ supposeth and compriseth. Now there are divers great and weighty truths supposed and implied in this imitation of Christ, or walking as he walked, viz.

* *Christiani a Christo nomen acceperunt, et opera pretium est, ut sicut sunt hæredes nominis, ita sint imitatores sanctitatis.* Bern. sent. lib. p. 436.

First, It supposes, that no Christian is, or may pretend to be a rule to himself, to act according to the dictates of his own will and pleasure; for as no man hath wisdom enough to direct and govern himself, so if his own will were made the rule of his own actions, it would be the highest invasion of the divine prerogative that could be imagined: "I know, O Lord, (saith Jeremiah) that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in him that walketh to direct his own steps, Jer. x. 23. We may as well pretend to be our own makers as our own guides. It is a pretty observation of Aquinas, that if the workman's hand were the rule of his work, it were impossible he should ever err in working: And if the will of man were the only law and guide of his way, we might then say no man would sin in his walking. The apostle, indeed, saith of the Heathens, Rom. ii. 14. "That they are a law to themselves;" but it is not his meaning, that their will is their law, but the law of God engraven upon their hearts; the light and dictates of their own consciences did oblige and bind them as a law.

Secondly, This imitation of Christ implies, that as no man is, or may pretend to be his own guide, so no mere man, how wise or holy soever he be, may pretend to be a rule to other men; but Christ is the rule of every man's way and walking. It is true indeed, the apostle saith, "We should be followers of them, who through faith and patience, inherit the promises," Heb. vi. 12. And again, James v. 10. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." But you must always remember, that there is a two-fold rule;

1. *Regula regulans*, the rule ruling.

2. *Regula regulata*, the rule ruled.

The wisest and holiest among men, may pretend no higher than a *ruled rule*. The great apostle, though filled with as great a measure of the Spirit of wisdom and holiness, as ever was possessed by any mere man, yet goes no higher than this, 1 Cor. xi. 1. "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ." The best of men are but men at best; they have their errors and defects, which they freely acknowledge; and where they differ from Christ, it is our duty to differ from them. We may not pin our faith to any man's sleeve, for we know not where he will carry it. It was the commendation which Paul gave of the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. i. 6. "And you became followers of us and of the Lord." The noble Bereans were also commended for searching the scriptures, and examining the apostles' doctrine by it; and it was a good reply of the *father* to a clamorous disputant, crying, Hear me, hear me; "* I

* *Nec ego te, nec tu me, sed ambo audiamus Christum.* Aug.

“ will neither hear thee, nor do thou hear me; but let us both hear Christ.”

Thirdly, The imitation of Christ implies the necessity of sanctification in all his followers; forasmuch as it is impossible there should be a practical conformity in point of obedience, where there is not a conformity in spirit and in principle; all external conformity to Christ's practice, depends upon an internal conformity to Christ in the principle and Spirit of holiness. It is very plain, from Ezek. xi. 19, 20. that a new heart must be given us, and a new spirit put into us, before we can walk in God's statutes; we must first live in the Spirit, before we can walk in the Spirit, Gal. v. 25.

Fourthly, The imitation of Christ plainly holds forth this, that the Christian religion is a very precise and strict religion; no way countenancing licentiousness, or indulging men in their lusts: it allows no man to walk loosely and inordinately, but rejects every man's claim to Christ, who studies and labours not to tread exactly in the footsteps of his holy and heavenly example. Profaneness and licentiousness, therefore, can find no shelter or protection under the wing of the gospel; this is the universal rule laid upon all the professors of the Christian religion, “ Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity,” 2 Tim. ii. 19. i. e. let him either put on the life of Christ, or put off the name of Christ; let him shew the hand of a Christian, in works of holiness and obedience. or else the tongue and language of a Christian must gain no belief or credit.

Fifthly, The imitation of Christ necessarily implies the defectiveness and imperfection of the best of men in this life; for if the life of Christ be our pattern, the best and holiest of men must confess they come short in every thing of the rule of their duty. Our pattern is still above us, the best of men are ashamed when they compare their lives with the life of Christ: It is true, a vain heart may swell with pride, when a man compares himself with other men: thus measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves among ourselves, we shew our folly and nourish our pride; but if any man will compare his own life with Christ's, he will find abundant cause at every time and in every thing to be humbled. Paul was a great proficient in holiness and obedience, he had been long striving to come up to the top of holiness, yet when he looks up and sees the life of Christ, and rule of duty, so far above him, he reckons himself still but at the foot of the hill. Phil. iii. 12. “ Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” q. d. Alas! I am not come up to my duty, I am a great way behind; but I am following

after, if at last I may attain it: Perfection is in my expectation and hope, at last, not in my attainment here.

Sixthly, The imitation of Christ, as our general rule or pattern, necessarily implies the transcending holiness of the Lord Jesus; his holiness is greater than the holiness of all creatures "For only that which is first and best in every kind, is the rule and measure of all the rest*." It is the height of saints' ambition to be made conformable to Christ, Phil. iii. 10. Christ hath a double perfection, a perfection of *being*, and a perfection of *working*. His life was a perfect rule, no blot or error could be found therein; for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners:" And such an high-priest becomes us, as the apostle speaks, Heb. vii. 26. The conformity of professors to Christ's example, is the test and measure of all their graces; the nearer any man comes to this pattern, the nearer he approaches towards perfection.

Seventhly, The Christian's imitation of Christ, under penalty of losing his claim to Christ, necessarily implies sanctification and obedience to be the evidences of our justification and interest in Christ: Assurance is unattainable without obedience; we can never be comfortable Christians except we be strict and regular Christians. Gal. vi. 16. "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be unto them, and mercy; and upon the Israel of God." A loose and careless conversation can never be productive of true peace and consolation, 2 Cor. i. 12. "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Let men talk what they will of the immediate sealings and comforts of the Spirit, without any regard to holiness, or respect to obedience; sure I am, whatever delusion they meet with in that way, true peace, and consolation is only to be expected and found here: "The fruit of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness, and assurance for ever." We have it not for our holiness, but we always have it in the way of holiness. And so much of the first particular, namely, what the imitation of Christ implies and comprizes in it.

Secondly, In the next place we are to enquire, in what things all who profess Christ are obliged to the imitation of him; or what those excellent graces in the life of Christ were, which are pronounced as patterns to the saints.

The life of Christ was a living law; all the graces and virtues of the Spirit were represented in their glory, and brightest lustre in his conversation upon earth †: Never man spake as he spake;

* *Primum et optimum in unoquoque genere est regula et mensura cæterorum.*

† What have you to do with virtues, who are ignorant of Christ's virtue?

never any lived as he lived. "We beheld his glory (saith the evangelist) as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. But to descend to the particular, imitable excellencies in the life of Christ, which are high patterns and excellent rules for the conversation of his people, we shall, from among many others, single out the ten following particulars, which we are obliged to imitate.

Pattern 1. And first of all, the purity and holiness of the life of Christ is proposed as a glorious pattern for the saint's imitation. 1 Pet. i. 15. "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;" εν παση αναστροφη, in every point and turning of yourselves. There is a two-fold holiness in Christ, the holiness of his nature, and the holiness of his practice; his holy being and his holy working: This obligeth all that profess interest in him to a two-fold holiness, viz. holiness *in actu primo*, in the principles of it in their hearts, and holiness *in actu secundo*, in the practice and exercise of it in their conversations. It is very true we cannot in all respects imitate the holiness of Christ, for he is *essentially* holy; proceeding, by nature, as a pure beam of holiness from the Father; and when he was incarnate, he came into the world immaculate, and pure from the least stain of pollution: There it was said, Luke i. 25. "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." In this we can never be like Christ, in the way of our production; for "who can bring a clean thing out of that which is unclean? Not one." The Lord Jesus was also *efficiently* holy, i. e. he makes others holy; therefore his sufferings and blood are called a fountain opened "for sin and for uncleanness," i. e. to cleanse other men's souls, Zech. xiii. 1. In this Christ also is inimitable; no man can make himself or others holy. That is a great truth, though it will hardly go down with proud nature, *Minus est te fecisse hominem, quam sanctum*; we may sooner make ourselves to be men, than to be saints. Beside Christ is infinitely holy, as he is *God*; and there are no measures set to his holiness, as *Mediator*. John iii. 34. "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." But notwithstanding these excepted respects, the holiness of Christ is propounded as a pattern for our imitation six ways.

First, He was truly and sincerely holy, without fiction or simulation; and this appeared in the greatest trial of the truth of holiness that ever was made in this world. John xiv. 30. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me:" When he was agitated and shaken with the greatest temptations, no dregs ap-

Where, pray you, is true prudence, but in Christ's doctrine? Or true temperance, but in Christ's life? Or true fortitude, but in Christ's passion?

peared; he was like pure fountain-water in a chrystal glass. The hypocrite makes shew of more holiness than he hath, but there was more holiness in Christ than ever appeared to the view of men. We may say of the way of Christ what the* *philosopher* saith of the *milky way* in the heavens; and those faint streams of light which we see there, are nothing else but the reflection of innumerable stars which shine there, though they are invisible to us. There was much inward beauty in him, and so there ought to be in all his followers; our holiness, like Christ's, must be sincere and real, Eph. iv. 24. shining with inward beauty towards God rather than towards men.

Secondly, Christ was *uniformly* holy at one time as well as another; in one place and company as well as another: He was still like himself, an holy Christ; one and the same tenor of holiness ran throughout his whole life from first to last: So must it be with all his people, holy in all manner of conversation. Christians, look to your copy, and be sure to imitate Christ in this; write fair after your copy; let there not be here a word and there a blot: one part of your life heavenly and pure, and another earthly and dreggy; or (as one expresses it) now an heavenly rapture, and by and by a fleshly frolic.

Thirdly, Christ was *exemplarily* holy; a pattern of holiness to all that came nigh him and conversed with him: O imitate Christ in this. It was the commendation of the Thessalonians, that they "were ensamples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia; and that in every place their faith to God-ward was spread abroad," 1 Thes. i. 7, 8. Let no man go out of your company without conviction or edification. So exemplary were the primitive Christians, Phil. iii. 17.

Fourthly, Christ was *strictly* and *precisely* holy: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" The most envious and observing eyes of his greatest enemies could not pick a hole, or find a flaw in any of his words or actions: It is our duty to imitate Christ in this, Phil. ii. 15. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine (or, as the word may be rendered imperatively, *καίνασθε ως φωνήεις*, among whom shine ye) as lights in the world." Thus it becomes the followers of Christ to walk circumspectly, or precisely; "for so is the will of God that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," 1 Pet. ii. 15.

* The Galaxy is a very great multitude of stars of the smallest size, whose smallness hinders their being perceived by us distinctly like the other stars, and their beams are mutually intermingled and confounded. *Cominh. de Meteor. cap. 2.*

Fifthly, Christ was perseveringly holy, holy to the last breath; as he began, so he finished his whole life in a constant course of holiness: in this also he is our great pattern. It becomes not any of his people to begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh; but on the contrary, their last works should be more than their first: "Let him that is holy, be holy still," Rev. xxii. 11.

Sixthly, In a word, the delight of Christ was only in holy things and holy persons: they were his chosen companions; even so it becometh his people to have all their delights in the saints, and in the excellent of the earth, Psal. xvi. 3. Thus, Christians, be ye followers of Christ in his holiness; God hath decreed this conformity to Christ in all that shall be saved, Rom. viii. 29. he banished all unholy ones from his gracious presence for ever, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Heb. xii. 14. The design of Christ in dying for you was to make you pure and holy, Eph. v. 25, 26. O then, study holiness, eye your pattern, and as dear children, be ye followers of your most holy Lord Jesus Christ.

Pattern 2. The obedience of Christ to his Father's will, is a pattern for the imitation of all Christians: it is said of Christ, Heb. v. 8. that he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered;" a text which labours under some difficulties; Christ learned obedience, and yet was not ignorant before of what he learned afterward; he was perfect in knowledge, and yet the apostle speaks of him as a proficient in the school of wisdom. But we must consider there are two ways of learning, viz. by

1. The comprehension of the mind.
2. By the experience of the sense.

Christ, as God, was perfect in knowledge; nothing could be added to him: but when he became man, then he came to understand, or learn by sufferings, as the apostle here speaks; which, though it added nothing to his knowledge, yet it was a new method and way of knowing. Now the obedience of Christ is our pattern whereunto we are obliged (as ever we will warrant our claim of interest in him) to conform ourselves in the following properties of it.

First, Christ's obedience was free and voluntary, not forced or compulsory; it was so from the very first undertaking of the work of our redemption, Prov. viii. 30, 31. "Then was I by him as "one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing "always before him: Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; "and my delights were with the sons of men." And when the fulness of time was come for executing that blessed design, which had been in prospect from all eternity, how cheerfully did the will of Christ echo to his Father's call, Psal. xl. 7. "Then said I, lo I "come, in the volume of thy book it is written of me, I delight

“to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart.” Nor was this a flourish before he came into the field and saw the enemy, for he laid down his life with the greatest cheerfulness and spontaneity that could be, John x. 17, 18. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again; no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself:” and indeed the voluntariness of Christ, in his obedience unto death, gave his death the nature and formality of a sacrifice; for so all sacrifices ought to be offered, Lev. i. 3. and so Christ’s sacrifice was offered unto God, Eph. v. 2. It was as grateful a work to Christ to die for us, as it was to Moses’ mother to take him to nurse from the hand of Pharaoh’s daughter. O Christians, tread in the steps of Christ’s example, do nothing grudgingly for God, let not his commands be grievous, 1 John v. 3. If you do any thing for God willingly, you have a reward; if otherwise, a dispensation only is committed to you, 1 Cor. ix. 7. Obedience in Christ was an abasement to him, but in you a very great honour and advancement: you have reason therefore to obey with cheerfulness.

Secondly, The obedience of Christ was universal and complete, he was obedient to all the will of God, making no *demur* to the hardest service imposed by the will of God upon him, Phil. ii. 8. “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;” and though it is true, the humanity of Christ recoiled and staggered when that bitter cup of the wrath of God was given him to drink; yet how soon was that innocent aversion overcome in him by a perfect submission? Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be “done,” Matt. xxvi. 39. Christians, here is your pattern: happy art thou, reader, if thou canst say, when God calls thee to suffering and self-denying work, I am filled with the will of God. Such was Paul’s obedience, Acts xxi. 13. “I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Thirdly, The obedience of Christ was sincere and pure, without any base or by-end, purely aiming at the glory of God, John xvii. 4. “I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” He sought not honour of men. This was the great desire of his soul, John xii. 28. “Father glorify thy name:” And truly the choicest part of your obedience consists in the purity of your ends, and in this Christ is propounded as your pattern, Phil. ii. 3, 4, 5.

Fourthly, The streams of Christ’s obedience flowed from the spring and fountain of ardent love to God, John xiv. 31. “But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do;” Thus let all

your obedience to God turn upon the hinge of love; for "love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 10. Not as if no other duty but love were required in the law, but because no act of obedience is acceptable to God, but that which is performed in love.

Fifthly, In a word, The obedience of Christ was constant; he was obedient unto death, he was not weary of his work to the last. Such a patient continuance in well-doing is one part of your conformity to Christ, Rom. ii. 7. it is laid upon you by his own express command, and a command backed with the most encouraging promise, Rev. ii. 10. "Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

Pattern 3. The *self-denial* of Christ is the pattern of believers, and their conformity unto it is their indispensable duty, Phil. ii. 4, 5, 6. 2 Cor. viii. 9. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Jesus Christ, for the glory of God, and the love he bare to the elect, denied himself all the delights and pleasures of this world, Matt. xx. 28. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;" he was all his lifetime in the world, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," Isa. liii. 5. more unprovided of comfortable accommodations than the birds of the air, or beasts of the earth, Luke ix. 58. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head*." Yet this was the least part of Christ's self-denial: What did he not deny when he left the bosom of his Father, with the ineffable delights and pleasures he there enjoyed from eternity, and instead thereof to drink the cup, the bitter cup of his Father's wrath, for our sakes? O Christians, look to your pattern, and imitate your self-denying Saviour. There is a threefold self you are to deny for Christ.

First, Deny your *natural self*, for him, Luke xiv. 26. Hate your own life, in competition with his glory, as well as your natural lusts, Tit. ii. 12.

Secondly, Deny your *civil self* for Christ; whether they be gifts of the mind, Phil. iii. 8. or your dearest relations in the world, Luke xiv. 26.

* *Vulpibus in saltu rupes exisa latebras
Præbet, et aereis avibus dat silva quietem:
Ast hominis Nato nullis succedere tectis
Est licitum.*—————

Heins. in loc.

The craggy rock to foxes holes affords,
The pleasant woods a resting-place to birds;
For Christ no fixed habitation's found.
But what was borrow'd, or the naked ground.

Thirdly, Deny your *moral* and *religious self* for Christ; your own righteousness, Phil. iii. 10. Deny sinful self absolutely, Col. iii. 4, 5. Deny natural self conditionally, i. e. be ready to forsake its interests at the call of God. Deny your religious self, even your own graces, comparatively, not in the notion of duties, but in the notion of righteousness: and to encourage you in this difficult work, consider,

First, What great things Christ denied for you, and what small matters you have to deny for him.

Secondly, How readily he denied all for your sakes, making no objections against the difficultest commands.

Thirdly, How incapable you are to put any obligation upon Christ, to deny himself in the least for you, and what strong obligations Christ hath put you under, to deny yourselves in your greatest interests upon earth for him.

Fourthly, Remember that your self-denial is a condition consented to, and subscribed by yourselves, if ever you received Christ aright.

Fifthly, In a word, consider how much your self-denial for Christ, makes for your advantage in both worlds, Luke xviii. 29. O therefore, look not every man upon his own things, but upon the things that are of Christ; let not that be justly charged upon you, which was charged upon them, Phil. ii. 21. "All seek their own, not the things which are Christ's."

Pattern 4. The activity and diligence of Christ in finishing the work of God which was committed to him, was a pattern for all believers to imitate. It is said of him, Acts x. 38. "He went about doing good." O what a great and glorious work did Christ finish in a little time! A work to be celebrated to all eternity by the praises of the redeemed. Six things were very remarkable in the diligence of Christ about his Father's work.

First, That his heart was intently set upon it, Psal. iv. 8. "Thy law is in the midst of my heart," or bowels.

Secondly, That he never fainted under the many great discouragements he frequently met withal in that work, Isa. xliii. 4. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged."

Thirdly, That the shortness of his time provoked him to the greatest diligence, John ix. 4. "I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day, for the night cometh, when no man can work."

Fourthly, That he improved all opportunities, companies, and occurrences to further the great work which was under his hand, John iv. 6, 10.

Fifthly, Nothing more displeased him than when he met with

dissuasions and discouragements in his work ; upon that account it was that he gave Peter so sharp a check, Mat. viii. 33. "Get thee behind me, Satan."

Sixthly, Nothing rejoiced his soul more, than the prosperity and success of his work, Luke x. 20, 21. When the disciples made the report of the success of their ministry, it is said, "In that hour "Jesus rejoiced in Spirit." And O what a triumphant shout was that upon the cross at the accomplishment of his work, John xix. 30. *It is finished!*

Now, Christians, eye your parent, look unto Jesus ; trifle not away your lives in vanity. Christ was diligent, be not you slothful. And to encourage you in your imitation of Christ in labour and diligence, consider,

First, How great an honour God puts upon you in employing you for his service: every vessel of service is a vessel of honour, 2 Tim. ii. 21. The apostle was very ambitious * of that honour, Rom. xv. 20. It was the glory of Eliakim to be fastened as a nail in a sure place, and to have many people hang upon him, Isa. xxii. 33.

Secondly, Your diligence in the work of God will be your great security in the hour of temptation ; for "the Lord is with you "while you are with him," 2 Chron. xv. 2. The *schoolmen* put the question, How the saints in heaven became impeccable? and resolve it thus, that they are therefore freed from sin, because they are continually employed and swallowed up in the blessed visions of God.

Thirdly, Diligence in the work of God is an excellent help to the improvement of grace. For, though gracious habits are not acquired, yet they are greatly improved by frequent acts ; "To "him that hath shall be given," Mat. xxv. 29. It is a good note of *Luther*, *Fides pinguescit operibus*, Faith improves by obedience.

Fourthly, Diligence in the work of God is the direct way to the assurance of the love of God, 2 Pet. xv. 10. This path leads you into a heaven upon earth.

Fifthly, Diligence in obedience is a great security against back-sliding: small remissions in duty, and little neglects, increase by degrees unto great apostasies, you may see how that disease is bred by the method prescribed for its cure, Rev. ii. 5. *Do thy first works.*

Sixthly, In a word, laborious diligence, in the day of life, will be your singular comfort when the night of death overtakes you, 2 Pet. i. 11. 2 Kings xx. 3.

Pattern 5. Delight in God, and in his service, was eminently con-

* Φίλοτιμος, *ambio*, dictum verbum ad amore honoris. Zanch.

spicuous in the life of Christ, and is a rare pattern for believers imitation, John iv. 32, 34. "But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." The delights of Christ were all in heaven. The Son of man was in heaven, in respect of delight in God, while he conversed here among men. And if you be Christ's, heavenly things will be the delight of your souls also. Now spiritual delight is nothing else but the complacency and well-pleas'dness of a renewed heart, in conversing with God, and the things of God, resulting from the agreeableness of them to the spiritual temper of his mind. Four things are considerable about spiritual delight.

First, The nature of it, which consisteth in the complacency, rest, and satisfaction of the mind in God and spiritual things. The heart of a Christian is centered, it is where it would be; it is gratified in the highest, in the actings forth of faith and love upon God; as the taste is gratified with a suitable delicious relish, Psal. lxiii. 5, 6. Psal. cxix. 14, 24. Psal. xvii. 18.

Secondly, The object of spiritual delight, which is God himself, and the things which relate to him. He is the blessed ocean into which all the streams of spiritual delight do pour themselves, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and on earth there is none that I desire in comparison of thee."

Thirdly, The subject of spiritual delight, which is a renewed heart, and that only so far as it is renewed, Rom. vii. 22. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man."

Fourthly, The principle and spring of this delight, which is the agreeableness of spiritual things to the temper and frame of a renewed mind. A sensitive pleasure arises from the suitability of the faculty and object. So it is here, no delicious sweetness can be so pleasant to the taste, or beautiful colours to the eye, or melodious sounds to the ear, as spiritual things to renewed souls, because spiritual senses are delicate, and the objects more excellent.

But my business here is not so much to open its nature, as to press you to the practice thereof in conformity to your great pattern, whose life was a life of delight in God, and whose work was performed with the greatest delight in God. "I delight to do thy will, O my God." O Christians, strive to imitate your pattern in this. And to encourage you, I will briefly hint a few things.

First, Scarce any thing can be more evidential of sincerity than a heart delighting in God, and the will of God. Hypocrites go as far as others in the material parts of duties, but here they are defective; they have no delight in God and things spiritual; but do whatsoever they do in religion, from the compulsions of conscience, or accommodations of self-ends.

Secondly, An heart delighting in God will be a choice help and means to perseverance. The reason why many so easily part with religion is, because their souls never tasted the sweetness of it; they never delighted in it; but the Christian who delights in the law of God will be meditating on it day and night, and shall be like a tree planted by a river of water, whose leaf fadeth not, Psal. i. 2, 3.

Thirdly, This will represent religion very beautifully to such as are yet strangers to it; you will then be able to invite them to Christ by your example, the language whereof will be like that, Psal. xxxiv. 8. "O taste and see that God is good."

Fourthly, This will make all your services to God very pleasing and acceptable through Christ; you will now begin to do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven; your duties are so far *angelical* as they are performed in the strength of delight in God.

Object. But may not a sincere Christian act in duty without delight? Yea, may he not feel some kind of weariness in duties?

Solut. Yes, doubtless he may; but then we must distinguish betwixt the *temper* and *distemper* of a renewed heart; the best hearts are not always in the right frame.

Pattern 6. The *inoffensiveness* of the life of Christ upon earth is an excellent pattern to all his people; he injured none, offended none, but was holy and harmless, as the apostle speaks, Heb. vii. 26. He denied his own liberty to avoid occasion of offence; as in the case of the tribute-money, Mat. xix. 27. "The children are free, notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go," &c. So circumspect was Christ, and inoffensive among all men, that though his enemies sought occasion against him, yet could they find none, Luke vi. 7. Look unto Jesus, O ye professors of religion; imitate him in this gracious excellency of his life, according to his command, Phil. ii. 15. "That ye may be harmless and blameless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." You are indeed allowed the exercise of your prudence, but not a jot farther than will consist with your innocence. "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." It is the rule of Christ that you offend none, 1 Cor. x. 32. 2 Cor. vi. 3. And to engage you to the imitation of Christ in this, I must briefly press it with a few encouragements, which methinks should prevail with any heart that is truly gracious.

First, For the honour of Jesus Christ, be you inoffensive, his name is called upon you, his honour is concerned in your deportment; if your carriage in the world give just matter of offence, Christ's worthy name will be blasphemed thereby, Jam. ii. 7. Your inoffensive carriage is the only means to stop the mouths of detractors, 1 Pet. ii. 15.

Secondly, For the sake of souls, the precious and immortal souls of others, be wary that you give no offence: "Wo to the world, (saith Christ,) because of offence," Matth. xiii. 7. Nothing was more commonly objected against Christ and religion by the Heathens in Cyprian's time, than the loose and scandalous lives of professors: * "Behold, say they, these are the men who boast themselves to be redeemed from the tyranny of Satan, to be dead to the world; nevertheless, see how they are overcome by their own lusts." And much after the same rate Salvian brings in the wicked of his time, stumbling at the looseness of professors, and saying, Where is that catholic law which they believe? Where are the examples of piety and chastity which they have learned? &c. O Christians, draw not the guilt of other men's eternal ruin upon your souls.

Thirdly, In a word, answer the ends of God in your sanctification and providential dispose in the world this way; by the holiness and harmlessness of your lives, many may be won to Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 1. What the Heathens said of moral virtue, (which they called *verticordia*, turn-heart) that if it were but visible to mortal eyes, all men would be enamoured with it, will be much more true of religion when you shall represent the beauty of it in your conversation.

Pattern 7. The humility and lowliness of Christ is propounded by himself as a pattern for his people's imitation. Mat. xi. 29. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." He could abase and empty himself of all his glory, Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7. He could stoop to the meanest office, even to wash the disciples feet. We read but of one triumph in all the life of Christ upon earth, when he rode to Jerusalem, the people strewing branches in the way, and the very children in the streets of Jerusalem, crying, "Hosanna to the son of David, Hosanna in the highest;" and yet with what lowliness and humility was it performed by Christ, Matth. xxi. 5. "Behold thy King cometh unto thee meek and lowly." The humility of Christ appeared in every thing he spake or did. Humility discovered itself in his language, Psal. xxii. 6. "I am a worm, and no man." In his actions, not refusing the meanest office, John iii. 14. In his condescensions to the worst of men, upon which ground they called him "a friend to publicans and sinners," Matth. xi. 19. But especially, and above all, in stooping down from all his glory to a state of the deepest contempt, for the glory of God and our salvation. Christians! here is your pattern; look to your meek and humble Saviour, and tread in his steps; be you "clothed with

* *Ecce qui jactant se redemptos a tyrannide Satanæ, qui prædicant se mortuos esse mundo, nihilominus vineuntur cupiditatibus suis.* Cyprian.

“humility,” 1 Pet. v. 5. Whoever are ambitious to be the world’s *great ones*, let it be enough for you to be Christ’s *little ones*. Convince the world, that since you knew God and yourselves, your pride hath been dying from that day. Shew your humility in your *habits*, 1 Pet. iii. 3. 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. In your *company*, not contemning the meanest and poorest that fear the Lord, Psal. xv. 4. Rom. xii. 16. In your *language*; that *dialect* befits your lips, Eph. iii. 8. *Less than the least of all saints*; but especially in the low value and humble thoughts you have of yourselves, 1 Tim. i. 15. And to press this, I beseech you to consider,

First, From how vile a root pride springs. Ignorance of God, and of yourselves, gives rise and being to this sin: They that know God will be humble, Isa. vi. 5. And they that know themselves cannot be proud, Rom. vii. 9.

Secondly, Consider the mischievous effects it produces; it estrangeth the soul from God, Psal. cxxxviii. 6. It provokes God to lay you low, Job xl. 11, 12. It goes before destruction and a dreadful fall, Prov. x. 18.

Thirdly, As it is a great *sin*, so it is a bad *sign*, Hab. ii. 4. “Behold his heart which is lifted up, is not upright in him.”

Fourthly, How unsuitable it is to the sense you have, and the complaints you make of your own corruptions and spiritual wants; and above all, how contrary it is to your pattern and example: Did Christ speak, act, or think as you do! O, learn humility from Jesus Christ, it will make you precious in the eyes of God, Isa. lvii. 15.

Pattern 8. The contentation of Christ in a low and mean condition in the world, is an excellent pattern for his people’s imitation. His lot in this world fell upon a condition of deepest poverty and contempt: Yet how well was he satisfied and contented with it! hear him expressing himself about it, Psal. xvi. 6. “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage.” The contentation of his heart with a suffering condition, evidenced itself in his silence under the greatest sufferings, Isa. liii. 7. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” O that in this also the poorest Christians would imitate their Saviour, and learn to manage an afflicted condition with a contented spirit: Let there be no murmurs, complaints, or foolish charges of God heard from you, whatever straits or troubles he brings you into: For,

First, The meanest and most afflicted Christian is owner of many rich, invaluable mercies, Eph. i. 3. 1 Cor. iii. 33. Is sin par-

doned and God reconciled? then never open your mouths any more, Ezek. xvi. 63.

Secondly, You have many precious promises that God will not forsake you in your straits, Heb. xiii. 5. Isa. xli. 17. And your whole life hath been a life of experiences of the faithfulness of God in his promises. Which of you cannot say with the church, Lam. iii. 23. "His mercies are new every morning, and great is his "faithfulness."

Thirdly, How useful and beneficial are all your afflictions to you! they purge your sins, prevent your temptations, wean you from the world, and turn to your salvation: and how unreasonable then must your discontentedness at them be?

Fourthly, The time of your relief and full deliverance from all your troubles is at hand; the time is but short that you shall have any concernment about these things, 1 Cor. vii. 26. If the candle of your earthly comfort be blown out, yet remember it is but a little while to the break of day, and then there will be no need of candles. Besides,

Fifthly, Your lot falls by divine direction upon you, and as bad as it is, it is much easier and sweeter than the condition of Christ in this world was: Yet he was contented, and why not you? O that we could learn contentment from Christ in every condition. And thus I have laid before you some excellent patterns in the life of Christ for your imitation.



SERMON XXX.

1 JOHN *iii* 6.

II. 6.

He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

THESE words have been resolved into their parts, and their sense opened in the former sermon: The observation was this:

That every man is bound to the imitation of Christ, under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ.

In prosecution of this point, we have already shewn what the imitation of Christ imports, and what the imitable excellencies in the life of Christ are: It now remains that I shew you in the next place, why all that profess Christ are bound to imitate his example, and then apply the whole. Now the necessity of this imitation of Christ will convincingly appear divers ways.

First, From the established order of salvation, which is fixed

and unalterable: God that hath appointed the end, hath also established the means and order by which men shall attain the ultimate end. Now conformity to Christ is the established method in which God will bring souls to glory, Rom. viii. 29. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son; that he might be the first born among many brethren." The same God who hath predestinated men to salvation, hath in order thereunto, predestinated them unto conformity to Christ, and this order of heaven is never to be reversed; we may as well hope to be saved without Christ, as to be saved without conformity to Christ.

Secondly, The nature of Christ-mystical requires this conformity, and renders it indispensably necessary. Otherwise, the body of Christ must be *heterogeneous*; of a nature different from the head, and how monstrous and uncomely would this be? This would represent Christ to the world in an image, or idea, much like that, Dan. ii. 32, 33. "The head of fine gold, the breasts and arms of silver, the thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet part of iron and part of clay." Christ, the head, is pure and holy, and therefore very unsuitable to sensual and earthly members. And therefore the apostle in his description of Christ-mystical, describes the members of Christ (as they ought to be) of the same nature and quality with the head, 2 Cor. xv. 48, 49. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." That image or resemblance of Christ, which shall be complete and perfect after the resurrection, must be begun in its first draught here by the work of regeneration.

Thirdly, This resemblance and conformity to Christ appears necessary from the communion which all believers have with Christ in the same spirit of grace and holiness. Believers are called Christ's *fellows*, or co-partners, Psal. xlv. 7. from their participation with him of the same spirit; as it is 1 Thes. iv. 8. God giveth the same Spirit unto us, which he more plentifully poured out upon Christ. Now where the same Spirit and principle is, there the same fruits and operations must be produced, according to the proportions and measures of the Spirit of grace communicated; and this reason is farther enforced by the very design and end of God, in the infusion of the Spirit of grace: For it is plain, from Ezek. xxxvi. 27. that practical holiness and obedience is the scope and design of that infusion of the Spirit. The very innate property of the Spirit of God in men, is to elevate their minds, and set their affections upon heavenly things, to purge their hearts from earthly dross, and fit them for a life of holiness and obedience. Its nature also is assimilating, and changeth them in whom it is, into

the same image with Jesus Christ their heavenly head, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Fourthly, The necessity of this imitation of Christ may be argued, from the design and end of Christ's exhibition to the world in a body of flesh. For though we detest that doctrine of the Socinians, which makes the exemplary life of Christ to be the whole end of his incarnation; yet we must not run so far from an error, as to lose a precious truth. We say, the satisfaction of his blood was a main and principal end of his incarnation, according to Mat. xx. 28. We affirm also, that it was a great design and end of the incarnation of Christ to set before us a pattern of holiness for our imitation; for so speaks the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 21. "He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps." And this example of Christ greatly obliges believers to his imitation, Phil. ii. 5. "Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus."

Fifthly, Our imitation of Christ, is one of those great articles which every man is to subscribe, whom Christ will admit into the number of his disciples, Luke xiv. 27. "Whosoever doth not come after me, cannot be my disciple." And again, John xii. 26. "If any man serve me, let him follow me." To this condition we have submitted, if we be sincere believers; and therefore are strictly bound to the imitation of Christ, not only by God's *command*, but by our own *consent*. But if we profess interest in Christ, when our hearts never consented to follow, and imitate his example, then are we self-deceiving hypocrites, wholly disagreeing from the scripture character of believers, Rom. viii. 1. They that are Christ's being here described to be such as walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. And Gal. v. 25. "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit."

Sixthly, The honour of Christ necessitates the conformity of Christians to his example, else what way is there left to stop detracting mouths, and vindicate the name of Christ from the reproaches of the world? How can wisdom be justified of her children, except it be this way? By what means shall we cut off occasion from such as desire occasion, but by regulating our lives by Christ's example? The world hath eyes to see what we *practise*, as well as ears to hear what we *profess*. Therefore either shew the consistency between your profession and practice, or you can never hope to vindicate the name and honour of the Lord Jesus. The uses follow; for

1. Information.
2. Exhortation.
3. Consolation.

First use, for information.

Inference 1. If all that profess interest in Christ, be strictly bound to imitate his holy example; then it follows, that religion is very unjustly charged by the world, with the scandals and evils of them that profess it. Nothing can be more unjust and irrational, if we consider,

First, That the Christian religion severely censures loose and scandalous actions in all professors, and therefore is not to be censured for them. It is absurd to condemn religion for what itself condemns: looseness no way flows from the principles of Christianity, but is most opposite and contrary to it, Tit. ii. 11, 12. "For the grace of God that brings salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Secondly, It is an argument of the excellency of the Christian religion, and that even wicked men themselves covet the name and profession of it, though they only cloak and cover their evils under it. I confess it is a great abuse of such an excellent thing as religion is; but yet, if it had not an awful reverence paid it by the consciences of all men, it would never be abused to this purpose, by hypocrites, as it is.

Thirdly, According to this reasoning, there can be no religion in the world; for name me that religion which is not scandalized by the practices of some that profess it. So that this practice hath a natural tendency to Atheism; and is, no doubt, encouraged by the devil for that end.

Inf. 2. If all men forfeit their claim to Christ, who endeavour not to imitate him in the holiness of his life, then how small a number of real Christians are there in the world? Indeed, if liberal talking, without accurate walking: if common profession without holy practices, were enough to constitute a Christian; then this quarter of the world would abound with Christians: But if Christ owns none for such but those that tread in the steps of his example; then the number of real Christians is very small. The generality of men that live under the Christian name, are such as walk after the flesh, Rom. viii. 2. according to the course of this world, they yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, Rom. vi. 13. Strict godliness is a mere bondage to them; narrow is the way, and few there be that walk therein.

Inf. 3. What blessed times should we all see, if true religion did once generally obtain, and prevail in the world! How would it humble the proud, meeken the passionate, and spiritualize those that are carnal! The perverse world charges religion with all the tumults and disturbances that are in it; whereas nothing in the

world but religion, advanced in the power of it, can heal and cure these *epidemical* evils. O if men were once brought under the power of religion indeed, to walk after Christ in holiness, obedience, meekness, and self-denial; no such miseries as these would be heard of among us, Isa. xi. 8, 9. "The sucking child shall play upon the hole of the asp, and a weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Inf. 4. Hence it also follows, that real Christians are the sweetest companions. It is a comfortable thing to walk with them that walk after the example of Christ; the holiness, heavenliness, humility, self-denial, and diligence in obedience, which was in Christ, are, in some measure, to be found in all sincere Christians: They shew forth the virtues of him that calleth them; the graces of the Spirit do more or less shine forth in them: And O how endearing, sweet, and engaging are these things! Upon this very account the apostle invited others into the fellowship of the saints, 1 John i. 3. "That ye might have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus." And is it not sweet to have fellowship with them who have fellowship with Christ? O let all your delights be in the saints, and in the excellent of the earth, who excel in virtue, Psal. xvi. 3. Yet, mistake not, there is a great deal of difference betwixt one Christian and another, and even the best of Christians are sanctified but in part. If there be something sweet and engaging, there is also something bitter and distasteful in the best of men. If there be something to draw forth your delight and love, there is also something to exercise your pity and patience. Yet this is most certain, that notwithstanding all their infirmities and corruptions, they are the best and sweetest company this world affords.

Inf. 5. In a word, if no men's claim to Christ be warranted but theirs that walk as he walked; how vain and groundless then are the hopes and expectations of all unsanctified men, who walk after their own lusts? None are more forward to claim the privileges of religion than those that reject the duties of it; multitudes hope to be saved by Christ, who yet refuse to be governed by him: But such hopes have no scripture warrant to support them; yea, they have many scripture testimonies against them, 1 Cor. vi. 9. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind; nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." O how many

thousand vain hopes are laid in the dust, and how many thousand souls are sentenced to hell by this one scripture!

Second use, for exhortation.

If this be so, it naturally presses all the professors of Christianity to strict godliness in their conversations, as ever they expect benefit by Christ. O professors, be ye not conformed unto this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds: Set the example of Christ before you, and labour to tread in his steps. This is the great business of religion, the main scope of the gospel. Give me leave, therefore, closely to press it upon your hearts, by the following motives.

Motive 1. Christ hath conformed himself to you by his abasing incarnation; how reasonable therefore is it that you conform yourselves to him in the way of obedience and sanctification? He came as near to you as it was possible for him to do, strive you therefore to come as near to Christ as it is possible for you to do: he hath taken your nature upon him, Heb. ii. 14. yea, and with your nature he hath taken your weaknesses and infirmities, Rom. viii. 3. and not only your natures and your infirmities, but your condition also, for he came under the law for your sakes, Gal. iv. 4. He conformed himself to you, though he was infinitely above you; that was his abasement: do you conform yourselves to him who are infinitely beneath him: that will be your advancement: his conformity to you emptied him of his glory, your conformity to him will fill you with glory: he conformed himself to you, though you had no obligation upon him; will you not conform yourselves to him, who lie under infinite obligations so to do?

Motive 2. You shall be conformed to Christ in glory; how reasonable therefore is it you should now conform yourselves to him in holiness? The apostle saith, 1 John iii. 2. "We shall be like unto him, for we shall see him as he is:" Yea, not only your souls shall be like him, but your very bodies, even those vile bodies of yours "shall be changed, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." How forcible a motive is this to bring men into conformity with Christ here! especially, seeing our conformity to him in holiness, is the evidence of our conformity to him in glory, Rom. vi. 5. 2 Pet. iii. 11. O professors, as ever you look to be with Christ in glory hereafter, see that ye walk after Christ's example in holiness and obedience here.

Motive 3. The conformity of your lives to Christ, your pattern, is your highest excellency in this world: The measure of your grace is to be estimated by this rule. The excellency of every creature rises higher and higher, according as it approaches still nearer and nearer to its original; the more you resemble Christ in grace, the

more illustrious and resplendent will your conversations be in true spiritual glory.

Motive 4. So far as you imitate Christ in your lives, and no farther, you will be beneficial in the world in which you live: so far as God helps you to follow Christ, you will be helpful to bring others to Christ, or build them up in Christ; for all men are forbidden by the gospel to follow you one step farther than you follow Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 1. and when you have finished your course in this world, the remembrance of your ways will be no further sweet to others, than they are ways of holiness and obedience to Christ, 1 Cor. iv. 17. If you walk according to the course of this world, the world will not be the better for your walking.

Motive 5. To walk as Christ walked, is a walk only worthy of a Christian; this is to "walk worthy of the Lord," 1 Thess. ii. 12. Col. i. 10. By worthiness * the apostle doth not mean meritoriousness, but comeliness, or that decorum which befits a Christian: as, when a man walks suitably to his place and calling in the world, we say he acts like himself; so, when you walk after Christ's pattern, you then act like yourselves, like men of your character and profession; this is consonant to your vocation, Eph. iv. 1. "I beseech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation where-with you are called." This walking suits with your obligation, 2 Cor. v. 15. for it is to live unto him who died for us. This walking only suits with your designation, Eph. ii. 10. "For you are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained we should walk in them." In a word, such walking as this, and such only becomes your expectation, 2 Pet. iii. 14. "Wherefore [beloved] seeing that you look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

Motive 6. How comfortable will the close of your life be at death, if you have walked after Christ's pattern and example in this world: A comfortable death is ordinarily the close of a holy life, Psal. xxxvii. 37. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." A loose, careless life puts many terrible stings into death. As worms in the body are bred of the putrefaction there, so the worm of conscience is bred of the moral putrefaction or corruption that is in our natures and conversations. O then be prevailed with by all these considerations to imitate Christ in the whole course and compass of your conversations.

* The word worthiness, as used in scripture, does not always denote an exact proportion of equality between one thing and another, but a certain suitableness and fitness which excludes inconsistency. *Davenant on Coloss. p. 25.*

Third use, for consolation.

Lastly, I would leave a few words of support and comfort to such as sincerely study and endeavour, according to the tendency of their new nature to follow Christ's example, but being weak in grace, and meeting with strong temptations, are frequently carried aside from the holy purposes and designs of their honest, well-meaning hearts, to the great grief and discouragement of their souls. They heartily wish and aim at holiness, and say with David, Psal. cxix. 5. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." They follow after exactness in holiness as Paul did, Phil. iii. 12. "If by any means they might attain it." But finding how short they come in all things of the rule and pattern, they mourn as he did, Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Well, if this be thy case, be not discouraged, but hearken to a few words of support and comfort, with which I shall close this point.

SUPPORT I.

Such defects in obedience make no flaw in your justification: for your justification is not built upon your obedience, but upon Christ's, Rom. iii. 24. and how complete and defective soever you be in yourselves, yet at the same instant, "you are complete in him" "which is the head of all principality and power," Col. ii. 10. Wo to Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, and the most eminent saints that ever lived, if their justification and acceptance with God had depended upon the perfection and completeness of their own obedience.

SUPPORT II.

Your deep troubles for the defectiveness of your obedience, do not argue you to be less, but more sanctified than those who make no such complaints; for these prove you to be better acquainted with your own hearts than others are; to have a deeper hatred of sin than others have; and to love God with a more fervent love than others do; the most eminent saints have made the bitterest complaints upon this account, Psal. lxxv. 3. Rom. vii. 23, 24.

SUPPORT III.

The Lord makes excellent uses even of your infirmities and failings to do you good, and makes them turn to your unexpected advantage: for, by these defects he hides pride from your eyes; he beats you off from self-dependence; he makes you to admire the riches of free grace: he makes you to long more ardently for heaven, and entertain the sweeter thoughts of death; and doth not the Lord then make blessed fruits to spring up to you from such a bitter root? O the blessed chymistry of heaven, to extract such mercies out of such miseries!

SUPPORT IV.

Your bewailed infirmities do not break the bond of the everlasting covenant. The bond of the covenant holds firm, notwithstanding your defects and weaknesses, Jer. xxxii. 40. "Iniquities prevail against me," saith David, yet in the same breath he adds, "as for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away," Psal. lxxv. 3. He is still thy God, thy Father for all this.

SUPPORT V.

Though the defects of your obedience are grievous to God, yet your deep sorrows for them are well-pleasing in his eyes, Psal. li. 17. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Ephraim was never a more pleasant child to his father, than when he bemoaned himself, and smote upon his thigh, as thou dost, Jer. xxxi. 20. Your sins grieve him, but your sorrows please him.

SUPPORT VI.

Though God have left many defects to humble you, yet he hath given many things to comfort you. This is a comfort that the desire of thy soul is to God, and to the remembrance of his name. This is a comfort, that thy sins are not thy delight as once they were; but thy shame and sorrow. This is a comfort, that thy case is not singular; but more or less, the same complaints and sorrows are found in all gracious souls through the world; and to say all in one word, this is the comfort above all comforts, that the time is at hand, in which all these defects, infirmities, and failings shall be done away, 1 Cor. xiii. 10. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

For ever blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

And thus I have finished the third general use of examination, whereby every man is to try his interest in Christ, and discern whether ever Christ hath been effectually applied to his soul. That which remains is

An use of Lamentation.

Wherein the miserable and most wretched state of all those to whom Jesus Christ is not effectually applied, will be yet more particularly discovered and bewailed.