

OF  
**RECONCILIATION**

BETWEEN

**GOD AND MAN.**

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Colos. 1. 21.

*And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.*

Verse 22.

*In the body of his flesh, through death, &c.*

**WE** have, from the former words of this text, shewn the fearful, horrid state of unconverted sinners; that as such they are alienated and enemies in their mind, by wicked works, and come now to shew, from the words that follow, the blessed state of the converted. You now, hath he reconciled, &c. Here is instance given of the happiest change that ever was made, in the case of sinful wretched creatures; and far above all our expectations, if we had not been told: that as far as the heavens are above the earth, so far, in acts of mercy, are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, Isa. 4. Otherwise, when we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion against him, that were alienated, and enemies to him in their minds, by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, well and what became of the business? how did it issue? what was the event? and would expect to hear, why fire came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them in a moment; or the earth opened, and swallowed them up quick. Yea and if the matter were so reported.

to us, if we did hear fire and brimstone, flames and thunderbolts immediately came down upon them, and destroyed them in a moment; who would not say, so I thought, who could expect other? But that it should be said, such as were alienated from God, and his very enemies in their mind, by wicked works, those hath his own Son reconciled! into what a transport of wonder, and praises would this cast any considering mind! with what amazement would it make us cry out, O what hath God wrought what wonders can the power of divine grace bring about! How unexpected! How surprising a thing is this! Especially when we also consider how this was brought to pass, the Son of God effected it in the body of his own flesh, through death. He died for it! rather than such impure venomous worms, and that were as weak and defenceless as they were vile and wicked, should at last suffer the dreadful consequences of so desperate and unequal a war against the Almighty; which could not be other than their own ruin, and eternal death; he chose himself to die for them. This is the strange amazing subject we have to consider, And we cannot but confess and consider it as a strange thing, if we were only told it as that which had fallen out, in some other country, in any remote part of the world, or in some other world. But when we understand, as for the former part, this is the common case of men on earth, and therefore that it was our own case, to have been alienated from God and enemies to him in our minds by wicked works; and as to the latter part, that to us the proposal and offer is made of being reconciled, in this strange way! in what agonies! in what consternation of spirit should we be, when we can with greatest certainty say the former; if we cannot say the latter! And if we can, in what a transport! in what raptures of admiration, joy and praise, should we say it! Any of us who hath heard, or now reads these words, even me who was alienated, and an enemy in my mind, by wicked works, yet me now hath he reconciled! Can you say so? how should your heart leap, and spring within you, at the reciting of these words: and if you cannot as yet say this, with particular application, and it does not therefore raise a present joy, yet it may beget hope in you; for think with yourself, if with some the matter hath been brought to this blessed issue, why may it not with me? and upon the one account, or the other, now set yourself seriously to consider these latter words. And that you may do so with the more advantage, take distinct notice of these two things, that are to be severally treated of;—of this blessed work itself, brought about by your merciful and glorious Redeemer: reconciliation with God. “You hath he reconciled,” and—the wonderful way wherein he hath affected it in the body of his flesh, through death.

I. Consider this reconciliation itself. Which that we may do with just advantage, both to the truth and ourselves, we must take heed of too much narrowing so important a subject; but take it in its due extent and compass, as comprehending all that truly belongs to it: and so it must be understood to be mutual between God and us; and to include both our reconciliation to him, and his reconciliation to us. Thus the proper import of the word, the scope of the apostle's present discourse, and the nature of the thing lead us to understand it. The word being used when two parties have been at variance, not only signifies the laying down of enmity on the one side, but to be received into grace and favour on the other; as might be shewn of the original words, that are wont to be thus rendered, if it were needful; or at this time fit. But it sufficiently appears, in the common use of this way of speaking among ourselves. And if we consider the scope of the apostle's discourse, nothing can be more agreeable to it; which is manifestly to exalt and magnify Christ, first, as Creator, affirming that all things visible, and invisible were made by him, and for him, as ver. 16. And then afterwards, there having been a rupture and breach in the creation, by the apostacy and revolt of some creatures; others also, being in an uncertain and mutable state, liable to a like failure and defection, he is further magnified, as the Reconciler of such as were thought fit to be restored, and the Establisher of such as stood, ver. 17. Now the representation of his performance, as a Reconciler, had been very imperfect, if he had designed therein only to signify a reconciliation, effected by him on one side, leaving the other unreconciled. And though it be true, that taking this reconciliation, in reference to the immediately foregoing words of this verse, you that were enemies, might seem to limit it to that one sense, as if it meant only reconciliation on our part, consisting in the laying down of our enmity; yet the following words, that shew how this reconciliation is brought about in the body of his flesh through death, signify as much for the extending of it to the other reconciliation also; namely on God's part towards us. For they plainly mean that this reconciliation is brought about by sacrifice, namely, by our Lord Jesus's offering himself upon the cross for us (as hereafter we shall have occasion more largely to shew) now a sacrifice is offered to God only, not to men, and being for reconciliation, must principally, and in the first place intend the reconciling of God to us; though it secondarily hath its great use, for the reconciling us to God, also; as hereafter we shall shew. And it is in the nature of the thing very evident: reconciliation supposing a difference and displeasure between two parties, as what hath been, it must include the agreement of both, as that which.

now is. A willingness to be reconciled there may be on one side, when there is none on the other, as it is often and long between God and men; but if there be actual reconciliation, it is always mutual; unless the one party deceive, or impose upon the other, pretending to be reconciled when he is not: which, in the case between God and us, can never be; for neither can we deceive God, nor will he deceive us. Therefore we shall treat of both the parts of this reconciliation of men to God and of God to them.

*First.* Our reconciliation to God. And though that be proposed to be first insisted on, let none think it is therefore looked upon as deserving, or as being any way a cause of his reconciliation to us. For as our enmity and rebellion, against him cannot do him real hurt, though it does him infinite wrong; so our love and obedience, though they are most due to him, can profit him nothing. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself; is it a gain to him, if we be righteous? Job. xxii. 2, 3. What givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit a son of man, ch. 35, 7, 8. But by neither can we do the one or other to him. It should therefore be far from us to imagine we can procure his favour or reconciliation, by anything we can do. And know sinner, he is before-hand with thee, in the offer of reconciliation and in real willingness to be reconciled; for his offer is most sincere. When therefore out of a state of enmity, thou art brought to love him, it is because he loved thee first, 1 John iv. 19. But take this aright, that thou mayest not deceive thyself, nor wrong him. Before our reconciliation to him, his gospel truly speaks him reconcilable, and offering us reconciliation; when his offer is accepted and complied with, then his gospel speaks him actually reconciled. His offer of reconciliation shews his compassion, which is love to the miserable; herein he is before-hand with them whom he finally saves, he loves them with this love while they yet hate him and are full of enmity against him. From this love it is that he is reconcilable to them, willing to forgive all their former enmity and rebellions; if yet they will be reconciled, and turn to him with their whole souls. And this he testifies to them in his gospel; and hereby his spirit, working in and by this gospel of his grace, he overcomes, conquers their enmity, and causes them to love him, whom before they hated. But this actual reconciliation is always accompanied with delight, which is love to the amiable, such as he hath now made lovely, by transforming them into his own image, who is love, 1 John iv. 16. This is friendly complacential love, that freely converses, and holds communion

with the beloved, so that they dwell in him, and he in them, as in the same place.

It is profane therefore, and an insolent presumption for any to say, God is reconciled to me, he delights and takes pleasure in me, while they are unreconciled to him, and have hearts full of wicked enmity against him. They do even weary him with their words, when they say, every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them, Mal. ii. 17. It is an affront to his excellent majesty, a reproach to his glorious holiness and the purity of his nature, a defiance to the justice of his government, to think him well pleased, when they persist in their rebellions against him; or that he will be reconciled to them, when this is still the temper, and posture of their souls towards him. He is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him, he hates the workers of iniquity, Ps. v. 4, 5. Any such thought he will severely and terribly avenge, If any man bless himself in his heart, and say, I shall have peace when he walks in the imagination of his heart, Deut. 29, 19, 20. God will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man. And it is, on the other hand, a wicked, provoking unbelief, a high affront to him a giving him the lie, if one, really willing to be reconciled, do apprehend him irreconcilable, or say in his heart, God will never shew me mercy. It is as much as to say that the word of his grace is nothing but deceit, and his whole gospel is made up of falsehood. Therefore though our reconciliation to him is no cause of his reconciliation to us, yet (according to the method which he hath settled, as most agreeable to his glorious majesty, to his pure holiness, his hatred of sin, the justice of his government, and the truth of his word) we cannot say he is actually reconciled to us, till we are reconciled to him. It may be said he pities us before, and is upon gospel terms reconcilable to us, not that he delights in us, or is reconciled. And we may the better understand this, that our reconciliation is no cause of his reconciliation to us, though it go before it, inasmuch as he works both reconciliations, in and by his Christ; so the text speaks of both; you hath he reconciled—not we ourselves. And 2 Cor. v. 18. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ; but in this way, order, and method, that first he overcomes our enmity, changes our hearts, and turns them to him; then is reconciled to us, as believing in his Son, and accepts us in him, as the beloved one.

Hereupon therefore we are first to consider, and open to you our reconciliation to God; which we shall consider and speak of, not merely by shewing the very point, wherein it lies; but more largely, by letting you see what it comprehends in the compass

of it, or what belongs to it, and in what way it is brought about. We are indeed to consider that this, in the text "you hath he reconciled" is a historical passage, signifying somewhat past, a *res gesta*, a *great thing* effected and done. Whereas therefore some have taken much pains (and not to ill purpose) to write histories of nature, and give account of natural productions; we may call this a history of grace; giving some account how this gracious production is effected, and wrought on the souls of men. And for you that are reconciled, it is but to repeat to you your own story, and shew you what God hath done for your soul, in this blessed work. We might have carried the same notion backward, and in the former part have considered your case, as the history of a man's unregenerate state; but those days, I believe, you would rather should not be numbered amongst the months. We therefore go on, to consider what will be of a more grateful, as well as most useful remembrance to you; namely, how God hath dealt with you, in bringing about this happy change. And doing it, in some sort, in the way of a history, it will be the more suitable to put you in mind, in divers particulars, of the manner how it was wrought; it being usual, in historical relations, not only in short to say that such a thing was done, but more at large to relate how, and in what way it was done. Though yet we cannot certainly say, that the several things, we shall mention, were all done in that order wherein we shall set them down; for God's method may vary, or not in every respect be the same, with every one he savingly works upon. But because there are several things to be spoken which cannot all be mentioned at once, or in one breath, and some order or other must be used in reciting them; we shall repeat them, not merely as they occur to our thoughts, but also as they more aptly lie in order to one another; not doubting but if you have been reconciled to God, you will say, when you hear them, these things have been wrought in you. Or if you have not, I must say, these are things you are to look after; and must at one time find in yourselves, if ever you shall be reconciled. And so this reconciliation hath begun with you, or must begin in,

1. A thorough conviction with deep and inward sense, wrought into your hearts, of your former enmity. There must have been a charging one's self, particularly, with this matter of fact, I have been alienated from God, and an enemy to him in my mind; I see it, I confess it, thus it hath been with me, this hath been the temper of my soul, towards the blessed God! Here lies the great difficulty of reconciliation, on our part, that men are so hardly brought to see and own this; because they feel not an enmity boiling in their hearts against God, therefore

they will not yield there is any such thing. But they might take notice, they as little feel love burning in their breasts towards him. And they the less apprehend the truth of their case in this respect, because by the same external shew and appearance, by which they may deceive other men, they endeavour to cheat themselves too; that is because they sometimes bear a part in the solemnities of God's worship, and sit in an assembly as his people, hear his word, and with their mouth (*ore tenus*, or in *outward appearance*) shew much love, they therefore think all is well, though their heart run after their covetousness Ezek. 33, 31. But what can be said to that convictive query; How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me? when in reference to creatures it is required that love be without dissimulation, and that we love not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth: Will an outward appearance, and shew of love, be sufficient towards the most amiable and most excellent One, the ever-blessed, heart-searching God! Let this be laid as a ground most firm and stable, that if the subject, thy soul, be capable, and the object, the ever-blessed God, be made known and set in view to the eye of the mind; if then there is not love towards him, there is hatred, What can a reasonable soul be indifferent towards God! the all-comprehending Being! and with whom all have to do! the first and the continual Author of our life and being, whose invisible and eternal power are manifest in the visible things which he hath made; so that heaven and earth are full of his glory. Towards some remote foreign prince, multitudes may be void of love and hatred alike, of whom they have no notice, with whom they have no business. Can it be so with us towards God, who is God alone, besides whom there is no other, in whom all live, and move, and have their being, who is, therefore, not far from any one of us; and whom all are obliged to take for their God, and must if they accept him not, be taken for refusers! A thing that carries with it most horrid guilt! and carries in it downright enmity; and the more heinous, when, with any, it is covered with lying lips, with the cloak of a profession, namely, that they have taken him for their God, when such as say that he is their God yet have not known him, as John. viii. 54. 55. For that ignorance must proceed from enmity, a not liking to retain God in their knowledge, as Rom. 1. 28. Of which ignorance from disaffection, if heathens might be guilty, as they were, the apostle there speaks of; much more deeply guilty are they, who being his professing people, yet know him not; as they were, whom our Lord so charges in the forecited John viii. 54, 55. For these hide their hatred with lying lips, which is much more an abomination to the Lord, Prov. x. 18. If you never so confidently pretend love to God, and he that knows all things, says I know

you that you have not the love of God in you, as our Saviour tells the Jews; Who is more likely to be mistaken? John v. 42. And can you be more confident, or more highly boast your relation to God, or your love to him, than they who were so peculiarly his people, chosen out from all nations? If you say you are lovers of God: and the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who searches hearts and reins, (Rev. ii. 18,) says, I know you that you have not the love God in you; how must it appal and dismay your hearts, to have his certain unerring judgment of you, thus to controul your partial, self-flattering judgment; and if this be indeed the state of the case, with any of us, and he know it to be so, it is enough for our condemnation; but for our saving conviction it is necessary that we know it too: therefore let us search our own hearts, and try them impartially, by all the several evidences, and aggravations of enmity against God, in the foregoing discourse, from p. 390. to p. 399. And to all these, I add here some enlargement, upon what was more lightly touched (as within the narrow limits of time, wherein that discourse was delivered, it could not be otherwise) p. 395. (2.) namely, disobedience to that plain, express command of our Lord: to lay up our treasure, not on earth, but in heaven, so as to have our hearts also there, Mat. vi. 19, 21. This I choose to insist upon, in reference to our present purpose, that where there is a remaining and a reigning enmity against God, there may be a thorough conviction of it, in order to reconciliation; both because as to this thing, the rule we are to judge by is so very plain in the word of God; and because the temper and bent of our own hearts, in this respect, is so easily discernible, to them that will diligently, and faithfully observe themselves.

Scripture is most express herein, as in the place last mentioned, that they whose hearts are on earth, and not in heaven, have no treasure in heaven. And what can be a greater evidence of enmity to God, than to have the bent and tendency of your heart and spirit directly contrary to the mind of God, concerning you, or to what he would have it be, and it must necessarily be, that you may not be lost, and miserable for ever? The enmity to him, which he so much resents, is not your designing any hurt or prejudice to him; but the contrariety of your temper to his kind, and merciful design towards you. Therefore they that mind earthly things, that is, that savour them most (as the word signifies) and it must be understood as excluding the savour of better things, that is, who only savour them and taste no pleasure or delight in spiritual or heavenly things; such are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ, that is, to the design of his dying upon the cross, which was to pro-



cure for his redeemed, a blessed state in heaven, and to bring them thither, not to plant and settle them here on earth. They are enemies therefore, because his design, and theirs lie contrary, and oppose one another. He is all for having them to heaven, and was so intent upon that design, as not to shun dying upon a cross to effect it; they are all for an earthly felicity, and for a continual abode upon earth, to enjoy it. This is an opposition full of spite and enmity, to oppose him in a design of love and upon which his heart was set, with so much earnestness! Therefore is the carnal mind said to be enmity against God, Rom. viii, 7. even as it is death, v. 6. but to whom? not to the blessed God himself, which you know is impossible, but to us. It is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be; for that is spiritual, ch. vii. 14. and the best on earth find themselves, in too great degree, carnal; and here lies the contrariety, much more when this carnality is total. And this law is the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, which directly tends to make us free from the law of sin, and death; ch. viii. 2. which it doth when the Spirit of God prevails, and gets the victory over this carnality of mind, so that we come to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. In the mean time, they that are after the flesh, do only savour the things of the flesh; as they that are after the Spirit, do the things of the Spirit, v. 5. And they that are after the flesh shall die, but they that by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh shall live, v. 13. Therefore we see the reason why it is above said, they that are in the flesh, or under a prevailing carnality, cannot please God; for he takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he should turn, and live, Ezek. 33. 11. You cannot please him, because the bent of your carnal mind lies cross to his saving design, you are enemies in your mind to him, for your mind is most opposite to his mind; he is for saving you, you are for self-destruction, you hate him, as you love death, Prov. viii. 36. Therefore also they that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them, 1 John ii. 15. He would have them do his will, and abide in a blessed state for ever; but while they love this world, their hearts are set upon a vanishing thing; for the world and the lust thereof must pass away and be gone, v. 17. They cannot love him, while in mind, and will, and design, they so little agree with him. And hereupon is the friendship of this world said to be enmity against God, and he that will be a friend of this world, makes himself an enemy to God, Jam. iv. 4. The design of his amity with you is disappointed and lost, therefore he can look upon you no otherwise than as enemies to him.

And now, if this be the temper of your mind and spirit, how easily, by looking into your own hearts, might you discern it?

Know you not your own selves? 2 Cor. xiii. 5. As if it were said, it is a reproach to be ignorant or without this knowledge! What is so near you as yourselves? Do you not know your own minds? whether you had rather have your portion for ever on earth, or in heaven? whether you more value a heavenly treasure or the treasures of this earth? If you chiefly mind earthly things, how can you but know it? Do but take an account of yourselves, where are your hearts all the day from morning to night, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year? what thoughts, designs, cares, delights are they that usually fill your souls? are they not worldly, carnal, earthly? Trace your own hearts: how canst thou say, I am not polluted? see thy way, (Jer. ii. 23,) mark thy own footsteps, see what course thou hast held, years together, even under the gospel; and when thou hast been so often warned, even by him who bought thee by his blood, to seek first the kingdom of heaven—to strive to enter in at the strait gate—and told how precious a thing thy soul is, even more worth than all the world; and how fearful a bargain thou wouldst have of it, if thou shouldst gain the whole world, and lose thy soul! And if all the neglects of his warnings and counsels have proceeded from the worldliness, earthliness, and carnality of thy heart and mind, and all this is declared to be enmity against God; then cast thyself down at his foot, and say to him, now Lord, I yield to conviction; I now perceive I have been alienated, and an enemy in my mind by wicked works, though I never suspected any such thing by myself before. And know that till then the gospel of reconciliation will do thee no good, thou wilt never be the better for it, though thou livest under it all thy days; all exhortations to be reconciled to God, and to get this dreadful disease of enmity against God cured, will avail no more than physic, or a physician to one that counts he is well, and feels himself not at all sick. All thy Redeemer's calls will sound in thine ears, as if he called the righteous, and not a sinner to repentance. But that such calls might, or may yet signify the more, know that reconciliation not only comprehends a conviction of the fact, that thou hast been an enemy; but will also contain, in thy case, if ever thou be reconciled;

2. A clear and lively apprehension, with dread and horror, of the monstrous iniquity and wickedness thereof. This hath been, or must be wrought in thee. And when thou art convicted in thy conscience of thy being an enemy to the ever-blessed God, how canst thou but see thyself to be a vile and wicked creature, upon this account? This is thy case, and thou must apprehend it accordingly, that thou art an enemy in thy mind, and by wicked works. For what can be more wicked, than to hate the God of thy life! even him who is love, and good-

ness itself in highest perfection ! What to hate the God of all grace, he that is the Lord, the Lord gracious and merciful, abounding in loving-kindness, goodness, and truth ! Bethink thyself, make thy reflections, view the face of thy soul, in the mirror of that most righteous law : thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and might and mind. And doth it not astonish thee to behold enmity filling up, in thy soul the room and place of love ! that thou findest thou hast, in thy soul, a power of thinking thoughts, but canst take no pleasure to think of God ! Thou hast in thy nature a principle of love, and thou canst love thy friend, thy child, yea thy money, and (what is worse) thy lust ; but canst not love thy God ! How fearful a case ! that when thou hast a mind and spirit in thee, made up of reason and love, it should against all reason love things less lovely, as earth and vanity ; yea even most hateful, as sin and iniquity ; but cannot love its own Father, even him whose offspring it is, and to whom alone the title belongs of Father of spirits.\* How monstrous a deformity is this ! How fearful a transformation of a reasonable, immortal mind and spirit ! If thy body were wrested into never so horrid and hideous shapes, there were nothing in point of horror, comparable to this deformedness of thy soul. Nor canst thou ever be reconciled to God, till there be unreconcilableness to thyself, as thou art in this state ; and till thou be the most frightful, hateful spectacle to thyself, on this account. Thou wilt never look upon thy own carnal mind, or thy friendliness towards this world, which is declared to be enmity against God, (Rom. viii. 7. Jam. iv. 4.) with a kind, self-indulgent eye any more ; but as having in them the most amazing wickedness, such whereby a reasonable soul, an understanding mind and spirit is brought to love a clod of clay, a lump of earth, yea even sin itself, rather than the ever-blessed, and most holy God of heaven ! Let no man ever think himself in a way of reconciliation to God, till he find in his soul a very deep sense of so hateful an evil as this ; and have expressly charged himself with it, before the throne of the most high. If you find there is a difficulty in it, and that your hearts are hardly brought to it, that they fly back and recoil, and will not yield that anything so bad is to be charged upon them ; take

\* So some heathens have conceived God, as the *vous πατρικός*, the *paternal mind*, Heriœel. And so the apostle quotes a heathen poet, speaking of ourselves as God's offspring. And thereupon adds that the Godhead is not like silver and gold, whereas he is like our minds or spirits ; whence he might collect how unreasonable it is not only to love silver and gold, which is unlike him, but even sin which is most contrary, and hateful to him.

so much the more pains, labour and strive with them the more to bring them to it; because the whole business of your peace, and reconciliation with God depends upon it. You can never be reconciled, till you see your not being so, or your continuing enmity is a thing not to be endured; that if thou couldst be truly charged with hating thy own father or mother, or wife or child or thy prince, or country; none of these, though monstrously bad, are by many degrees so ill things, as the hating of thy God.

Therefore since this charge cannot be denied, it must be aggravated upon thy own soul, till thou feel the weight and burden of it; and that now at length thou art brought to say, I cannot endure to dwell with myself, I cannot keep myself company, nor eat, or drink, or sleep, or converse with myself in peace, till my heart be changed, and the case be altered with me in this respect. If thou canst truly say, Christ hath reconciled thee, thus thou hast felt and found it, or thus thou wilt find it, if ever thy reconciliation be brought about.

3. You that are reconciled, may reflect and take notice of this, as a further very remarkable thing in your own story, that you have been made deeply sensible of your great sinfulness, in other respects. And for others, that are yet to be reconciled, know that this belongs to the reconciliation, which you are to endeavour and seek after, a deep sense of sin, in the full extent of it. As love is the fulfilling of the law, and is therefore to be considered, not in one single duty only, but as the spring and source of all other duty; so enmity is to be looked upon not as one single sin only; but as the spring and fountain of all other sin. Therefore when you are convinced, and made sensible of your enmity against God, you have been or must be led on, from this fountain, to the several impure streams and rivulets issuing from it; and have a like conviction and sense of your sinfulness, in the larger extent and compass of it; and that in such respects, whereof slighter penitents take little notice. As for instance,

(1.) You have had, or must have a sight and sense of sin as sin. Many apprehend little of it besides the sound of the word, and make a light matter of it. I am a sinner, is soon said, when it is little understood what sin is, or what it is to be a sinner. But you have, or must conceive of sin, as a violation of the holy law of God; an affront to the authority of your Maker and sovereign Lord, a setting of your own will above, and against the supreme will of the most high. Hereupon you must consider, if yet you have not, what a fearful thing it is to be a sinner, and say with yourself, "O what a monstrous vile wretch am I! that was nothing but the other day, and now being raised up

into being a reasonable creature, capable of subjection to a law, to rise up in rebellion against him that gave me breath!" What to contend against him who is thy life, and the length of thy days, how horrid must this be in thy eyes!

(2.) You must have a thorough conviction and sense of the sinfulness of your nature, as having been sinful from the womb, born in sin, conceived and brought forth in iniquity, Ps. lviii. 3. Ps. li. 5. Hence you are to bethink yourself, "What a loathsome creature have I been from my original! to have come into the world, with a nature poisoned and envenomed with sin! what a wonder was it that the holy God would suffer me to breathe in the world so long, and feed and sustain me so many days!" Many may have some sense of wicked acts, that have no sense of the impurity of their natures. This should fill thee with confusion, and self abhorrence!

(3.) Of such sinful inclinations and actions, as were most directly against God. Many can be convinced of wrong done to a neighbour, that have no sense of their having wronged the God of their lives, by continual neglects of him, casting him out of their thoughts and hearts, and living as without God in the world; and as if they had been made to please, and serve themselves, and not him.

(4.) But there must also be a deep sense too of sins against thy neighbour. For on the other hand, there are too many that are so taken up about the commands of the first table, as to overlook those of the second; that if they cannot be accused of gross idolatry, or of the neglect of God's external worship, think themselves very innocent, when in the mean time they live, as to their neighbours, in envy, hatred, malice, hateful, and hating one another; make no scruple of cozening, or defrauding a neighbour for their own advantage, or of bearing him a grudge, of harbouring thoughts of revenge against him. Whereas we are plainly told, that if we forgive not our offending brother, neither will God forgive us; and are taught to pray for forgiveness to ourselves; but as we forgive others. And that he that hates his brother, abides in death, 1 John iii. 14. Yea, and that when the law of God requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, we are obliged not only not to harm him, but to do him all the good we can, as we have opportunity, and as we are able, when we see him in distress, to relieve and help him. Especially if we see him go on in a sinful course, to admonish, and reprove him, with prudent friendliness, and not suffer sin upon him: otherwise thy righteous judge will reckon that thou hast him in thy heart, Lev. xix. 17.

(5.) And thou oughtest to be sensible too of sins against thyself. For when God's law requires us to love our neighbour as

ourselves, it implies there is a love which we owe to ourselves ; not that inordinate self-love, which excludes both love to God and our neighbour ; but such as is subordinate to the one, and co-ordinate with the other. Consider therefore, whether thou hast not been guilty of sinning against thyself : against thy body, in gluttony, drunkenness, fulfilling the lusts of it : against thy soul, in neglecting it, in famishing it, letting it pine and waste away in thy iniquities ; in ignorance, worldliness, carnality, estrangedness from God, never looking after a Saviour for it, not using the appointed means of thy salvation. What multitudes live all their days, in sin of this kind, and never accuse or blame themselves for it ?

(6.) And you must labour to be sensible of all such sins against your neighbour, and yourselves, as sins, though not immediately or directly, yet principally against God himself ; because he is the supreme Law-giver, and it is he, who by his law hath settled that order in the world, which by such sins you have violated and broken. Therefore doth that great penitent thus accuse himself, in his humble confession to the great God: against thee, thee only have I sinned (ps. li. 4.) reflecting upon the transgressions, by which he had highly wronged Uriah, Bathsheba, and his own soul ; because there is but one sovereign Lawgiver, (Jam. iv. 19.) by whose authority only, either put forth immediately by himself, or derived to his vicegerents, all just laws are made, by which there comes to be any such thing as sin or duty in the world. Therefore you must charge yourself as having offended him, by all the sins that ever you were guilty of ; though man was the object, God's law was the rule, sinned against.

(7.) You ought therefore to be sensible of secret sins, which he only knows ; as well as open, and such as tend to bring reproach upon you amongst men.

(8.) And (amongst them) of the sins of your heart, and inward man, evil thoughts, designs, affections, inclinations ; as well as of such as have broken forth into outward actions.

(9.) Of sinful omissions, as well as commissions ; you must be sensible, not only of the evil which you have done but the good that you might, and ought to have done, but which you have not done. The judgment of the great day, as it is represented, Mat. 25. from ver. 31, to the end of the chapter, runs, you see, chiefly upon the omissions of the condemned, in oppositions to the performances of them that are absolved, and adjudged to life everlasting. And before, in the same chapter, he that made no use of his one talent, is doomed unto utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth, under the name of an unprofitable

servant, ver. 30. that is, a wicked, and slothful servant, as he is called, ver. 26. For though, when we have done all we can, we are to count ourselves unprofitable servants, and to God we are so: yet we ought, and are capable to be profitable to ourselves, and to other men; and to God we ought to be faithful servants, though we cannot be profitable. But will you count him a faithful servant, who can only plead for himself to his master: "I have not embezzled your goods, destroyed your cattle, or burnt your house;" when yet he never did him real service? If ever therefore you be reconciled to God, you will be or have been in bitter agonies of spirit before him, in the review of your former fruitless life, and that you have lived so long in the world to so little purpose!

(10.) You must have been, or will yet be deeply affected with the sense of sins, not only against the holy, righteous law of God, but against the gospel of his Son; not only that you have swerved from the rules which were given you, and neglected the ends you were made for, as you are God's creatures, and the work of his hands, thereby exposing yourselves to his wrath and justice; but that you have slighted the only remedy tendered you in the gospel, neglected the great salvation that was wrought out, and began to be spoken by the Lord himself, Heb. ii. 3, 4. Consider, were you never in dread? did you never cry out affrighted: "How can I escape, who have neglected such a salvation, such a Saviour?" It must at one time or other cut and wound your souls to think how many serious warnings, earnest invitations, affectionate entreaties, heart-melting allurements have I withstood! How often have I been besought, in the name of a crucified, dying Redeemer, to resign and surrender myself to him, to submit to his authority, to accept his mercy and have refused! The heavy yoke and burden of sin, and guilt have been more tolerable to me, than his easy yoke and light burden. I have more busied myself to increase my interest, and share in this present world; than to gain a part in that fulness of grace, righteousness, spirit, and life which is treasured up in him. Your reconciliation can never be brought about, but upon a heart-wounding sense of your being so long unreconciled, and your having disregarded the great and merciful Reconciler.

4. If Christ hath brought about, in you, a thorough reconciliation to God, this further belongs to the story of his dealings with you, as that which he hath given you to experience; or if he have not yet reconciled you, it is that which, if ever you be reconciled, you are yet to expect, namely—a deep inward apprehension and sense both of the dreadfulfulness, and dueness of divine displeasure towards you, for your former enmity against

him, and for all the other wickedness, that hath accompanied it.

(1.) Of the dreadfulness of his displeasure. You could no longer make light of it, or eat and drink, and sleep in quiet, and give yourself the liberty of mirth and jollity, while you still lay under it. God is said to be angry with the wicked every day, Ps. vii. 11. and to hate all the workers of iniquity. Ps. v. 5. You will count it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he saith, vengeance belongs to him, and he will repay it, Heb. x. 30, 31. And when you have reason to apprehend him, as lifting up his hand to heaven, and saying, I live for ever; as whetting the glittering sword, and his hand taking hold of vengeance, (Deut. 32. 40, 41.) you must have thought, or will yet think with yourself, who knows the power of his anger! Ps. xc. 11. And by how much the less you can know it, so much the more you must have dreaded it. For all the while you have been abusing his patience, long-suffering, and forbearance, not considering that the goodness of God did lead you to repentance; so long as you were despising the riches of his goodness, you were treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment, Rom. 2. 4. 5. And to have treasures of unknown wrath, far beyond what you could conceive, laying up in store against you, how amazing must this be to you! Destruction from the Almighty! What a terror must that be to you, Job. 31. 23. To eat and drink under wrath! to buy and sell, to plough and sow, and all under wrath! and with a curse from God, covering you as a garment, cleaving to you as a girdle, flowing as oil into your bones, mingling with all your affairs, and all your comforts, with whatsoever you do, and whatsoever you enjoy! And to be, all the while, upon the brink of eternity, and not, for ought you know, to have a hand-breadth, not more than a breath between you and eternal woes and flames, and none to deliver you from the wrath to come! This cannot have been an easy condition, and the less when you considered,

(2.) The dueness of God's wrath and displeasure unto you, that how terrible soever it is, it is all most justly deserved. You must have been made to see and say, "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish did most righteously belong to me, as my most proper portion; to me, an enemy to the God of my life, who gave me breath and being, upon the treasures of whose bounty I have lived all my days; to whom, when he filled my house with good things, yet I often in my heart said, depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. 15. And as the law of love to God, the great original law, had engaged me to keep all his other commandments



so my enmity against him, hath made me break them all, so that I have lived a life of disobedience and rebellion, all my time thus far. And though he hath offered me terms of peace, and I have been often and earnestly besought, by those that have spoken to me in Christ's stead (my bleeding, dying Redeemer and Lord) to be reconciled to God; yet I have hitherto borne toward him an impenitent, implacable heart. If there were ten thousand hells, they were all due to me, I have deserved them all.

5. Such as have been reconciled, have been brought, by believing, to apprehend God's reconcileableness to them, in and by his own Son. This also belongs to the history of God's dispensation towards them, and may instruct others, by letting them know what must be wrought in them, that they may be reconciled. It is their special advantage, that live under the gospel, that therein they behold God reconciling the world to himself, by Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. This is the sum of the gospel, that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believe in him should not perish but have life everlasting, John iii. 16. Hereby they may know and believe the love God hath to them, 1 John iv. 16. And that, though they have been alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet he is not irreconcilable. This is the gospel of the grace of God, which he testifies and they are to believe, unless they will make him a liar, 1 John v. 10. And therefore notwithstanding the sense they ought to have of their having been enemies, and of the horrid wickedness hereof and of their sinful temper and course in all other respects, together with the terrors of God's wrath, and their desert of it to the uttermost; they are yet to conjoin therewith, the belief of his willingness to be reconciled. And hereby he melts and breaks their hearts, namely, by this discovery of his good will, believed; for disbelieved, it can signify nothing, nor have any effect upon them; the gospel is his power to salvation, to every one that believes, (Rom. i. 16.) and works effectually in them that believe, 1 Thes. ii. 13. So it is the immediate instrument of their regeneration, after that the love and kindness of God to men, appears, that is, so as that they believe it; he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 4, 5. And then he makes them know it is not by works of righteousness; which they have done, but by his mercy, as it is there expressed. They are not (as was formerly said) the objects of his delightful love, before their regeneration; but they may be of his pity, or mercy, his compassionate love; and this they are to believe, as the general proposal of his gospel declares it; and by the belief hereof, he conquers their

enmity, and subdues them into compliance with his good and acceptable will. These glad tidings, that he is truly willing to receive any returning soul, vanquishes their disaffection, and overcomes their hearts; makes them say with themselves, why should I still continue alienated from the God who is so gracious and merciful, abundant in loving-kindness, goodness and truth, as his name signifies (Exod. 34, 6, 7.) though he will by no means clear the guilty; that is, the obstinate, impenitent, and implacable. But if this discovery of the grace of God can find no entrance, sinner into thy soul, if it remain shut up in unbelief; or if, when he tells thee over and over, that he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they turn and live, thou wilt not believe him, but still think him implacable, and Cain-like, say thy sin is greater than can be forgiven: this hardens thy heart in enmity against him, and makes thee say, as (Jer. ii. 25.) There is no hope, I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. Therefore if ever thou hast been, or shalt be reconciled to God, as thou hast not been left in a stupid insensibleness of thy former wickedness, so thou hast been kept from sinking into an utter despair of God's mercy; thy reconciliation is brought about by thy believing his reconcileableness.

6. Hereupon thou wast brought to entreat his favour with thy whole heart, and that he would be merciful to thee according to his word, Ps. cxix. 58. When thou sawest, though thy case was very horrid and dismal, yet it was not hopeless, and that there was a ground for prayer in the hope of mercy; then didst thou, or yet wilt set thyself in good earnest to supplicate, and cry mightily for pardoning and heart renewing grace. Where is no hope, there can be no prayer; this posture of soul thou hast been wrought up to, or wilt be, if ever thou be reconciled. Hope gives life and breath to prayer, and prayer, to peace and friendship with God. When God promises to take away the stony heart, and give the new one, the heart of flesh; he declares that even for this he will be inquired of, and sought unto, Ezek. xxxvi. 36. 37. Nor doth the soul, when hope of mercy, according to God's word and promise, gives it vent, breathe faint breath in prayer; but the whole heart is engaged, all the powers of the soul are put into a fervent motion. Despair stupifies, hope fills the soul with vigour; the favour of God is sought, not with cold indifferency, but as that wherein stands thy life, (Ps. xxx. 5.) and which is better than life (Ps. lxiii. 3.) without it can be. But then, whereas the gospel under which thou livest, informs thee that God cannot be approached by a sinful creature, as men are, and as thou must own thyself to be, but through Christ the only Mediator between God and men;

and that thou canst not approach him in, and by Christ, if thou be not in him :

7. Thou art hereupon led to Christ, and brought to receive him with all thy heart and soul, (John 1. 12. Rom. x, 10.) and to resign and give thyself up wholly to him, (2 Cor. viii. 5.) not knowing in thy distress, what to do with thyself, and he compassionately inviting thee, O thou weary, heavy laden soul, come unto me, and I will give thee rest, (Mat. xi. 28.) and assuring thee, that whosoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out, John vi. 37. Thou thereupon with a humble, thankful, willing heart art brought to comply with his merciful offer, acceptest him and yieldest up thyself, no more to be thy own, but his ; and thus believing in his name, thou ownest him in his office, as the great Peace-maker, between God and thee.

8. Whereupon thou hast been brought to apply thyself, through Christ to the blessed God, and humbly to take hold of his covenant, Isa. lvi. 2. Thou hast come to God the judge of all, having come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 23, 24. And been enabled to covenant with him, according to what he himself hath declared to be the purport and sum and substance of his covenant ; that is, if thou art reconciled, thou hast taken him to be thy only God, thy supreme and sovereign good, thy chief and only satisfying portion, (ps. xvi. 5.6.) whom thou art most pleasantly to enjoy, and in whom thou art to take highest delight, above all things in heaven or earth, (ps. lxxiii. 25) and whom thou art to believe willing, according to this covenant, to do for thee, in outward and temporal respects, what he judges fittest and best ; and for thy soul, in his own way and method, all that is requisite for thy present support, and future blessedness. And to be thy supreme and sovereign Ruler and Lord, whom thou art to thy uttermost to please, serve, fear, obey, and glorify above all other. And to whom thou must reckon it belongs, according to this covenant, to forgive thy iniquities ; and by it, as well as by natural right, to govern and dispose of thee in all thy thoughts, actions, inclinations and affairs, according to his own holy will. And thou givest up thyself absolutely, and entirely to him, to be of his people to be taught and ruled by him. This is the covenant which in thy baptism thy parents, who had nearest natural relation to thee, entered into for thee (as children do, in their parents, stand obliged to the government under which they live) but which, when thou art come to use an understanding of thy own, thou art to enter into with the great God, for thyself (as persons come to a certain age of maturity, are called to avow their allegiance to their secular rulers.) And because it is made with sinners, such as had been in rebellion against the majesty of

heaven, and therefore by a mediator, and by sacrifice ; it is therefore a covenant of reconciliation, and the sacrifice by which it is made, is a propitiation or a reconciling sacrifice. If therefore Christ hath reconciled thee to God, or if ever thou shalt be reconciled, this covenant must pass between him and thee ; this is to come into the history of his dealings with thy soul. And it ought to be with thee a great solemnity, and to fill thy soul with a wondering joy, that the great God, whom thou hadst so highly offended, should ever vouchsafe to covenant with thee a sinful worm ! But because the manner of this covenanting is so fully set down, by Mr. Joseph Allen, and in a little treatise called self-dedication, and in another of yielding ourselves to God, I shall not further enlarge upon it here.

9. If thou be reconciled, the frame and bent of thy soul is so far altered and changed, that thy carnal mind is become, in a prevailing degree, spiritual ; and thy worldly heart is taken off, in a like measure, from this present world, and set upon God and heaven. For the carnal mind is enmity against God, and they that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them ; and he that will be a friend of this world, is the enemy of God, Rom. viii. 7. 1 John. ii. 15. Jam. iv. 4. But canst thou be reconciled, and still be an enemy ? And how canst thou not be an enemy, when not in this, or that single act only, but in the main bent and frame of thy soul, thou resistest his will, and in thy whole course walkest contrary to him ?

10. If thy reconciliation to God have been brought about, there must be suitable walking afterwards, which includes two things.—Amity must be continued, that is, there must be a very great care that there may be no new breach : and—there must be much uneasiness of spirit, if there have been a new breach, till it be composed and made up again.

(1.) Where there is a thorough reconciliation, amity must be continued, care taken of giving any new offence, or the making any new breach, by not doing what will displease, and by a friendly intercourse continued and kept up. For there may be a new breach, or a new offence may be given again, either of these ways ; either by breaking out into any fresh quarrel or contentions, or by breaking off friendly intercourse. As if there have been a war between two nations, when a firm peace is made, there ensues both a ceasing from hostilities, and free commerce ; so if thou hast made peace with God, and hast entered into a league and covenant of reconciliation with him, thou must take great care, to thy uttermost, to sin no more ; not deliberately to do anything, that thou knowest will displease him. Thou must say, as is said in Job. 34. 32. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more. And again, thou must take great

heed of growing strange to him, of giving over, or of becoming slack or cold in thy converse with him; for when he inquires, "can two walk together if they be not agreed?" he thereby intimates, that if they be agreed, it is that they may walk together. And it is to be considered, that in the text the unreconciled state consists, not only in the enmity of the mind by wicked works, but also in being alienated from him, or strange to him; by either whereof thou givest him also cause of just offence, even after reconciliation.

(2.) But if thou findest thou hast made a new breach, either of these ways, by doing any thing that thou didst apprehend to be displeasing to him, or by estranging thyself from him, there must be an uneasiness in thy spirit, and thou must be restless, till it be composed and made up again. This is walking suitably to a reconciled state, to resolve with thyself, upon any new offence, not to give sleep to thy eyes, nor slumber to thy eyelids, till thou have humbled thyself before thy God, and sought his pardon, by faith in the blood of his Son; with a resolution, in dependence on his grace and Spirit, to walk more carefully, and more closely with him in thy future course, accounting always that in his favour is life. Such things as these if thou be reconciled to God, will compose and make up thy story of it. Such a narrative thou couldst give of it thyself, upon recollection, or at least thou canst say, when thou redest it thus put down to thy hand, thou canst say these things thou hast found God hath wrought and done in thee. Though perhaps they may not have come into thy mind, in the same order wherein they are here set down, which is less material, if thou canst truly say such workings as these thou hast really felt in thine own heart, while God was dealing with thee, for the bringing about this reconciliation. But if this work be not yet done, if it is yet to be done, then know such stages as these thou must pass through. And thou art to be restless in thy spirit, while thou canst yet say, such and such of these things are still wanting in me; I have not yet found them, my heart agrees not in such and such points with this narrative; I can give no such account of myself. But wait and strive, in hope that thou shalt yet find them, if thou persist, and do not grow negligent and indifferent, whether any such reconciliation to God be effected in thee or no. And when thou hast found it, then art thou led to consider, in the next place,

*Secondly.* God's reconciliation to thee; and inquire what that includes and carries in it. But here now, because his part lies in himself, and may for some time have no discernible effects upon thy soul; therefore the account hereof is not to be

carried on in the way of the history, as the other might. It is doctrinally written in his own word, and so is the matter of thy faith, not of thy present sense, as the other is. But as it is indefinitely propounded in his word, so it ought to be firmly believed, and without wavering, as a sure part of the true and faithful sayings of God, who is truth itself, and cannot deceive nor be deceived. And it ought to be believed, with particular application to thyself, that thus and thus he bears himself towards thee, as thy reconciled God; according as thou findest thy own soul, thus truly reconciled to him. For though thy reconciliation to him, be no cause of his reconciliation to thee; yet it is a most certain evidence of it. Otherwise

1. You would be beforehand with him in love, when as his word expressly says, he loves us first, 1 John iv. 19.

2. It would be true, that he made us love him, having himself no love to us; when as the same word says, we love him, because he first loved us; namely, with that compassionate love whereof you formerly heard.

3. You would hereupon outdo him in point of love, and be better affected towards him, than he is towards you.

4. If any could be reconciled to God, and yet God not be reconciled to them, and they die in that state, it would be possible there might be lovers of God in hell. And what can be more absurd in itself? or more contrary to the plain word of God, that hath said; the things which eye hath not seen are prepared for them that love God, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) and that he hath promised the crown of life to them that love him, Jam. i. 12. All which you cannot but apprehend to be intolerable absurdities, and they would all follow, if upon such grounds as have been mentioned you should apprehend yourself to be reconciled to him, and yet disbelieve his being reconciled to you. Therefore having so sure a ground, upon which to apprehend he is reconciled to you, when you find you are reconciled to him; let it now be considered what his reconciliation to you imports. Wherein, as in all that follows, I shall be very brief; that this part be not too unproportionable in bulk to the former gone out before it. And here two things in the general, must be understood to be included in God's being reconciled to us.—His forgiving to us all the sins of our former state of enmity against him: and—His receiving us into a state of amity and friendship with him. How great things are both these! And if you cannot as yet with certainty conclude that you are reconciled to God, as thereupon to have a present assurance of his having thus forgiven, and accepted you; yet you are however to apprehend both these as most certainly be-

longing to their state, who are reconciled to him, so as to make you most earnestly to covet, and endeavour to get into that state; as perceiving how desirable a thing it is to have the eternal God no longer an enemy to you, but your friend.

(1.) Therefore you must apprehend God's being reconciled to you, includes his forgiving you all the sins of your former state, wherein you lived in enmity against him. And of how vast compass and extent is his mercy towards you herein! when you consider what you were doing, and what manner of life you led all that time; always sinning from morning to night either by acting against him, or by not living with him, and to him! not minding him, not fearing him, standing in no awe of him, never aiming to please, or serve, or glorify him in any thing you did, as if you were made for yourself, and not for him! And that your disobedience to him, your neglects of him were all summed up in enmity! And how monstrous a thing it was to be an enemy, a hater of the ever blessed God! And to have all this forgiven! So his own word plainly speaks: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon, Isa. lv. 7.

And here you must understand aright what sort of pardon and forgiveness that is, when God is said to forgive; which you must conceive of, by considering what sort of enmity yours was against him. The case is not as between equals, falling out and forgiving one another; but your enmity was that of an offending inferior and subject, rebelling against your sovereign, rightful Lord, who hath both right and power to punish you. And then think how terrible punishment you deserved, and were liable to: even an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, 2Thes. i. 9. Whereupon consider what it signifies for him to forgive you: and see now whether you do not savour those words: blessed is the man, or whether the sense of your case do not make you cry out, as those words may be read: O the blessednesses of him, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered: O the blessednesses of him, to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity! Of how mighty a load must it ease and disburden thy soul, to have thy offended Lord say to thee, Thou hast been sinning against me hitherto all thy days, when I have been all thy days doing thee good; thou hast done evilly against me as thou couldst, slighted my authority and despised my mercy; I could plead my rebukes against thee, with flames of fire; if I should whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold of vengeance, how soon could I ease myself of so feeble an adversary, and avenge myself of so contemptible an enemy?

But I forgive thee : Now upon thy repenting and turning to me with thy whole soul, I forgive thy ungodly prayerless life, thy having been alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works. I forgive it to thee all! Thy iniquity is all pardoned, thy sin covered, I no more impute any thing of it to thee. What rock would not this melt? what stony heart would it not dissolve, and break in pieces? And what! Canst thou now be any longer an unreconciled enemy, to such a sin-pardoning God? Consider here more particularly,—the properties and consequences of this forgiveness.

[1.] The properties of it, as that,

First. It is most compassionate, an act of tender mercy and pity; so says his own word: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, Heb. viii. 12. In his love and pity he redeemed, and he bare them, Isa. lxiii. 9. And being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity, Ps. lxxviii. 38. For he remembered they were but flesh, v. 39.

Secondly. It is perfectly free, and of mere grace. We are justified freely by his grace, Rom. iii. 24. He invites sinners to come to him, even without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1. A great price indeed hath been paid, but by another hand, as we shall shew when we come to the second head, the way wherein our Lord effects this reconciliation, in the body of his flesh through death. But no price is expected from us, he doth it for his own sake, as Isa. xliii. 25.

Thirdly. It is full and entire. And that both in respect of the object, the sin forgiven, all manner of sin (that can be repented of) shall be forgiven unto men, Matt. xii. 31. I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me Jer. xxxiii. 8. And in respect of the act of forgiving, it shall be so full as to leave no displeasure behind: for (as he speaks) I, even I am he that blotteth out thy iniquities, and there is not so much as a remembrance left; I will not remember my sins Isa. xliii. 25. Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more, Heb. viii. 12.

Fourthly. It is often repeated. He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity—yea many a time turned he his anger away, Ps. lxxviii. 38.

[2.] The consequences of this forgiveness.

First. Cessation of all acts, that have either destruction for their end, or enmity for their principal. In the very covenant of reconciliation, God reserves to himself a liberty of chastening his reconciled ones; yea the case requiring it, he not only reserves the liberty, but takes upon him an obligation hereunto. For he expressly declares: that if his children forsake his law,



and walk not in his judgments; then he will visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; but that, nevertheless, he will not utterly take away his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor break his covenant, (Ps. lxxxix. 31,—34.) implying that otherwise his faithfulness would fail, and his covenant were broken on his part. And therefore when he deals not with a people upon covenant terms, but as cast-aways, and as people given up, he declares: I will not punish your daughters, Hos. iv. 14. And why should they be smitten any more? Isa. i. 5. And they themselves own; it was good for them to have been afflicted, (Ps. cxix. 71.) and that he had done it in very faithfulness, v. 75. And his correcting them is signified not only to consist with love, but to proceed from it; for it is said; whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, Heb. xii. 6. And those afflictions are properly punitive, as they import warning to others; but not vindictive, as tending to the destruction of themselves; but corrective, as intending their own amendment, besides warning to others, which also those that are destructive might do. But these afflictive strokes upon his own, as they intend warning to others, have the general nature of punishment in them. But they differ in their special kind, as being to themselves corrective only, not destructive, or vindictive. But upon the whole, when once he is reconciled to you, he no longer treats you as enemies; if sometimes he see cause to afflict his own, he smites them not as he smites those that smote them, Isa. xxvii. 7. Your carriage doth not always please him, therefore it is not strange, if his dealings do not always please you; but after forgiveness he intends your real, and final hurt no more.

Second. Another consequent of God's forgiving you all your sins, is his seasonable manifestation hereof to you. He may have forgiven you, and not judge it seasonable suddenly to make it known to you: he may judge it fit to hold you, some time, in suspense. And when by his grace he hath enabled you to exercise repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whereupon you are in a pardoned state; you may yet sometime remain in doubt, whether you were sincere herein or no. And may not on a sudden, put you out of doubt, but keep you a while in a waiting posture; as that which is more suitable to his own majesty and greatness, and to your own infirm and less established condition. He waits to be gracious, and is exalted even in shewing mercy, for he is a God of judgment, and doth shew mercy judiciously, when he judges it the fittest season; therefore are they blessed that wait for him, Isa. xxx. 18. Assurance is the privilege not of all his children, but

of them that are come to a more grown stature ; but in the mean time he sustains you, by hope in his mercy, and lets not your heart sink within you. And when he sees it fit, lets you know he hath accepted the atonement for you, which he hath enabled you to receive ; and speaks that peace to you, which is the fruit of his lips, and which he only, by speaking it inwardly to your heart, can create ; that peace which passes all understanding, (Isa. lvii. 18. Phil. iv. 7.) and which belongs to his kingdom in you ; with joy in the Holy Ghost, when once the foundation is laid in righteousness, Rom. xiv. 17.

(2.) This reconciliation, on God's part, not only includes the forgiveness of your former enmity, with all the sins of that fearful state wherein you then were ; but also his receiving you into a state of amity and friendship with himself. And this you are to take for a great addition to the former. A prince may pardon to a malefactor a capital crime, spare his forfeited life and estate ; and yet not take him for a favorite and a friend. But when the blessed God forgives his enemies, he also takes them for his friends ; though those are distinct things, yet they are most closely conjunct ; he always adds this latter to the former.

Abraham was called the friend of God, (Isa. xli. 8.) that is, not only in the active sense, as now bearing a friendly mind towards God ; but in the passive sense also, as now God hath a friendly mind towards him. And upon what account ? some may think Abraham being a person of eminent sanctity, this may be said of him only upon that peculiar account. But see how the matter must be understood, from what we find, Jam. ii. 23. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God ; this is spoken of him, not as an eminent saint only, but under the common notion of a believer ; so that the same thing is truly to be said of every one that believes, with a justifying faith. So saith our Saviour to his disciples in common : ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, John xv. 14. And—I have called you friends for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you, (v. 15.) which signifies his own friendly mind to them. And now consider what this friendliness towards them includes. It must include,

[1.] Love, which is the very soul of friendship. So our Saviour expresses his own friendliness, towards them that are his : As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you ; continue ye in my love, v. 9. And the height of that love, v. 13. Greater love than that hath no man, that a man should lay down his life for his friends ; though it is elsewhere further heightened, from

our having been sinners and enemies, (Rom. v. 8, 10,) though it was then in view to him what he designed to make of them, namely, friends to him too. And so his friendship must signify further, not love merely, but also after reconciliation, there mentioned, v. 10.

[2.] A delightful, complacential love. For such is the love of friends, a love of delight, which they take in one another; as if he had said, "Now I have overcome you, and won your hearts, I love you with that pleasantness, that delightful love which is proper to the state of friendship." So such friends are spoken to, (Cant. ii. 14.) O my dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely; and that book abounds with expressions of that import, thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. How fair is my love! (ch. iv. 7, 9, 10, &c.) But besides what this friendship, as such, or as it hath in it the general notion of friendship, includes; consider further some particularities belonging to this friendship, as,

[3.] How infinitely condescending it is on God's part. That the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, who hath infinite fulness in himself, and could with delight live alone to all eternity, as he did from all eternity, that he should vouchsafe to take from among his own creatures, such as he would make friends of; how admirable! much more of such creatures, apostate revolted creatures, impure and vile creatures! such as he hath so much to do upon, to make them kind and holy, that they might be capable of his friendship!

According to the usual measures of friendship, it is with those that are like, yea with equals. How transporting should it be to thy soul, that the great God should entertain and strike such a friendship with thee, so vile, so rebellious and abject as thou wast! Solomon speaks of it as a wonderful thing, and even exceeding all belief, that God should dwell, (which dwelling signifies friendly society,) saith he; In very deed will God dwell with men! such creatures as men are now become! and with men on earth! in this their low and mean state, and on this narrow, little, base spot; when even the bright and spacious heavens, yea the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, (2 Chron. vi. 18.) How wonderful a thing is this! and even surpassing all wonders! Is it after the manner of men! how far, herein, are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts! even as the heavens are above the earth, Isa. l. 8. Consider,

[4.] How beneficial this his friendship to us is! many friends can only wish well to one another, have neither wisdom, nor

power really to befriend them; his friendship is most beneficial to them on whom it is placed, having all-sufficient fulness in himself to counsel, to support, to relieve, to supply them as the matter shall require.

[5.] How conversable he is with these his friends, being

First. Always present. One may have a wise and potent friend, but perhaps he is far off when there is greatest need of him.

Second. Being intimately present, with our minds and spirits. The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit, 2 Tim. iv. 22. He can be always so. The most inward friends, among men, can have no immediate access to one anothers spirits; but this is the peculiar advantage of this friend, that he can enter into our very souls; nothing is shut up from him.

[6.] How constant is God's friendship! He loves with an everlasting love, and to the end, (Jer. xxxi. 3. Isa. liv. 8. Joh. xiii. 1.) when other friendships are upon slight grounds, easily, and often broken off. Thus far we have seen what this mutual recollection imports, on our part, towards God; and on God's part towards us. We now come to consider,

II. The way wherein our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and us, brings about this reconciliation; namely, In the body of his flesh through death. The same thing is expressed in the 20th verse, by his making peace by the blood of his cross, or his shedding his blood on the cross. The meaning of both expressions is, that he brought about this reconciliation, by suffering death for us, upon the cross. Now because this reconciliation, as you have heard, includes both God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God; and that both are effected by his dying upon the cross for us; we are to shew how each of these are brought about, this way.

*First.* How God's reconciliation to us is wrought, by Christ dying for us. You may say, why was this the means of reconciling God to us? for you may think with yourselves, if God had a mind to be reconciled to sinners, could he not have been so, without letting his Son die for it? There are indeed difficulties in this matter, which are not fit to be brought into such a discourse as this; but I shall here say nothing about it, but what is plain, and easy to be understood.

1. You can easily apprehend, that God saw it was necessary his Son should die, in order to the saving of sinners; for who can think he would ever have consented to the death of his most beloved Son, if he had not seen it necessary? Therefore you must conclude it was necessary, whether you discern the reasons upon which it was so, or no.

2. You can easily apprehend that the sins of men deserved eternal death, and that God threatened them with eternal death accordingly; for what death, but eternal death can that be, which is opposed to eternal or everlasting life? (Rom. v. 21. Rom. vi. 23.) and which is executed upon all that are not reconciled, according to the sentence of the last judgment, Mat. xxv. 46.

3. You cannot but know that there were sacrifices under the law of Moses, appointed to make atonement for sin, and that without shedding of blood there could be no remission, Heb. ix. 22.

4. It is easy to be understood, that the blood of those sacrifices could not take away sin, as is expressly said, (Heb. x. 4) and therefore that they could not otherwise signify any thing, to the taking it away, than as they were types and shadows of that great sacrifice, that once for all was to be offered up for that purpose. Once in, or towards the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26.

5. You can understand that as this could never have been, without the consent of the Father, and the Son; so by their consent it might be, that the innocent might suffer for the guilty: as one may be bound, body for body, for another.

6. And it is plain they did consent, God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have life everlasting, (Joh. iii. 16.) And our Lord Jesus Christ himself says: No man could take his life from him, that is, against his will, for he could have twelve legions of angels to defend it, but he did lay it down. (Joh. x. 18.) And gave his life a ransom for many, Mat. xx. 28.

7. So it came to pass that our Lord Jesus suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, (1. Pet. iii. 18.) And he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him.

8. And hereupon when God is reconciled to sinners, he doth not only forgive them, but he justifies them, there being an equal recompence made to him; but of his own providing, and therefore to us it is most free, though it was very costly to Christ. So both these expressions, of the same thing, are put together: We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins that God might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25. 26.

9. Thus God becomes reconciled to sinful men (not to every one, but to them that sincerely repent, and believe) in a just, regular, and orderly way, most becoming his excellent Majesty. For though he forgive sinners, that had affronted him, and rebelled against him; yet it is not without a sacrifice, and that of his own Son, a sacrifice of infinite value; most becoming his grace and mercy, for that sacrifice was of his own providing. Most becoming his justice, for though sin be forgiven, it is punished too; forgiven to us but punished on his own Son, who consented to bear our sins, in his own body on the tree, (1 Pet. ii. 24.) Most becoming the truth of his word, for as that said, without shedding of blood there could be no remission; the most precious blood was shed, that ever was, in order to our remission. Most becoming his infinite wisdom, that found out this way of answering all purposes; that both he might be glorified in the highest degree, and yet sinners be saved. Grace hath herein abounded in all wisdom and prudence, Eph. i. 6, 7, 8.

*Secondly.* We come now (having thus far seen, how Christ's dying on the cross works God's reconciliation to us) to shew also how it brings about our reconciliation to God. And here you may observe, we changed the method of speaking to this two-fold reconciliation, considered in itself, and as the effect of Christ's death. For though God is not actually reconciled to us before he hath disposed our hearts to a reconciliation unto him; yet the foundation of his being reconciled to us, is first laid in the death of his Son, or in the prospect and foresight of it; before there can be any disposition, on our parts, to such a reconciliation. And that being done, and it being thereby seen what this great sacrifice signifies to his being reconciled, whensoever that shall be; it comes, in the proper order, next to be considered which way it works, to bring about our reconciliation also. And it works, in order hereto, these two ways.

1. By preparing the ground of preaching the gospel of reconciliation, or of Christ crucified; which must first be, or have been resolved on before there could be any gospel to reveal it. In this gospel, Christ is set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood, (Rom. iii. 25.) And this is the proper and most apt means to work upon thy heart sinner, to persuade thee to be reconciled to God. Looking upon him whom thou hast pierced, is that thou mayst mourn over him, Zech. xii. 10. What should so melt and overcome thy heart, and make thee yield to the terms of reconciliation? But he must be represented, that he may be looked upon; and therefore is the preaching of Christ crucified, unto them that are called, the power of

God, and the wisdom of God, (1 Cor. 1. 23, 24.) the most powerful, and the wisest method; and which God, hath thought fittest to win souls, and reconcile them to himself. Therefore it is reckoned no less than a witchery, if they obey not the gospel, who have Christ set forth before their eyes, as crucified among them, (Gal. iii. 1.) which setting forth could not be otherwise, than in the gospel representation. For you know Christ was not actually crucified in Galatia, but at Jerusalem; therefore, saith our Lord himself: But I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me, (Joh. xii. 32.) This was said, (as it follows) signifying what death he should die, that is, by being crucified. And this, supposing a due representation of him in the gospel, was in point of means to draw all men. But it could only be sufficient, as a means; when yet it could not be a means sufficient, if there were not an Agent, able to use it to that purpose. Therefore,

2. Our Redeemer's dying upon the cross did work towards our reconciliation, by procuring the Spirit to be given, in order to the making this most apt means effectual to this end. And if this sacrifice of Christ, on the cross, was necessary to the obtaining forgiveness of sins; it was, at least, equally necessary to obtain the giving of the Spirit, without which all the rest were in vain. When Christ had died to reconcile both, (that is, Jew and Gentile) in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and thereupon preached peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh; yet it was still necessary that by one Spirit, both should have access to the Father; otherwise they would never come at him, they would still, with implacable hearts, have kept at a distance. Therefore looking upon a crucified Christ would never have had this effect, to make them mourn over him, whom they had pierced; if the Spirit of grace and supplication were not poured forth, Zech. xii. 10. They would with hard hearts have gazed long enough, on this doleful spectacle, far enough from mourning; if the Spirit of Christ were not poured forth, as well as his blood.

And do we think that holy and pure Spirit would ever have been poured forth, on so impure and unholy souls; if the precious blood of that invaluable sacrifice had not been poured forth to procure it? Those words of the apostle make this plain, (Gal. iii. 13, 14.) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree) that the blessing of Abraham might reach further, come upon the Gentiles; that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Or in their being made to

believe, the ever-blessed One was so far made a curse, that you might be capable of this blessing; and by it have your own enmity overcome, and your reconciliation brought about. Therefore doth our Lord direct us to pray for the Spirit, assuring us our heavenly Father will give that Holy Spirit to them that ask him, (Luke xi. 13.) as well knowing, his pouring forth his blood had deserved it should not any longer be an enclosed blessing; but which might be communicated to Jew and Gentile, and in his way and season be poured out on all flesh. Thus doth our Lord, in the body of his flesh through death work out this twofold reconciliation both of God to you, and of you to God.

III. And now the use follows, which must have reference both,—To the mutual reconciliation itself. You hath he now reconciled, and—To the way wherein our Lord Jesus brings it about (in the body of his flesh through death) The use we shall make of the former, will be twofold (according as this reconciliation itself is twofold, namely, God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God) namely, to persuade us, from sundry considerations,—

To believe God's reconcileableness to us, and—to be willing, hereupon, to be actually, and speedily reconciled to him. And the use which is only now intended to be made of the latter, is to draw from it divers additional considerations, by which to enforce, and give further strength to both those mentioned exhortations.

*First.* For the use of the former, the doctrine of the reconciliation itself. In as much as we have shewn that it contains reconciliation, on God's part towards us, and on our part, towards God, we must understand,

1. That God's reconciliation is asserted here, to the persons whom the apostle now mentions; and whom he had before described as converts, saints, faithful in Christ, (ch. i. 1.) that Christ had reconciled them, that is, restored them into a state of grace, favour and acceptance, though they had been alienated, and enemies in their minds. Therefore, if when they become saints, faithful, &c. God was reconciled to them; while they were yet in their state of enmity, he was reconcileable. The plain use to be made of this, is—that we be persuaded to believe God's reconcileableness to sinners, offending creatures, such as had been strangers to him, and enemies; whatsoever bar was in the way, is so far removed (as we shall shew from the second head) that he can be reconciled to such enemies, and will actually be so, whensoever they turn to him. This, sinner, is the sum of the gospel, which thou art to believe.



upon sundry considerations, which have their ground here ; as,

(1.) This gospel could never be intended for these only, to whom the apostle now writes. Can we think there was one gospel meant for Colossians, and another, or none at all for Englishmen? Yea when the apostle himself was converted and obtained mercy, it was for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe, (1 Tim. i. 16.) You have the same warrant to believe, that turning to God and believing on his Son, God will be reconciled to you as he was to them.

(2.) This is the gospel which God hath ever declared to the world, without excepting any person, wheresoever his written word hath come, (Isa. lv.) Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, even he that hath no money, come without money, and without price, ver. 1. Incline your ear, and come to me, hear, and your souls shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, ver. 3. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy ; to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. For my ways are not as your ways, ver. 7, 8. So the tenour of his word hath always run "turn to me, and I will turn to you" 2 Chron. xxx. 6. Jer. iii. 12. Zech. i. 3. Mal. iii. 7. And is it not to be believed ?

(3.) It is the gospel which he hath confirmed, by his own solemn oath (as I live, saith the Lord) having plainly pronounced it, (Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, 23, 31, 32.) He swears to it, ch. xxxiii. 11. and wilt thou not yet believe him ?

(4.) When, after the fulness of time, it was more expressly revealed, that there could be no turning to God, but through Christ; this was the Gospel which he himself preached, (Mark. 14. 15.) and which, when he was leaving the world, he required should be preached to all the world, (Mark xvi. 15, 16.)

(5.) It is given as the sum of all the counsel of God, (Acts xx. 21.)

(6.) It is the everlasting gospel, which is to continue through all ages, as the stated means of regenerating and renewing souls, (1. Pet. i. 23, 24, 25.)

(7.) It is this gospel which God blesses, and makes effectual to this purpose. When, herein, the love and kindness of God to men appear, then (not by works of righteousness which they have done) but of his mercy he saves them, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, (Tit. iii. 4, 5.) His mercy revealed, softens and changes their hearts; so that by the exceeding great, and precious promises, contained in this gospel, they are made partakers of a divine nature, (2 Pet. i. 4.)

(8.) But it is by believing it becomes effectual to any blessed purpose. It is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believes, (Rom. i. 16.) but to them that believe it not, it is without power, and effects nothing. It works effectually, on every one that believes, (1. Thes. ii. 13.) but hath no efficacy, when it is not believed. Much people, believing, were turned to the Lord, (Acts xi. 24.) but where there is no believing, there is no turning.

(9.) Where it is not believed, it hardens. We are therefore warned to take heed of the evil heart of unbelief, lest we be hardened, (Heb. iii. 12. 13.) and are told those hardened ones that fell in the wilderness, were such as believed not, and that could not enter into Canaan (the type of heaven) because of unbelief, (ver. 18, 19.) and that the gospel could not profit them because it was not mixed with faith, ch. iv. 2.

(10.) It is in the same context mentioned, as a most provoking wickedness, to disbelieve this gospel of his. That sin was therefore said to be the provocation, (Heb. iii. 15.) and referring to the same time, the great God says; How long will this people provoke? How long ere they believe me? (Numb. xiv. 11.) when their not believing his willingness to do better for them, than only to bestow upon them an earthly Canaan, was their most provoking wickedness.

(11.) The not believing of this gospel of his, is understood to be giving God the lie. (1 Joh. v. 10.) as believing it, is setting to our seal that he is true, (Joh. iii. 33.) But what inducement is it possible he can have to lie to his own creatures, who is himself all-sufficient; and who hath them absolutely in his power? Or what man would lie for lying sake, having no inducement? It is therefore impossible for God to lie, as being inconsistent with the universal perfections of his nature; and therefore to impute falsehood to him, is highest blasphemy. And after all this, sinner, dar'st thou disbelieve God's reconcileableness to thee, upon his own declared terms; when here the whole business sticks, of reconciliation between him, and thee? But there are yet other considerations to this purpose, to persuade thy *belief* of God's reconcileableness to thee, from the

*Second*, Head of discourse, the way of our Lord's bringing about this reconciliation, namely, in the body of his flesh through death. And here his reconcileableness must be understood to signify two things:—the possibility of God's being reconciled to sinners, and—his willingness to be reconciled. And the death of his Son upon the cross in order hereto, affords considerations to evince both.

1. The possibility of the thing, which this sacrifice proves to be possible, because it makes it so. When the apostle asserts, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, (Heb. ix. 22.) and that it was impossible the blood of bulls and of goats should take it away, (ch. x. 4.) and that therefore our Lord came to take it away, in that body prepared for him, (v. 5, 6.) he therein implies it to be impossible to be otherwise taken away, than by this blood shed upon the cross; nothing indeed being possible to God, which becomes him not. And it became him not otherwise to effect this design, and bring many sons to glory, but by the sufferings of this his Son. It was therefore not possible upon other terms, (Heb. ii. 10.) but in this way it was possible, upon the account of these several things concurring;

(1.) The rich and infinite value, and fulness of this sacrifice. The blood that was herein shed, and the life that was laid down, though of a man, yet were the blood and life of such a man as was also God, (Acts xx. 28. 1 Joh. iii. 16.) a man that was God's own fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. As it was God that was offended, so it was God that did satisfy for the offence.

(2.) He was nearly allied to us, as a Redeemer ought to be. Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part with us of the same, (Heb. ii. 14. 15.) therefore as man did offend, man suffered for it.

(3.) He freely consented hereto, both to become man, and to suffer for man, Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. Joh. x. 18.

(4.) He had no sin of his own to suffer for, as 2 Cor. v. 21. and many other scriptures speak.

(5.) He was, by a special, divine law, commissioned hereunto. Therefore his laying down his life, was in itself no illegal act. He had power to lay down his life, having received a commandment for it from the Father, Joh. x. 18. He came, having God's law, to this purpose, in his heart, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8.

(6.) He was fully accepted herein above, his sacrifice having a sweet smelling odour with it, unto God; because satisfying his justice, it made way for the free exercise of his grace and love. Eph. v. 2. Therefore, sinner, canst thou disbelieve, or doubt the very possibility of God's being reconciled to thee, upon his own declared terms; when so extraordinary a course was taken that he might be reconciled?

2. And thou hast as great reason to believe his willingness to be reconciled, considering that this was consented to on purpose. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, (Joh. iii. 16.) Now consider, was his own Son given for what he was

not willing of? His only begotten Son! His very Image! (Heb. i. 2.) The Son of his delights, always dear to him! (Prov. viii. 30.) and who was specially dear to him, for this very reason! Joh. x. 17. Yea, and that it was the very cry of his blood from the cross: O forgive, forgive this repenting, believing sinner, be reconciled to him, O Father, for the sake of thy dying Son! and yet was he unwilling? What could induce him who is love itself, to give up such a Son, to so bitter, bloody, and ignominious sufferings, but his willingness to be reconciled to sinners? It were a blasphemy, against the ever-blessed nature and being of God, to imagine he would have his most beloved Son suffer for suffering's sake! And for what other end could it be? And there is as little reason to doubt the issue, but that, being an enemy thou wast reconciled by the death of his Son; being reconciled, thou shalt be saved by his life, Rom. v. 10. It therefore remains to press the

2. Exhortation, which you may take in the apostle's words, (2 Cor. v. 20.) We, the ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, do pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Now that is put out of doubt, that God justly and honourably can be reconciled to you (without which it had been impossible) and that he is most unquestionably willing; are you yet unwilling to be reconciled to him? Consider both this reconciliation itself, brought about with some, You hath he reconciled. And the way of it, in the body of his flesh, through death.

(1.) Some have been reconciled, that have been alienated and enemies in their minds, by wicked works, Whereupon bethink yourselves.

[1.] Have you any greater reason to be implacable towards the blessed God, than those Colossians? why should you be more wicked enemies?

[2.] Can you better maintain your cause against God? are you more able to stand against all the power of his wrath, which you so little know? Ps. xc. 11.

[3.] Can you better bear the loss and want of the comforts of his love, while you live? To have the great God for your friend? To whom you have free recourse, and may pour out your souls daily? Upon whom you may cast all your cares? With whom you may walk in friendly love, and may converse with him every day?

[4.] Can you less need his supports in a dying hour? Will it be easy to you to die unreconciled? And afterwards to appear convicted, unreconcilable enemies before the tribunal of your Judge? And then to have no advocate, no intercessor to plead for you? When he himself must be your condemning Judge,

and shall only say, O that thou hadst known, in the day of thy visitation, the things that did belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thy eyes, Luke xix. 42, 44.

(2.) But we are further to persuade to this reconciliation to God, from the way wherein our Lord effects it: in the body of his flesh, through death, or by dying a sacrifice upon the cross. And now you know this, will ye not yet be reconciled to him? Consider,

[1.] You will herein frustrate and make insignificant to yourself, the highest demonstration that could be given of God's good-will towards you. God so loved the world, &c. (John. iii. 16.) and what could our Lord himself have done more to testify his own love? For greater love hath no man, than to lay down his life for his friends, (Joh. xv, 13.) Yea, for those that were not so before, but wicked enemies; only that thereby they might be made friends, Rom. v. 8. And what could it signify to you, to represent the divine love to you by so costly a demonstration, if it do not gain your love?

[2.] And what could be so apt a means, sinner, to break thy heart, and conquer all thy former enmity, as to behold thy Redeemer dying upon the cross for thee? They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and mourn, Zech. xii. 10. And I, if I be lift up, will draw all men to me; which our Lord said, signifying what death he should die, by being lift on the cross, Jon. xii. 32, 33. Now what dost thou think of thyself, if such a sight will not move thee! An earthly, carnal, worldly mind, is declared over and over to be enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7. Jam. iv. 4. But how remarkable is it, that such a temper of mind should be so peculiarly signified to import enmity to the cross of Christ? Phil iii. 18, 19. I tell you of such, weeping, saith the apostle, that do even continue their enmity even in the face of the cross! And who even by that itself are not overcome!

[3.] If thou wilt not be reconciled, Christ did, as to thee, die in vain, thou canst be nothing the better. Think what it must come to, that so precious blood, (infinitely exceeding the value of all corruptible things; silver and gold, &c. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) should be shed, to redeem and save such as thou, and yet do thee no good?

[4.] If thou continue to the last, unreconciled, it not only doth thee no good, but it must cry, and plead most terribly against thee. Blood guiltiness is a fearful thing! What must it be, to be guilty of such blood! if thou wert guilty of the blood of thy father, thy child, or of the wife of thy bosom, how would it astonish thee! But to be guilty of the blood of the Son of God! How canst thou live under it? If thou wert guilty of all the inno-

cent blood that ever was shed, since the creation of the world, it were not comparable to the guilt of this blood!

5. But if thou come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel, as a reconciled believing penitent; thou wilt also come and be adjoined to the general assembly, to the church of the first born written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. O the joy in heaven that will be concerning thee! And O the fulness of thy own joy, into which thou shalt enter at last: for consider,

[6.] And in the last place, what follows in the latter part of this verse, that is, that thou wilt be presented, by thy Redeemer, holy and unblameable, and unproveable in the sight of God, as if thou hadst never offended, and never been an enemy. All thy former transgressions, that have overwhelmed thee with just sorrow, shall all be overwhelmed in that kind, paternal joy, as for the returning prodigal; This my Son was lost, and is found. And thy having been so long alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works, will all be forgotten and swallowed up in the embraces of infinite, everlasting love!