

I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' Shall we be less charitable than a man in hell is represented to be? If we have a friend or a child falling into the fire, we save him by violence, though we break an arm or a leg. Your children by nature are children of wrath; pluck them as brands out of the burning.

SERMON XIX.

But we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again to you, but give you an occasion to glory on our behalf, that you may have somewhat to answer them who glory in appearance, and not in heart.—2 COR. v. 11, 12.

THE apostle having proved his sincerity and fidelity in his ministry, now asserts it with confidence;—(1.) By an appeal;—(2.) An apology.

1. An appeal to God, as the supreme judge; and to the Corinthians, as inferior witnesses. And he appealeth to the most impartial and discerning faculty in them, their consciences, who are most apt to give infallible judgment, and to take God's part, and own what is of God.

2. By an apology, or answer to an objection, which might be framed against him, by his adversaries, ver. 12; where, first, the objections were intimated—*We commend not ourselves again to you.* Secondly, His vindication, from the end, the reason why he spake so much of his fidelity and integrity—*But give you occasion to glory in our behalf, that you may have somewhat to answer them.* Thirdly, A description of the false apostles at Corinth, or those vain-glorious teachers who went about to lessen the apostle's authority: *They glory in appearance, and not in heart.* Let me explain these passages.

[1.] The intimation of the objection; 'For we commend not ourselves again to you.' The adversaries were wont to say upon all occasions, he runneth out into his own praises; which doth not become a modest and a sober man, for boasting is the froth of pride; and how can Paul be excused from pride? This was the objection against Paul, that he did commend himself too much.

[2.] Paul's answer and vindication was from his end. It was not to set forth his own praise, but to arm them with an argument and an answer against the false teachers, whereby they might defend his ministry, and the doctrine they had heard from him; it was not pride and ostentation in Paul, but a necessary defence of the credit of his ministry, their faith and obedience to the gospel depending thereupon.

[3.] The false apostles are described by their hypocrisy and ambition: 'They glory in appearance, and not in heart.' For the opening of this clause, observe, First, That there were false apostles at Corinth, who sought to depreciate Paul, and to lessen the authority of his

doctrine: 2 Cor. xi. 13-15, 'For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing, if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.' Secondly, These false apostles were great boasters, and apt to glory; whenever they are spoken of, we hear of this glorying; 'that wherein they glory, we may be even as they.' Thirdly, Their glorying (as that of all hypocrites) was in some external thing. Called a glorying *ἐν σαρκί*, 2 Cor. xi. 18, 'Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also;' and here *ἐν προσώπῳ, οὐκ ἐν καρδίᾳ*. But what fleshly and external thing they gloried in, is not expressly mentioned. Some leave it in the general, that they boasted before men, otherwise than their conscience, and the truth of the thing did permit: *Omne id quod inter homines humana sapientes, maximi fieri solet*, Grot. Others instance in particular, birth, wealth, abilities of speech, frothy eloquence, 1 Cor. ii; in a coloured show of man's wisdom and eloquence, and not in true godliness. Some think in the multitude of their followers, or in the applause of their hearers; some a show of zeal, holiness and fidelity, when they were destitute of the truth of godliness, and that sincerity which is truly a comfort; some in their taking no maintenance, to gain credit and advantage; that appeareth by 2 Cor. xi. 9. Of all the churches planted by the apostles, Corinth was the richest, and Macedonia the poorest, yet Paul's preaching at Corinth was maintained from Macedonia, 2 Cor. xi. 9. Wherefore? as he himself puts the question, 'That I may cut off occasion from them that desire occasion, that wherein they glory, we may be found even as they,' 2 Cor. xi. 12. But what if it be such things as had a nearer connection with and respect to religion; as their acquaintance with Christ, that they had known him in the flesh, and owned him, while yet alive, which is supposed to be intended in that expression? 1 Cor. i. 12, 'I am of Christ;' others received the doctrine of life from Peter, Paul, Apollos, they immediately from Christ himself. This boasting these Corinthian doctors used, to keep up their own fame among the people, and to weaken the credit and esteem of Paul's apostleship; for this objection lay against him, that he had not, as other disciples, conversed with our Lord Jesus Christ, while he was upon earth. Now Paul, that he might give the Corinthians occasion to glory in his behalf, and furnish them with an answer to those that gloried, *ἐν προσώπῳ καὶ οὐ καρδίᾳ*, in external privileges, when their consciences could give little testimony of their sincerity,—Paul had more valuable things to boast of, namely, that he was much in spirit, much in labours, much in afflictions, for the honour of the gospel. To all which he was carried out by the hopes of eternal life, the terror of the Lord at the day of judgment, and the love of Christ; these were more valuable considerations, whereupon to esteem any one, than bare external privileges could possibly be; nay, in their outward privileges, he could vie with them, for though he was none of Christ's followers, whilst he was here upon earth, yet herein he was equal to them, if not exceeded them, by having seen Christ, and being spoken to by him out of heaven; therefore he saith, 1 Cor. ix. 1, 'Am not I

an apostle? Have not I seen Jesus Christ the Lord?' But Paul did not seek his esteem merely for his vision of Christ, and that ecstasy which befell him at his first conversion, but for his faithful discharge of his work, on the grounds fore-mentioned, for he would not glory, *ἐν προσώπῳ* as others did, but *ἐν καρδίᾳ*. Mortified christians, that have given up themselves to the Lord's use, should more mind that, and esteem themselves and others for true and real worth, more than the advantage of external privileges. I am confirmed in this exposition by what is said, ver. 6, 'Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him no more;' that is, we should not esteem and judge of persons by their conversing with him in the flesh, but by their loyalty and obedience to him. If they be zealous for his kingdom, and can upon the hopes which he hath offered, run all hazards and encounters of temptations, and upon the confidence of his coming to judgment be faithful to him, and out of love to his person, and gratitude for the work of redemption, deny themselves, and live to his glory, they have cause to glory in heart; whereas others, who boast only of personal acquaintance with him, but are not sound in doctrine and the practice of religion, do only glory in a mere appearance, or outward show before men, but can have no true, solid confidence in their hearts. Well then, here lay the case between Paul and his opposites; they gloried in some external thing, which could give no solid peace to the conscience; but Paul could glory in his perseverance, diligence, patience, and self-denial for the gospel; the sense of which made his heart rejoice. And by the way, the same glorying may be taken up by all the faithful, painful preachers of the gospel, against their opposites, who are the popish clergy; who glory in their pomp and their great revenues, and that they are the successors of the apostles, and can pretend an external title to this inheritance, and sit in their chair, as Pope Alexander VI., *Hæc est bona persuasio, quia per hanc nos regnamus*. Now you are to judge, who are they that glory in heart or in appearance. They that glory in their riches, or outward possession? or they that glory in their labours, sufferings, and converting of souls to God?

Doct. That then a man hath the full comfort of his sincerity, when he hath the approbation of God, and of his own conscience, and hath also a testimony in the consciences of others.

First, All these had Paul.

1. The approbation of God. For he saith, 'We are made manifest unto God.' God knew both his actions and his aims, for the Lord considereth both, Prov. xvi. 2. Now the Lord knew his labour, his patience, his travelling up and down to promote the kingdom of his Son, as also that he did this out of hope, fear and love. Paul's main care was to approve himself to God, and to be accepted with God.

2. He had the testimony of a good conscience. He telleth them so now, and told them so before: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we had our conversation in the world, but more abundantly to you-ward.' Not by violent or fraudulent means did he seek to promote the gospel, not his self-

opinions, not self-ends; they had more experience than others, for whereas he was maintained by the poorer towns, yet with them he laboured with his hands, and still preached the gospel. As usually, it falleth out often that handicraft people are more liberal for the support of the ministry, than the gentry or nobles upon the account of the gospel; nay, though he could speak of seeing Christ, by extraordinary dispensation, yet he would glory rather in the real and general evidences of grace than in any external privilege and advantage whatsoever. If Paul had never seen Christ, yet he had wherein to glory.

3. And he had a testimony in their consciences, as well as his own: 'I trust also we are made manifest in your consciences.' He was confident that he had a witness in their bosoms of his sincere and upright dealing. The greatest approbation that we can have from men, is to have an approbation in their consciences, for conscience is the faculty which is most apt to take God's part. We may easily gain their respect and applause by complying with their humours, but that is not lasting; that will not do God's work and the gospel's. Our greatest advantage, if we be faithful servants to God, will be to have a witness in their consciences. Thus did Paul; he wanted not opposers at Corinth; some questioned his apostleship, some slighted his abilities, some saw no such evidence and excellency in his doctrine; what should the poor man do? He courted not their affections by arts of insinuation, but approved himself to their consciences.

But how did Paul commend himself to the Corinthians? By three means.

[1.] By the evidence of his doctrine, which he managed with such power and authority, that it was manifestly seen by all who had not a mind to lose their souls, and were not prejudiced by their worldly interest, that it was not calculated for the lusts and interests of men, but their salvation: 1. Cor. iv. 2, 'By the manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' Paul preached such necessary truths, as, if men were not strangely perverted, they might see he aimed at their spiritual and eternal benefit.

[2.] By the success of his doctrine: 2 Cor. iii. 1-3, 'Do we begin again to commend ourselves, or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart.' The conversions which he had wrought among them, gave a sufficient testimony to their consciences, that he was not a vagrant self-seeker; he had been the instrument of transcribing the doctrine of Christ upon their hearts. Paul prevailed with many at Corinth, and had converted many. God himself assured him of this success: Acts. xviii. 9, 10, 'Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I have much people in this city.' It was an opulent, but a wanton town, but God would be with him, and had much people; therefore Paul ventured, and prevailed.

[3.] By the purity, holiness and self-denial which were seen in his

conversation: 2 Cor. vi. 4-6, 'But in all things approving ourselves as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings: By pureness, by knowledge, by long-sufferings, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left,' &c. These were the evidences which he had in their consciences—the faithful discharge of his office in all sort of pressures, wants, and exigencies; as also by the constant study of the mind of God, and purity of life, and abundance of Spirit, and sincere charity and love to souls. By these things should a people choose a minister; and by these things did Paul approve himself to their consciences.

Secondly, All these may others have—bating for the publicness of his office and the extraordinary assistance of the Holy Ghost. All ministers and all christians may have an approbation of God, and the testimony of their own consciences, and a witness in the consciences of others.

1. They may have the approbation of God; who certainly will not be wanting to the comfort of his faithful servants. Partly, because he hath promised not only to reward their sincerity at last, but to give them the comfort of it for the present: John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father: and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.' Let a man but love Christ, and be faithful to him, and he is capable of this promise: God will love him, and Christ will love him, and in testimony thereof, he will manifest himself to him. Christ knoweth the burden of believers, and what it costs them in the world to be faithful to him, and what sad hours many times they have, who make conscience of obedience. Now, to encourage them, the more seriously they engage in it, the more evidences and confirmations they shall have of his love to them, yea, sensible manifestations, and comfortable proofs thereof, shall still be given out to them, in their course of a constant, uniform, diligent, and self-denying obedience. Hidden love is as no love: Prov. xxvii. 5, 'Open rebuke is better than secret love.' As in our love to God, if it be not manifested, it is but a compliment and vain pretence; so in God's love to us, though he hath not absolutely engaged for our comfort, yet he hath his times of allowing special manifestations of himself to his people, and lifting up the light of his countenance upon them. Surely God will not be altogether strange, reserved, and hidden to a loving, faithful, and obedient soul. They need more testimonies of his favour than others do, and they shall not be without them. Partly, because the Spirit of God is given us for this end, not only as a spirit of sanctification, but of revelation, to witness God's acceptance of our persons and services, and the great things which he hath promised for us: 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12, 'What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God.' None but the Holy Ghost can know God's secrets, and reveal thereof to believers as much as

is needful for their salvation. For as man's own understanding can only know man's secrets, so none can know God's secret thoughts, but God's own Spirit. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, which only carrieth a proportion with worldly things, but the Spirit of God, which is given us to know the mind of God concerning us in Christ. He doth not only reveal the mysteries of salvation in general, but our own interest therein: Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' The infinite mercies of God being bestowed on us, God would not have them concealed from us; thus we may have the approbation of God.

2. We may have the testimony of conscience concerning our sincerity. For conscience is that secret spy which is privy to all our designs and actions, and taketh notice of all that we are and do; therefore a man should or may know the acts of grace which he puts forth. It is hard to think that the soul should be a stranger to its own operations; the spirit in man knoweth the things of a man, much more acts of grace; partly, because they are the most serious and important actions of our live. Many acts may escape us for want of advertency, they not being of such moment; but things that concern our eternal interests, and done with the most advisedness and seriousness, surely the man that is thus conversant about them, he will mind what he doth, and how he doth it: 1 John ii. 3, 'Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments:' 1 Cor. ix. 26, 'I therefore so run, not as uncertainly.' And partly, because acts of grace are put forth with difficulty, and with some strife and wrestling; a man cannot believe, but he feeleth oppositions of unbelief: Mark ix. 24, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.' A man cannot love God, and attend upon holy things, but he feeleth drowsiness and deadness in his heart, which must be overcome, though with difficulty: Cant. v. 2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.' A man cannot obey God, or do any serious good action, but the flesh will be opposing: Gal. v. 17, 'For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other;' and Rom. vii. 21, 'I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.' Now things difficult, and carried on with opposition, must needs leave a notice and impression of themselves upon the conscience. And partly, because there is a special delight which accompanieth acts of grace, by reason of the excellency of the object they are conversant about, and by reason of the greatness and excellency of the power they are assisted withal, and the excellency and nobleness of the faculties they are acted by. Faith can hardly be exercised about the pardon of sin, or the hopes of glory, but a man findeth some peace and joy in believing, Rom. xv. 13. Acts of love and hope are pleasant; a prospect of eternity is delightful. Now any notable pleasure and delight of mind notifieth itself to the soul; and therefore, upon the whole, we may have glorying if we love and fear God, and hope for eternal life from him, and thereupon study to approve ourselves to to him; conscience, which is privy to these things, will witness them to us.

3. We may leave a testimony in the consciences of others, if we keep up the majesty of our conversations; for such is the excellency and honour

of religion and godliness, that when it shineth in its strength it dazzleth the eyes of beholders, even of wicked men, and maketh them wonder at it, and stand in awe of it. And where it is evident and eminent it will do so indeed; where christians are christians in a riddle, and show forth more of the flesh than of the spirit, there is no such thing; but where religion is in life and vigour it will discover itself: as John's sanctity extorted reverence and regard from Herod, Mark vi. 20, 'Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and strict man.' Holiness is the image of God, and so far commendeth its reverence and esteem; as the image of God in Adam was a terror to the beasts, and when nothing but the natural image was left, Gen. ix. 2, 'The fear and dread of you shall be upon every beast of the field;' so much more the spiritual image of God. Ahab stood in fear of Elijah. Certainly a godly life is convincing, and darts awe into the conscience. It is convincing either potentially or actually. Potentially, such as is apt to convince, and of its own nature tendeth thereunto, as Christ saith, John vii. 7, 'The world hateth me because I testify of it, that their works were evil.' Not only by reproofs, but conversation; the world would not acknowledge it, but they felt it; so those that bear witness against the evil courses of the world, either by the holiness of their doctrine or innocency of life, do convince others; they have a testimony in their consciences, though they will not acknowledge it. Or actually, which doth so convince, that it draweth out an acknowledgment. The former may be without the latter, as the sun is apt to enlighten, but it cannot make a blind man, or one that winketh hard, see. But, however, christians should live convincing lives, as pure streams run, though none drink of them. They may convert others, for conversion is facilitated by good conversation; yet religion is honoured by the testimony in their consciences, though they will not acknowledge it, at least it will be a testimony at the day of judgment against impenitent sinners.

Thirdly, All these we should look after—the approbation of God, the testimony of conscience, and a testimony in the consciences of others. In a moral consideration there are three beings—God, neighbour, self; and therefore we should approve ourselves to God, and look after this threefold approbation.

1. The approbation of God must be chiefly sought after first. We cannot be sincere without it. For sincerity is a straight and right purpose to please God in all things; and this should be our aim, to approve ourselves to God in all that we do, and therefore should do all things as in his eye and presence: Gen. xvii. 1, 'Walk before me, and be thou upright;' and Luke i. 75, 'In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.' This is it which maketh men conscientious in all their actions, when they remember that they are now acting a part before the great God, who looketh on, either to reward or punish; it checketh sin, though never so secret, and though it might be carried on with security enough from men; yea when we may sin not only securely, but with advantage and profit: Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' So, Job xxxi. 4, 'Doth he not see my ways, and count all my steps?' therefore he durst not give way to any sin. So, Ps. xlv. 21,

‘Shall not God search this out, for he knoweth the secrets of the heart?’ Secondly, it maketh us faithful in all our duties and services, when we strive to approve ourselves to God, and do all as in his presence, to the praise and glory of his name, and can appeal for our fidelity to no other judge but the great searcher of hearts, from whom we cannot be concealed. The apostle instanceth in two callings; one of the highest, and one of the meanest. One of the highest and of most importance to the other world, that of a minister: 2 Cor. iv. 2, ‘Commending ourselves to every man’s conscience, as in the sight of God;’ and 1 Thes. ii. 4, ‘So we preach the gospel, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.’ A minister will never be faithful unless he first study to approve himself to God, and behaveth himself as in God’s eye and presence, and one that is to give an account to God. So in the lowest, a christian servant, Eph. vi. 6, 7, ‘Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good-will doing service, as to the Lord, not to men.’ So, Col. iii. 22, ‘Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God.’ So, Titus ii. 10, ‘Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.’ A christian servant useth all diligence in his master’s business, whether he be absent or present, and fidelity in all things committed to his trust, though he might be false with secrecy enough; because he fears God, and would approve himself to him. Well, then, we must study to approve ourselves to God, and be alike in all places and companies, for all things are manifest to him.

2. The testimony of conscience must be regarded. First, because it is matter of true joy and comfort to a christian: 2 Cor. i. 12, ‘This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience.’ I prove it from the office of conscience; it is both judge, witness, and executioner. Conscience is the judgment that every man maketh upon his actions, morally considered. As a man acteth or doth anything, so he is a party; as he loveth to view or censure it, so he is a judge; the morality considered as to their good or evil, rectitude or obliquity, in them, with respect to praise or dispraise, reward or punishment. Now joy is one part of executing the sentence of conscience, as fear is the other. Conscience is usually more felt after the act is over, than before or in it. For during the action the judgment of reason is not so clear and strong, the affections raising mists and clouds to darken the mind. In the act we feel the difficulties, or the pleasure of sin; but after the act, the violence of the affection ceaseth, and then reason taketh the throne, and doth affect the mind with joy or grief, according as a man hath done good or evil—with grief and terror, if the sensual appetite have been obeyed before itself; with delight, if he hath denied himself, and been faithful with God. Rewards and punishments are not altogether kept for the life to come. Hell is begun in an ill conscience, and a good conscience is heaven upon earth. Secondly, this joy that cometh from the testimony of conscience is very strong; it will fortify us against false imputations, when christians can say, We are not the men you make us to be by your false reports. Job saith, ‘You shall not take away mine integrity, nor will I let my

innocency go till I die,' Job xxvii. 5. Paul would not pass for man's sentence, 1 Cor. iv. 3. Yea, it will fortify us against accusations internal, arising from defects and failings: 'I sleep, but my heart waketh,' Cant. v. 2. A gospel conscience will acquit us, yea, it comforts in sickness: Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'Remember, Lord, I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.' A sick man when his appetite is gone, then he can eat nothing; a good conscience is a continual feast.

3. The latter testimony in the consciences of others is to be regarded. Here let me show you, (1.) That it is to be regarded; (2.) How far.

[1.] That it is to be regarded.

(1.) Partly, because the safety and credit of our service dependeth upon it. When we have a testimony in the consciences of men, it is a restraint to violence: Mark vi. 19, 20, 'Herodias would have killed John, but she could not, for Herod feared John, because he was a just man.' So Paulinus was spared by Valens. Wicked men fear the good, but hate them. When their hatred is greater than their fear, then no mercy; now it is grievous, when their fear is lessened by our scandals.

(2.) This is not affectation of praise, but doing things praise-worthy. Our care must be to do our duty, and trust God with our credit. Most men do otherwise; they would have honour from men, but neglect their duty to God: 'Yet honour me before the people,' 1 Sam. xv. 30. We are careless of service, and yet hunt for praise. Austin's rule is good: *Laus humana non appeti debet, sed sequi*—it is not a thing to be desired, but it must follow of its own accord; if it be the event of the action, let it not be the aim. So Aquinas: *Gloria bene contemnitur, nihil male agendo propter ipsam, et bene appetitur, nihil male agendo contra ipsam*—a good fame is well contemned by doing nothing evil for it; well desired by doing nothing evil against it.

(3.) Complying with the humours of men is dangerous, but leaving a witness in their consciences is safe; for conscience is God's deputy, the most serious faculty in us. Let us convince others, though we aim not at their applause: 1 Pet. iii. 16, 'Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed, that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.'

[2.] How far it may be regarded.

(1.) Surely so far as that we should not forfeit it by any sin, or imprudent action, or indiscretion of ours: 2 Cor. vi. 3, 'Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed;' so that the profession be not blamed, that the way of truth be not evil spoken of.

(2.) So far as to make a just apology, or vindication of our credit from aspersions. As Paul in the text, wherein he doth not intend his own apology, so much as the apology of the gospel. A holy life is the best apology: 1 Peter ii. 15, 'With well-doing we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' Muzzle or stop the mouths of gain-sayers; yet we may make apologies, that the truth suffer not.

(3.) The utmost end must be the glory of God and the honour of the gospel: Mat. v. 16, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven;' 1 Peter ii. 12, 'That they may by your good works which they shall

behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.' They do not glorify you, but God, that entertain a good opinion of the christian religion.

(4.) That though this threefold approbation must be looked after, yet every branch of it in its proper place. The order is, that we should first look to God, and then our own consciences, and afterwards a testimony in the consciences of others; for thus downward, the one succeeding the other, then a man hath the full comfort of his sincerity, but if upward, and singly, or apart, it will not hold; as if a man had the approbation of others, but not of his own conscience; or if of his own conscience, but not of God; if of others, a man cannot rejoice in the testimony of another man's conscience, because another man saith I am a good man; for another man knoweth not the springs and motives of my actions. Or if I had the bare testimony of mine own conscience, that would not be sufficient for my comfort: 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified;' there is a higher judge, for I am blind, partial, and unadvised; till the Spirit concurrerth with the witness of conscience, I cannot have a firm and solid peace: Rom. ix. 1, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost;' and Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' There are two witnesses, God's Spirit and our conscience. But now *descendendo*, it holdeth good, and many times one inferreth all the rest. If I have the approbation of God, his Spirit beareth witness with my conscience, and he hath also the hearts and tongues of men in his own hand, or if that be not, the approbation of God is absolutely necessary for my salvation; the testimony of conscience is very comfortable, and the third conduceth much to our safety, and service in the world. My salvation dependeth upon the approbation of God; my inward comfort upon the witness of his Spirit in my conscience; my outward peace and service upon a testimony in the consciences of others. I observe this to a double end.

(1st.) To direct us in point of duty. A good man should look more to God than to conscience; and to conscience more than to fame and report; to a good name in the last place. First he looketh to God, who is above conscience, and who is an infallible judge; and then he looketh to conscience, which is God's deputy; and then to good report among men. Invert this order, and great inconvenience will follow. Look to men above God, and it maketh a breach upon sincerity, John v. 44, and John xii. 42. Therefore it is not man, or glory and praise from him, but God alone, that the sincere heart is fixed upon; as those that run in a race (as the Scripture often compareth our christian course) did not regard the acclamations of the spectators, but the opinion of the *quæstor palestræ*, or the judge of the sports, who was to determine on whose side the victory was. So again, if the last be set before the second, it will be almost as bad. A christian cannot be safe, if he doth not value and prize the witness of a good conscience before the opinion of men, for then by humouring men a man displeaseth conscience, which is his best friend of all things, and above all persons; next to God, a man should reverence his own conscience most. So again, if the second be set in the first place, if the judgment

of conscience be preferred before that of God, what will be the issue but the hardening of the wicked, whose blind conscience is set in the place of God? Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes: but the Lord weigheth the spirit.'

(2dly.) To fortify our patience. A man must be approved of God, though his own heart speaketh bitter things to him; the sentence of God is to be sought in his word. If he mindeth his duty, seeketh after grace more than peace, is resolved to approve himself to God, though he cannot yet assure his heart before him, let the general comforts of christianity encourage him to wait. Duty thoroughly followed will bring peace in time. We must absolutely endeavour to seek the first. Again, if we have first and second, we must be thankful, though we want the third; and well satisfied, if approved of God, though disesteemed of the world. We must submit to God's providence, and bear our burden of reproach, if we cannot overcome prejudices, however we must do nothing to feed it, nothing to procure it.

Use of all.

1. Let us study to approve ourselves to God, before whom we, and all that we do, are manifest; sincerity beginneth there, seeketh the approbation of God: 'He is commended whom God commendeth,' 1 Cor. x. 18. Our final sentence must come out of his mouth. Next let us look to this, that we glory not in appearance, but in heart, that we may have the solid rejoicing of conscience: Job xxvii. 6, 'My heart shall not reproach me till I die.' Faith, love and hope will only give us that; not external privileges. Oh, then, let us keep up the majesty of our profession, that so we may have a testimony in the consciences of men: it will be our safety. In the primitive times they invested christians with bears' skins, and then baited them as bears. So Satan is first a liar, and then a murderer, 1 John ii. 4.

Use 2. Here is something to defend the poor ministers of Christ Jesus. I trust you desire to glorify God, and save souls, and that out of hope, fear and love. Some glory in outward advantages only, their church privileges; but I trust we can glory in heart. They burden us with imputations. No enemies, next the devil, are like minister to minister: *Ab implacabilibus odiis theologorum libera nos, Domine!* We all own the same bible, believe the same creed, are baptized into the same profession; if any be more serious in it than others, should they therefore be discountenanced? If it be their desire to save souls, and guide them to their eternal rest, it is ours also. So far as they glory in heart, we do even as they.

SERMON XX.

For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause—2 Cor. v. 13.

PAUL, glorying in his fidelity, was charged by the false apostles with two things: (1.) That he was proud; (2.) Mad. The first objection