

## SERMON XXXVIII.

*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God.*  
—2 COR. v. 20.

IN these words you have the practical use and inference of the foregoing clause. Observe here—

1. An office put on those to whom the word of reconciliation is entrusted.

2. The value and authority of this office—*As if God did beseech you by us.*

3. The manner how this office is to be executed—*Pray you in Christ's stead.*

4. The matter or message about which they are sent—*Be ye reconciled to God.*

*Doct.* God hath authorised the ministers of the gospel in his own name and stead affectionately to invite sinners to a reconciliation with himself.

*First,* The office—‘We are ambassadors for Christ;’ that is the nature of our employment; and sent by God on purpose for this end, Eph. vi. 20, ‘For which I am an ambassador in bonds.’

1. Ambassadors are messengers; so are the ministry sent: John xvii. 18, ‘As thou hast sent me into the world, so also have I sent them into the world.’ ‘How can they preach except they be sent?’ Rom. x. 15.

2. There is not only a mission, but a commission; they are not only posts, and letter-carriers, but authorised messengers. Ambassadors do in a singular manner represent the person of the prince who sendeth them, and are clothed with authority from him; and so we have an authority for edification, and not for destruction, 2 Cor. x. 8. They are sent with great power to bind or loose out of the word, to pass sentence upon men’s eternal condition—of damnation on the impenitent, of life and salvation on them that repent and believe the gospel.

3. They are sent from princes to other princes. On the one side, it holdeth good; they come from the greatest prince that ever was, even from the prince of all the kings of the earth, Rev. i. 3. But to us poor worms they are sent, unworthy that God should look upon us, or think a thought of us; we were revolted from our obedience to him, but he treateth not, and dealeth not with us as traitors and rebels, but as persons of dignity and respect, that thereby we may be more induced to accept his offers. Ambassadors to obscure and private persons were never heard of, but such honour would be put upon us.

4. Ambassadors are not sent about trifles, but about matters of the highest concernment; so they are sent to treat about the greatest matters upon earth—the making up peace and friendship between God and sinners: Isa. lii. 7, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those that bring glad tidings of peace!’ We are to publish the glad tidings of reconciliation with God. God might have sent heralds to proclaim war, but he hath sent ambassadors of peace. He might have sent them as

he sent Noah to the old world, to warn them of their destruction, or Jonah to Nineveh, but they came with an olive-branch in their mouths, to tell the world of God reconciled. Well then, we must regard the weight of the message; God's love and hatred are not such inconsiderable things, as that we should not trouble ourselves about them; it is his wrath maketh us miserable, and his love happy. Oh, how welcome to us should a message of love and peace with God be!

5. As to their duty: an ambassador and messenger must be faithful, keeping close to their commission as to the matter of their message, and be sincere and true as to the end of it: 2 Cor. ii. 17, 'For we are not as many which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.' We are for another, not for ourselves; our employment is to be proxies and negotiators for Christ, and this with all diligence, courage, and boldness: Eph. vi. 20, 'For which I am an ambassador in bonds, that I may speak boldly as I ought to speak;' as becometh a zeal for Christ's honour and the good of souls, the excellency of the message, and the gravity of our office, owning the truth in the face of dangers.

6. As to their reception and entertainment. Negatively—

[1.] They must not be wronged. Ambassadors are inviolable by the law of nations; but such is the ingratitude of the world, who are enemies to their own mercies, that they slight his message, use his ambassadors disgracefully, as Abner did David's, contrary to the law and the practice of all nations; as Paul was an ambassador in bonds, *ἐν ἀλύσει*, in a chain by which he was tied to his keeper; but God will not endure this, Ps. cv. 15. He hath given charge, 'Do my prophets no harm;' his judgments in his providence come for wrong done to his ministers, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. They misused his prophets, and the wrath of the Lord arose against the people, till there was no remedy. But the negative is not enough, not to wrong them; you ought to respect them, and receive them in the name of the Lord: 1 Cor. iv. 1, 'Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;' and Gal. iv. 14, 'They received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.' Surely it is meant with respect to the truth he preached; they received it with as much reverence and obedience as if delivered by Christ himself in person; otherwise he would not have mentioned that respect without detestation. Acts xiv. 14, the apostles rent their clothes when they would have given them divine honour. Well then, attention, credit, and obedience, is due to their message.

*Secondly*, The value and authority of this office. They sustain the person of God, and supply the place of Christ upon earth—'As though God did beseech you by us, and in Christ's stead.' This is added to bespeak credit and respect to their message.

I. Credit. Salvation is a weighty thing, and we had need be upon sure grounds, and not only have man's word but God's for it. Man's word breedeth but human credulity, and that is a cold thing; it is faith actuateth, and enliveneth our notions and opinions in religion, and maketh them operative: 1 Thes. ii. 13, 'The word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.'

The apostles' word, as it concerned them, was evidenced to be of God. Partly, by the evidence of the doctrine itself, which had God's impress and stamp upon it; and to minds unprejudiced did commend itself to their consciences, 2 Cor. iv. 2-4; and partly, by the power and presence of God with them, Acts v. 31, 32, and 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5; *per modum efficientis causæ et per modum argumenti*, enlightening the mind, persuading the heart, outwardly by miracles, inwardly by the operation of the Holy Ghost. The objective testimony was made up of both, the internal sanctifying work and the external confirmation by miracles; for it is said, 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'They were the epistle of Christ prepared by their ministry, written not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God.' He writeth the law upon the heart, Heb. viii. 10, and Jer. xxxi. 33; as it was the ministration of the Spirit, and carried a sanctifying virtue along with it, that their faith might be grounded upon the authority of God, opening their heart to receive the word, Acts xvi. 14. Now the ordinary ministers, the truth of their doctrine is evidenced by its conformity to the direction of the prophets and apostles: Isa. viii. 20, 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them.' That is the standard and measure by which all doctrines must be tried to prevent the obstructions of error. Well then, though other doctrine be brought to us by men, yet our faith standeth not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God; it must be resolved into a divine testimony; though men bring it, yet God is the author; what the ambassador saith, the king saith, if he be true to his commission; and therefore this word of reconciliation must be received as the word of God. When you come to an ordinance, the awe of God must be upon your hearts: Acts x. 33, 'We are all here before thee, to hear all things commanded thee of God.'

2. Respect. They speak in God's name, and in God's stead, as if God were beseeching, and Christ calling upon you: Luke x. 16, 'He that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me;' it is Christ maketh the request for your hearts; the Father sent him, and he us. It is a wonder, that after so much evidence of the christian faith, and the world hath had such sufficient trial of its goodness, efficacy, and power, any should suspect the voice of God speaking in the scriptures; but it is a greater wonder, that believing the scriptures to be the voice of God, and the testimony of God, we should so slight it, and carry ourselves so neglectfully in a business of such importance; as if either we suspected what we profess to believe, or the hatred and love of God were such inconsiderable things, that we did not much consider the one nor the other. If an oracle from heaven should warn you of danger, bid you seek the peace of God, or you are undone for ever, would not you seriously address yourselves to this business? God doth by us beseech you, we in Christ's stead pray you to be reconciled. It is God's word that we hear and God's message that is sent to you. As Peter prescribeth ministers to speak as the oracles of God, 1 Peter iv. 11; so you must hear as the word of God ought to be heard, with reverence, and attention, and serious regard, as if God and Christ himself had spoken to you to press you to it. This word which you hear slightly, as it is

the testimony of God to you, so one day it will be the testimony of God against you; this word shall judge you, John xii. 48. It doth not fall to the ground, but will be produced as a witness against your negligence and carelessness.

*Thirdly*, The manner. Here is beseeching and praying in and by his ministry which God hath instituted; God cometh down from the throne of his sovereignty, and speaketh supplications. We must treat with men after the manner of Christ, when he was here upon earth, calling sinners to repentance with all the affectionate importunity imaginable.

1. With love and sweetness; the manner must suit with the matter. We have an authority to exhort, yet in regard of the rich grace we offer, we must beseech and entreat with all gentleness and importunity. Paul in a like case doth the like elsewhere: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.' Church power and civil power differ much. They go altogether by way of injunction and command, we must beseech; they compel, we must persuade. The power of Christ's ambassadors is a ministry not a domination; we are to deal with the will and the affections of men, which may be moved and inclined, but not constrained. Again, there is a difference between the law and the gospel; the law doth not beseech, but only command and threaten: 'You shall have no other gods before me: Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, &c.'; but we, as in Christ's stead, pray you to be reconciled. The law is peremptory, 'I am the Lord;' the gospel woeth before it winneth, and reasoneth with us. The gospel being a charter of God's love, we must use a dispensation suitable, invite men to God in a loving sweet way; and surely, if men despise God's still voice, their condemnation will be very just. When Nabal slighted David's kind message, he marched against him in fury, 1 Sam. xxv. 13, 14, to cut off all that belonged to him. If we despise the still voice, we must expect the whirlwind, 'I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded,' Prov. i. 24, 'I will laugh at their calamity.' How can we expect that God should hear our prayers, if we be deaf to his requests; and when we in his stead pray you to be reconciled, and still you refuse to hear?

2. Meekness and patience. Praying and beseeching doth not only note meekness in the proposal, but perseverance also, notwithstanding the many delays and repulses, yea rough entertainment, that we meet with at the hands of sinners: 2 Tim. ii. 25, 'In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.' One reason why God will make use of the ministry of men is because they know the heart of man, how much he is wedded to his folly, how angry he is to be put out of his fool's paradise, and to be disturbed in his carnal happiness: Titus iii. 2, 3, 'Showing meekness to all men, for we ourselves were sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures.' And therefore we must wait, exhort, warn, and still behave ourselves with much love and gentleness, that compassion to souls may bear the chief rule in our dealing with them.

*Fourthly*, The matter: 'Be reconciled to God.' We have heard

much of the way of God's reconciliation with us; now let us speak of our reconciliation with God, what is to be done on man's part.

1. Let us accept of the reconciliation offered by God. Our great business is to receive this grace so freely tendered to us: 2 Cor. vi. 1, 'We, as workers together with him, beseech you not to receive this grace in vain,' that is, by a firm assent, believing the truth of it; 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a true and faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,' and Eph. i. 13; 'For God hath sent forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,' Rom. iii. 25. And thankfully esteeming and prizing the benefit, for our acceptance is an election and choice: Phil. iii. 8, 9, 'I count all things to be dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;' Mat. xiii. 45, 46, 'And having found one goodly pearl of great price, he sold all and bought it,' depending upon the merit, worth, and value of it; 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know in whom I have believed.' And venturing our souls and our eternal interests in this bottom, sue out this grace with this confidence, Ps. xxvii. 3, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of God for ever.'

2. We must accept it in the way God hath appointed, by performing the duties required on our part. What are they? Repentance is the general word, as faith is our acceptance. In it there is included—

[1.] An humble confession of our former sinfulness and rebellion against God. I have been a grievous sinner, a rebel, and an enemy to God, and this to the grief and shame of his heart: Jer. iii. 13, 'I am merciful, and will not keep anger for ever; only acknowledge thine iniquity which thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and disobeyed my voice, saith the Lord;' and 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess and forsake our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive us our sins.' When they begged the favour of the king of Israel, they came with ropes about their necks, 1 Kings xx. 31. The creature must return to his duty to God, in a posture of humiliation and unfeigned sorrow for former offences.

[2.] We must lay aside our enmity, and resolve to abstain from all offences which may alienate God from us. If we have any reserve, we draw nigh to God with a treacherous heart, to live like rebels under a pretence of a friendship: Heb. x. 22, 'Let us draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water;' and Job xxxiv. 31, 32, 'Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I see not teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more.' Unless you put away the evil of your doings, the anger continueth; and it is inconsistent with a gracious estate to continue in any known sin without serious endeavours against it. 'What peace as long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel remaineth?'

[3.] We must enter into covenant with God, and devote ourselves to become his: 2 Chron. xxx. 8, 'Yield yourselves unto the Lord;' and Rom. vi. 13, 'But yield yourselves unto God.' There must be an entire resignation and giving up ourselves to be governed and ordered by him at his will and pleasure: Acts ix. 6, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Give up the keys of the heart, renouncing all

beloved sins. We then, depending upon the merit of his sacrifice, put ourselves under the conduct of his word and Spirit, and resolve to use all the appointed means in order to our full recovery and return to God.

3. Our being reconciled to God implieth our loving God, who loved us first, 1 John iv. 19. For the reconciliation is never perfect, till there be a hearty love to God; there is a grudge still remaining with us; faith begets love, Gal. v. 6. Repentance is the first expression of our love; the sorrowing, humbling part of it is mourning love; the covenanting part, either in renouncing, is love, abhorring that which is contrary to our friendship, into which we are entered with God; the devoting part is love, aiming at the glory of him who hath been so good. All our after-carriage is love, endeavouring to please. You will never have rest for your souls till you submit to this course, and be in this manner at peace with God: Mat. xi. 28, 29, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and you shall find rest for your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' God complaineth of his people by the prophet, that 'they forget their resting-place,' Jer. 1. 6. Men seek peace where it is not to be found, try this creature and that, but still meet with vanity and vexation of spirit; like feverish persons, who seek ease in the change of their beds.

### SERMON XXXIX.

*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God.*  
—2 COR. v. 20.

*Doct.* The great business of the ministers of the gospel is to persuade men to reconciliation with God.

*Use.* Let me enter upon this work now—(1.) To sinners. (2.) To those reconciled already, as these were to whom he wrote; he presseth them further to reconcile themselves to God.

*First,* To sinners.

Will you be reconciled to God, sinners? Here I shall show you—(1.) The necessity of reconciliation. (2.) God's condescension in this business. (3.) The value and worth of the privilege. (4.) The great dishonour we do to God in refusing it.

1. The first motive is the necessity of being reconciled, by reason of the enmity between God and us: Col. i. 21, 'And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.' We are enemies to God, and God is an enemy to us. I shall prove both: the one to convince, the other to excite and rouse us up. By sin man is an enemy to God, and hateth him. As to the punishment, God is an enemy to man, and will avenge himself upon him. What greater sin than to be enemies to God? What greater misery than that God should be an enemy to us? Surely where both

these are joined, it should awaken us, and we should get out of this condition as fast as we can.

[1.] We are enemies and rebels to God. In our natural estate, we are all so; we will not own this, and are ready to defy any that should say we are God's enemies or haters of God; we count him to be a most profligate and forlorn wretch, that should profess himself to be so. That little spark of conscience, that is left in corrupt nature, will not suffer men openly to own themselves to be so; they are ready to say as Hazael, 'Is thy servant a dog, that I should do this thing?' Yet the matter is clear; we are in our natural estate enemies to God.

(1.) It is possible that human nature may be so far forsaken, as that among men there should be found haters of God and enemies to him: Rom. i. 30, *θεοστυγείς*, 'Haters of God;' and Ps. cxxxix. 21, 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?' There are an opposite party to God in the world, some that hate him, as well as some that love him; some that walk contrary to him, that oppose his interest, oppress his servants: Ps. lxxxiii. 2, 'They that hate thee are risen up against us without a cause.' The thing is possible then; all the business is to find who they are.

(2.) There are open enemies to God, and secret enemies. The open enemies are such as bid defiance to him, blaspheming his name and breaking his laws, opposing his interests and oppressing his servants. The open enmity is declared; the secret is carried on under a pretence of friendship, by their living in the church, and having a form of godliness, and a blind zeal, John xvi. 2. Not only Turks, and infidels, and apostates, but also profane wretches, though they live within the verge of the church, yet if they go on still in their trespasses, Ps. lxxviii. 21, 'But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of all those that go on in their trespasses;' if they oppose whatsoever of God is set a-foot in their days, they are *θεομάχοι*, Acts v. 39, 'Fighters against God;' and Acts xxiii. 9, 'Let us not fight against God.' Or if they oppose his servants, if they be not lovers of those which are good, 2 Tim. iii. 3, *ἀφιλόγαθοι*, 'despisers of those which are good.' God and his people have one common interest. Those that malign his servants hate him; for they hate his image, Prov. xxix. 27, 'The upright in his way is an abomination to the wicked.' There is a secret rising of heart against those that are stricter, and have more of the image of God, than they; there is an old enmity between the seeds, as between the raven and the dove, the wolf and the lamb; now this is enmity against God.

(3.) There are enemies to God directly and formally; and implicitly and by interpretation. Directly and formally, where there is a positive enmity against God, whether secret or open. The expressions of the open enmity against God have been already mentioned, a hatred of his ways and a rage against his servants; the secret positive enmity is seen in the effect of slavish fear, which only apprehended God as an avenger of sin; and so men hate those whom they fear. We have wronged God exceedingly, and know that he will call us to an account; and being sensible of a revenge, we hate him. All that are afraid of God, with such a fear as hath torment in it, *aut extinctum Deum cupiunt, aut exarmatum*; it is a pleasing thought to them if no God,

Ps. xiv. 1, 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' As the devils tremble at their own thoughts of God, it would be welcome news to them, if there were none; these are enemies directly and formally. But now by interpretation, that will make us more work; certainly there is such a thing as hatred by interpretation, as appeareth, Prov. viii. 36, 'He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all that hate me love death.' So where it is said, 'He that spareth the rod hateth his son,' Prov. xiii. 24. His fault is fond indulgence, but a wrong love is an interpretative hatred. Now apply it to the case between us and God; and those that pretend no such thing can be charged upon them, may yet hate God. Three ways we may be guilty of this interpretative hatred and enmity.

(1st.) If we love not God at all; for not to love is to hate. In things worthy to be loved there is no medium; for he that is not with God is against him, Mat. xii. 30; and he that loveth him not hateth him. To be a neuter is to be a rebel; and you speak all manner of misery to that man of whom you may say, 'that he loveth not God.' So Christ brandeth his enemies: John v. 42, 'But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.' They pleaded zeal for the sabbath, and opposed Christ for working a miracle on that day. Men are in a woful condition if they be void of the true love of God, love being the fountain of desiring communion with God, and the root of all sound obedience to him; and certainly if men love not God, being so deeply engaged, and God so deserving their love, they hate him and are enemies to him, there being no neutral or middle estate: 1 Cor. xvi. 22, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.' It is danger enough not to love him, though we break not out into open opposition against his ways.

(2dly.) If we love him not so much as we ought to do, or not so much as we love some other thing; for a lesser love is hatred in the sacred dialect, as we see in the law of the hated wife, not that the one was not loved at all or absolutely hated, but not loved so much as the others, Deut. xxi. 15, 16; so in that proverb, Prov. xiv. 20, 'The poor is hated even of his own neighbour, but the rich hath many friends.' There hatred is taken for slighting, or a less degree of love; so in this case between us and God, Mat. x. 37, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me;' in Luke it is said, Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man hate not father and mother, and brother and sisters, he cannot be my disciple.' Here to love less is to hate; so Mat. vi. 24, 'No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon.' God is of that excellent nature, that to esteem anything above him or equal with him is to hate him. Now because men love the world, and the things of the world as well, yea more than God, they hate him, and are enemies to him. Now all carnal men are guilty of this, 2 Tim. iii. 4, 'Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,' *φιλήδοναι μάλλον ἢ φιλόθεοι*; and therefore it is positively said, James iv. 4, 'That the friendship of the world is enmity with God; and whosoever is a friend of the world is an enemy to God.' Oh! that men would look upon things as the scripture expresseth them; that the love of the world is the highest contempt and affront



which can be offered to God. In comparison of our love to him, all the pleasures and contentments of the world should be hated, rather than loved. So far as we set our hearts upon these things, so far they are deadened and estranged from God, and God is easily parted with for the world's sake. If a father should come to a child and say, If you love such a young man or woman, you cannot love me, and I shall take you for my utter enemy, would not any ingenuous child, rather than be an enemy to his father, part with his vain and enticing company?

(3dly.) By interpretation still we are said to hate God and to be enemies to him, if we rebel against his laws, and love what God hateth: so, 'The carnal mind is said to be enmity to God, because it is not subject to the law of God,' Rom. viii. 7. Love is determined by obedience, 1 John v. 3, and hatred by disobedience: 'That hate me, and keep not my commandments.' We apprehend God standeth in the way of our desires, because we cannot enjoy our lusts with that freedom and security, as we might otherwise, were it not for his law; we hate God, because he commandeth that which we cannot and will not do; therefore an impenitent person and an enemy to God are equivalent expressions.

(4.) There is a twofold hatred: *Odiū abominationis* and *odiū inimicitie*, the hatred of abomination and the hatred of enmity; the one is opposite to the love of goodwill, the other to the love of complacency: Prov. xxix. 27, 'The wicked is an abomination to the righteous.' He hateth not his neighbour with the hatred of enmity, so as to seek his destruction, but with the hatred of offence, so as not to delight in him as wicked. In opposition to the love of complacency, we may hate our sinful neighbour, as we must ourselves much more; but in opposition to the love of benevolence, we must neither hate our neighbour, nor our enemy, nor ourselves. Apply this now to the case between God and us: it will be hard to excuse any carnal men from either hatred, certainly not from the hatred of offence or abomination, there being such an unsuitableness and dissimilitude between God and them. In pure nature we were created after his image, and then we delighted in him, but when we lost our first nature, we lost our first love, for love is grounded upon likeness: *φίλον καλοῦμεν ὁμοίον ὁμοίῳ κατ' ἀρέτην*; we love those that have like affections, especially in a good thing. Now there being such a dissimilitude between God and us, we love what he hateth, and hate what he loveth; therefore how can there choose but be hatred between us? How can we delight in a holy God, and a God of pure eyes delight in filthy creatures? What can carnal man see lovely in God? Zech. xi. 8, 'My soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me.' And therefore from this hatred of loathing, offence, and abomination, none can excuse them. Till they come to hate what God hateth, and love what God loveth, there is still the hatred of offence: Prov. viii. 13, 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil,' &c. And for the hatred of enmity, which is an endeavour to do mischief, and seeketh the destruction of the thing hated, we cannot excuse the wicked from that neither, for there is a secret positive enmity, as you have heard before.

(5.) God's enemies carry on a twofold war against God, offensive and defensive.

(1st.) The offensive war is when men rebel against God's laws, and seek to beat down his interest in the world, and employ their faculties, mercies, and comforts as weapons of unrighteousness against God: Rom. vi. 13, 'Yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, ὄπλα, or weapons, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness unto God.' Our faculties, talents, interests, are employed either as armour of light for God, or as weapons of unrighteousness against God. And warring Satan's warfare I call the offensive war against God.

(2dly.) The defensive war is when we slight his word, and resist the motions of his Spirit, Acts vii. 51. When God bringeth his spiritual artillery to batter down all that lifteth up itself against the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, he layeth siege to their hearts, and battereth them daily by the rebukes, and the motions of his Spirit; yet men will not yield the fortress, but stand it out to the last, and delight to go on in their natural corruption, and will not have Christ to reign over them; and so they increase their enmity, and double their misery, by a resistance of grace. So that they are rebels not only against the law, but the gospel, and stand out against their own mercies; as they are enemies to an earthly prince, that not only molest him with continual inroads and incursions, but those also that keep his towns against him. Well then, all this that is said showeth, that though men do not break out into open acts of hostility against God, yet they may hate him, be enemies to him. Though they may not be professed infidels, yet secret enemies, under a show of respect to his religion, enemies by interpretation, as they love him not, or love him less, or impenitently continue in a course of disobedience. If they seek not the destruction of God's interest in the world, yet their soul loatheth God; the thoughts of his being are a trouble to them; and they do not walk in his ways, nor will not be reclaimed from their folly by any of his entreaties.

[2.] Now let me prove, that God is an enemy to a carnal man or man defiled with sin. He is so, though he doth not stir up all his wrath, though he bestoweth many favours upon us in the blessings of this life; he is so, though he useth much patience towards us; he is so, though he vouchsafeth us many tenders of grace to reclaim us. All these things may consist with the wrath of God; he is so, whatever purposes of grace, or secret good-will he may bear to any of us from everlasting; for our condition is to be determined by the sentence of his law, and there we are children of wrath even as others, Eph. vi. 3; liable to the stroke of his eternal vengeance: Ps. v. 5, 'Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity.' They can look upon themselves as only objects of his wrath and hatred. Now this hatred and enmity of God is seen, partly as all commerce is cut off between God and them; Isa. lix. 2, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear;' so that he will not hold communion with us in the Spirit. Partly, in that he doth often declare his displeasure against our sins. Rom. i. 18, 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;' and Heb. ii. 2, 'Every transgression, and every disobedience received

a just recompense of reward.' Every commandment hath its trophies, to show that God hath gotten the best of sinners; some are smitten because they love not God, and put not their trust in him; some, for false worship; some, for blaspheming his name, and profaning his day. Sometimes he maketh inquisition for blood, sometimes for disobedience to parents and governors; by these instances God showeth, that he is at war with sinners. It may be the greatest expression of God's anger, if he doth not check us and suffer us to go on in our sins: Hosea iv. 17, 'Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone;' word, providence, conscience, let him alone: Ps. lxxxii. 12, 'So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels.' It is the greatest misery of all to be left to our own choices; but however it be, whether God strike or forbear, the Lord is already in battle array, proclaiming the war against us: Ps. vii. 11, 12, 'God is angry with the wicked every day; if he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and will make it ready: He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death. He hath ordained his arrows against the persecutors.' God's justice, though it doth for a while spare the wicked, yet it doth not lie idle; every day they are a-preparing and a-fattening. As all things work together for good to them that love God; so all things are working for the final perdition of the obstinately impenitent: God can deal with them *eminus*, at a distance, he hath his arrows; *cominus*, hand to hand, he hath his sword; he is bending his bow, whetting his sword. Now when God falleth upon us, what shall we do? Can we come and make good our party against him? Alas, how soon is a poor creature overwhelmed, if the Lord of hosts arm the humours of our own bodies, or our thoughts against us? If a spark of his wrath light into the conscience, how soon is a man made a burden and a terror to himself? God will surely be too hard for us: Job ix. 4, 'Who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered?' What can we get by contending with the Lord? One frown of his is enough to undo us to all eternity. Can Satan benefit you? The devil that giveth you counsel against God, can he secure you against the strokes of his vengeance? No, he himself is fallen under the weight of God's displeasure and holden in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day; therefore think of it while God is but bending his bow, and whetting his sword. The arrows are not yet shot out of the terrible bow, the sword is but yet a-whetting, it is not brandished against us; after these fair and treatable warnings we are undone for ever, if we turn not speedily; it is no time to dally with God. We read, Luke xiv. 31, of a king that had but ten thousand, and another coming against him with twenty thousand: what doth he do? 'While he is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassy, and desireth conditions of peace.' You are no match for God; it is no time to dally or tarry, till the judgment tread upon our heels, or the storm and tempest of his wrath break out upon us. The time of his patience will not always last, and we are every day a step nearer to eternity. How can a man sleep in his sins, that is upon the very brink of hell and everlasting destruction? Certainly a change must come, and in the ordinary course of nature we have but a little

time to spend in the world; therefore since the avenger of blood is at our heels, let us take sanctuary at the Lord's grace, and run for refuge to the hope of the gospel, Heb. vi. 18, and make our peace ere it be too late. Cry, Quarter, as to one that is ready to strike: Isa. xxvii. 5, 'Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.' This is the first motive.

2. God's condescension in this business.

[1.] That he being so glorious, the person offended, who hath no need of us, should seek reconciliation: it is such a wonder for God to offer, that it should be the more shame for us to deny. For us to sue for reconciliation, or ask conditions of peace, that is no wonder, no more than it is for a condemned malefactor to beg a pardon; but for God to begin, there is the wonder. If God hath been in Christ reconciling the world to himself, then we may pray you to be reconciled. And surely you should not refuse the motion; we did the wrong, and God is our superior, and hath no need of us. Men will submit, when their interest leadeth them to it, Acts xii. 20, 'They desired peace, because their country was nourished by the king's country.' We should make the motion, for we cannot subsist without him. What is there in man, that God should regard his enmity, or seek his friendship? He suffereth no loss by the fallen creature, angels, or men; why then is there so much ado about us? He was happy enough before there was any creature, and would still be happy without them. Surely thy enmity or amity is nothing to God; surely for us to be cross, and not to mind this, is a strange obstinacy. Men treat when their force is broken, when they can carry out their opposition no longer, but God, who is so powerful, so little concerned in what we do, he prayeth you to be reconciled.

[2.] In that he would lay the foundation of this treaty in the death of his Son: Col. i. 21, 'He hath reconciled us in the body of his flesh through death;' therefore, 'we pray you to be reconciled.' God, to secure his own honour, to make it more comfortable to us, would not be appeased without satisfaction. Though his nature inclined him to mercy, yet he would not hear of it till his justice were answered, that we might have nothing to perplex our consolation, and that we might have an incomparable demonstration of his hatred against sin, and so an help to sanctification. He would have our satisfaction and debt paid by him who could not but pay it with overplus. Since he hath not spared his only Son, we know how much he loveth us, and hateth sin. Oh! woe unto us if now, after God hath been at such a great deal of cost, we should slight the motion; angels wonder at what you slight, 1 Peter i. 12. Shall the blood of Christ run a-wasting? Mind the business I pray you. God hath laid out all his wisdom upon it, and will not you take it into your thoughts? God's heart was much set upon it, or else he would never have given his Son to bring it about. It is the folly of man to part with things of worth for trifles; as Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, Lysimachus his kingdom for a draught of water. Surely we cannot imagine this of the wise God; when he hath been at such expense, it is not for a matter of nothing; therefore we should the more regard it.

[3.] In that he hath appointed a ministry of reconciliation, and

authorised some as solemn messengers to tender this grace to us in his name; therefore, 'as ambassadors for Christ, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' God might have contented himself with putting his thoughts into scripture, and given us the word and doctrine of reconciliation only; and truly that is a great mercy. Heathens are left to the puzzle and distraction of their own thoughts, and know not how God shall be appeased; but because that blessed book may possibly lie by as a neglected thing, he will have some that shall put us in mind daily of his design of saving the world by Christ. If he would send messengers, he might have sent heralds to proclaim war, but he hath sent ambassadors of peace. Surely upon this account we should be welcome to you: Isa. lii. 7, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth;' how dirty soever their feet be with the journey. Our message is not to require satisfaction for the wrongs done to the crown of heaven or to denounce war, but a matter of peace; not only to beg a correspondency of traffic, but a treaty about marriage, and so to enter into the strictest amity with God; 'Even that you may be married unto Christ, to bring forth fruit unto God,' Rom. vii. 4. Yet farther,

[4.] These messengers are under a charge to manage God's message with all wisdom and faithfulness, and diligence, Mark xvi. 15, 16, to preach the gospel to every creature, to rich and poor, learned and unlearned. And woe be to them if they be not diligent, warning every man, and teaching every man, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, Col. i. 28. Christ hath conjured them by all their love to his person to do it, John xxi. 15, 16, 'Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.' If we have any respect to our Lord, we must be diligent in offering peace to all that are willing to repent and believe. This work is seriously commended to us; ye profess to be my servants, and therefore by all the love you have to me, I conjure you. I shall not take it that you love me, if you have not a care of my sheep and my lambs. You know the temptations, prejudices, and hatred of those you have to do with; therefore pray them to be reconciled. And

[5.] Consider the terms which God requireth, which are only that we should render ourselves capable of his favour, by entering into covenant with him. On God's part all things are ready; now we pray you to be reconciled; that is, do you enter into covenant with him. God in the covenant is our friend. Abraham is called the friend of God, James ii. 23; 2 Chron. xx. 7, 'Thou gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever;' Isa. xli. 8, 'The seed of Abraham my friend.' Abraham was God's confederate, and they loved entirely, as one friend doth another. In the covenant you take God for your God, and God taketh you for his people; you enter into a league offensive and defensive, to hate what God hateth, and to love what God loveth; God promiseth and engageth to bless, and you to obey.

3. The value of this privilege; it is worth the having. What do we plead with you about, but the favour of God and reconciliation with him by Christ? God found out the way; Christ purchased it; the angels first published it, Luke ii. 14. There are many privileges

depend upon it, as ; (1.) Sanctifying grace. God, being propitiated in Christ, giveth us the first grace, and causeth us to repent and believe in Christ ; for on the behalf of Christ, it is given us to believe, Phil. i. 29, and the regenerating Spirit is shed upon us by Christ. Now when we repent and believe, we are made capable of more of the sanctifying Spirit, Acts ii. 38. The Holy Ghost is given to them that obey : Acts iii. 32, 'And we are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.' And a farther measure of grace upon our actual reconciliation : Gal. iv. 6, 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' (2.) The pardon of sins. When we are regenerated, our sins are actually pardoned : Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me ;' Heb. viii. 10-12. We are released from the eternal punishment, and God quits his controversy against us. (3.) Communion with God, favour, image, and fellowship, go still together ; they were lost together. Before we could not look God in the face, or lift up the head to him, or think of him without trembling ; there is a God, but he is my enemy ; every prayer revived our guilt ; but now we have access with boldness, and confidence of welcome and audience, whenever we have occasion to make use of God, Heb. iv. 16. When David heard that Saul was pacified towards him, he was in his presence as in times past, 1 Sam. xix. 7. The flaming sword, which kept the way to the tree of life, is removed. In our falls, in our distresses, in our dangers, in our wants, in death itself we have a God to go to, to move for relief, to whom to commit our souls. (4.) We have solid consolation, rest, and peace in ourselves, for the chief cause of our fear and sorrow is done away ; our sin is pardoned and subdued, and the eternal punishment released. Till this be, you can never have any rest for your souls ; till you are at peace with God, and submit to the course prescribed by him for your reconciliation, Mat. xi. 28, 29. One great fault of man is that he doth not take a right course to quiet his soul. God complaineth of his people by the prophet, 'That they had forgotten their resting-place,' Jer. l. 6 ; that is, they had forgotten God, their only trust. Men seek peace where it is not to be found, in this creature and that, but still meet with vanity and vexation of spirit, like feverish persons who seek ease in the change of their beds. (5.) The fruition of God. Be reconciled to him, and in time you shall be admitted to see his face. This is the end of all ; for this end Christ died, for this end we are sanctified and justified, and adopted into God's family, and for this end we believe and hope, and labour and suffer, and deny ourselves, and renounce the world. It is Christ's end, Col. i. 21, 22 ; and it is our end, 1 Peter i. 9 ; and will certainly be the fruit of our reconciliation : Rom. v. 11, 'For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.'

4. The fourth motive is, the great dishonour we do to God in refusing it. You despise two things, which men cannot endure should be despised, their anger and love. For anger Nebuchadnezzar is an instance, who commanded to heat the furnace seven times hotter, Dan.

iii. 19 ; for love David, when Nabal despised his courteous message, Now you despise the love and wrath of God, as if they were inconsiderable things not to be stood upon.

First, The terror of his wrath, as if not to be stood upon. But do you know the power of his anger, and what a dreadful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God? Can you think of an eternity of misery without horror? One that hath been a little scorched in the flames of God's wrath dareth not have slight thoughts of it. Oh! christians, as you would escape this blackness of darkness, eternal fire, and the horrible tempest which is reserved for the wicked, flee from wrath to come. Secondly, His love. Thou despisest his Christ, as if his purchase were nothing worth; thou despisest his institutions, which are ordered with such care for thy good. Oh! what horrible contempt of God is this, that thou refuseth to be friends with him, after all his intreaties and condescension! How will you answer it at the last day? In hell thy heart will reproach thee for it.

*Secondly*, To those that have been reconciled with God before. Be yet more reconciled to God; get more testimonies of his favour, lay aside more of your enmity. I have four things to press upon them.

1. To renew your covenant with God by going over the first work of faith and repentance again and again, from 'faith to faith,' Rom. i. 17; not questioning your estate, but bewailing your offences, Job xiii. 10; and renewing your dedication to God. The covenant is the covenant of God's peace, Isa. liv. 10. This covenant needeth to be renewed, partly because of our frequent breaches. It is not a work that must be once done and no more, but often. We have hearts that love to wander, and need tie upon tie; therefore renew the oath of your allegiance unto God. We are apt to break with him every day. Partly, that you may give Christ a new and hearty welcome into your souls. We are baptized but once, but we receive the Lord's supper often, ὄσακις implieth πολλάκις. That is our business there, to make the bond of our duty more strong, and to tie it the faster upon our souls.

2. To increase your love to God; that is reconciliation on our part: Mat. xxii. 37, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy mind;' Luke x. 27, 'With all thy strength,' some add, 'might.' Now we grow up into this by degrees; 'Love with all thy mind.' The mind and thoughts are more taken up with God. Of the wicked it is said, Ps. x. 4, 'The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts;' and Job xxi. 14, 'They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' Now it must be otherwise with you: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.' You must still be remembering God; 'Love with all the heart.' Let will and affections be more carried out to God that your desires may be after him, your delights in him, and valuing the light of his countenance more than all things, Ps. lvi. 7. Prizing communion with him. An hypocrite doth not delight himself in God, but a sincere christian will: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple;' Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself also in the Lord,

and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart' and testify it by conversing much with him and thirsting after him, when they cannot enjoy him : Ps. lxxiii. 1, 2, ' O Lord, thou art my God, early will I seek thee ; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is ; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.' ' With all thy strength,' that is you are to glorify him and serve him with all the power and capacities that you have ; with body, time, estate, tongue, pleading for him, acting for him, not begrudging pains and labours, not serving him without cost.

3. A third thing is keeping covenant. The scriptures that speak of making covenant speak also of keeping covenant : Ps. xxv. 10, ' All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep his covenant and his testimonies : ' and Ps. ciii. 17, 18, ' The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.'

4. A thankful sense of the love of God in our reconciliation, glorying in grace, admiring of grace ; to preserve this is the great duty of a christian. This keepeth alive his love and obedience : 1 John iii. 1, ' Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God : ' Rom. v. 8, ' God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.'

## SERMON XL.

*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him.*—2 COR. v. 21.

HERE he amplifieth that mystery which was formerly briefly delivered concerning the way of our reconciliation on God's part—namely, ' that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them ; ' by showing what was done by God in Christ, and the benefit thence resulting to us. Here is *factum* and *finis facti*.

1. *Factum* ; and there take notice—

[1.] What Christ is in himself—*He knew no sin.*

[2.] What by the ordination of God—*He hath made him to be sin for us.*

2. *Finis facti* ; and there observe—

[1.] The benefit intended to us—*That we might be the righteousness of God.*

[2.] When we are made partakers of this benefit—*In him*, when actually united to Christ.

Let us explain these circumstances.

*First*, What was done in order to our reconciliation ; and there—

1. The innocency of Christ as mediator—' He knew no sin,' that is, practically and experimentally, but was an innocent, pure and sinless