

the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession ; for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need.' Therefore come boldly for such mercies as we stand in need of. He knoweth the heart of a tempted man.

*Use.* You see then, what abundant cause we have to triumph and glory in Christ. You have his humiliation as the ground of your comfort ; his exaltation, which qualifyeth him to apply it to you, and work it in you ; the merit and power. If he had not wrought our deliverance, long might we have borne the wrath we deserved, and had no means to help ourselves. If he should not make continual intercession for you, the remnant of your sin would still bring damnation ; if he did not hide your nakedness, and procure your daily pardon, you would every day be your own destroyers ; nay, you would not be an hour longer out of hell ; if he did not bring you to God, you could have no comfortable access to him in any of your wants and necessities ; if he leave you to yourselves to resist one temptation, even to the foulest sins, how quickly would you be borne down, and wallow like a swine in the mire ! We can, with Jonah, easily raise the storm, but we know not how to allay it. All, from first to last, must be given and ascribed to God in Christ.

## SERMON XLV.

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?—ROM. viii. 35.*

THE triumph over the evil of sin being ended, the apostle beginneth his triumph over afflictions. Here observe—

1. The challenge—*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

2. The evils enumerated—*Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

1. The challenge,  $\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  for  $\tau\acute{\iota}$  ;—who for what. The things mentioned are spoken of as a person ; but the chief difficulty is about the meaning of that clause, 'the love of Christ'—Whether it be meant of our love to Christ, or Christ's love to us. Reasons may be given on both sides. (1.) That it is meant of our love to Christ ; for tribulation is not like to alienate Christ from us, but us from Christ. This doth rather tend to draw us from loving God, than God from loving us. (2.) That it is meant of Christ's love to us, because it is very unlikely that the apostle would boast of the constancy of his own love ; it is more comely to triumph in God's love to us than our love to God. What shall we then determine in the case ? I answer, It is meant of both, Christ's love to us, and our love to Christ, but principally of the love of God in Christ to us. First, The object—'us ;' it is we are in danger

to be separated. Secondly, The word 'separate' also noteth it; to separate us from our own love to Christ is a harsh phrase. Thirdly, It is said, ver. 37, *διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος*—'Through him that loved us.' And again—'The love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,' ver. 34; which is most properly spoken of God's love to us. But this is not exclusive of our love to him, but comprehendeth it rather; therefore it is a mutual love. The apostle speaketh of his love as the cause of ours; for we love, because he loved us first; the comfort is not so great that we love him, as that he loveth us; and the stability of our love dependeth on his.

2. The evils enumerated here are seven kinds of external affliction, under which all the rest are comprehended. (1.) Tribulation; whereby is meant common affliction, which doth not amount to death; anything which presseth or pincheth us, disgrace, fines, stripes, imprisonment, banishment, at large. (2.) Distress; when there is no shifting nor way of escape left us, but we are brought into such straits as we know not which way to turn, but are at our wits' ends, and know not how to escape, but must submit to the will of our enemies. (3.) Persecution; when not only cast out, but pursued from place to place; as David by Saul: 1 Sam. xxvi. 20, 'For the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains;' and 2 Sam. xxiv. 14, 'And David said unto God, I am in a great strait.' *Id genus hominum non inquirō, inventos autem, puniri oportere*—a law of Severus against the christians. (4.) Famine; when, for fear of persecution, they are forced to shun all cities, towns, villages, and places of resort, and to lurk in deserts and places uninhabited, where many times they suffer great extremity of hunger: Heb. xi. 38, 'They wandered in deserts and mountains, and dens and caves of the earth.' (5.) Nakedness; when their clothes were worn and spent; so it is said of those: Heb. xi. 37, 'They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins;' so the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 27, 'In hunger, cold, and nakedness;' 1 Cor. iv. 11, 'We hunger and thirst and are naked.' (6.) Peril; by which he meaneth imminent dangers; for even in their lurking-places they had no safety. Paul reckoneth up his perils, 2 Cor. xi. 26, 'In perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;' and of the christians of those times he saith—'They stood in jeopardy every hour,' 1 Cor. xv. 20. (7.) The last is the sword, whereby he meaneth a violent death. And here the apostle stoppeth; for all enemies can do no more than kill the body, nor can we suffer more by them; a sword may separate body and soul, but it cannot separate us from the love of Christ; and under sword are comprehended axes, gibbets, fires, halters, all sorts of violent deaths. From the whole observe—

*Doct. 1.* That it is the usual portion of a christian in the discharge of his duty to meet with many troubles.

*Doct. 2.* That none of these can dissolve the union between them and Christ.

*Doct. 1.* That troubles are often the portion of God's people. the primitive christians here spoken of are a sufficient instance. First,

Their troubles were for their number many: Ps. xxxiv. 19, 'Many are the troubles of the righteous.' Secondly, For their kinds divers. Christians, by the unthankful world, are exposed to sundry evils and molestations; sometimes they are assaulted by want and shame, by fear and force, by all present and possible evils. Thirdly, For their degree, very grievous; not only vexatious, but destructive. There is a gradation; they molest them, that is tribulation; they follow them close, leave them no way of escape, that is distress; if they remove, still they worry them, and follow them from place to place, then it is persecution; that driveth to great necessities for food, then it is famine; for raiment, then it is nakedness; involveth them in sundry dangers, then it is peril; yea, sometimes they have power to reach life itself, and then it is sword. Now, shall we think that this was proper to that age only, and that the first professors of christianity were exposed to these sharp and grievous trials, that we might be totally excused from all kind of vexation and trouble? No; we must not indulge such tenderness and delicacy, but must look for our trials also. The bad will ever hate the good; the world is still set upon wickedness, and worse rather than better by long continuance. Certainly the world is the same that ever it was; but considering in whose hands the government of the world is, that raiseth wonder that he should permit it. Therefore let us see the reasons.

1. That we may be conformed to our head, and pledge him in his bitter cup. Jesus Christ was a man of sorrows, and there would be a strange disproportion between head and members if we should live altogether in honour and pleasure: Col. i. 24, 'That I may fill up what is behind of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh.' There is Christ personal and Christ mystical; the sufferings of Christ personal are complete, and there is nothing behind to be filled up; but the sufferings of Christ mystical are not perfect till every member have their allotted portion. It is an unseemly delicacy to be nice of carrying the cross after Christ. The apostle counted the 'fellowship of his sufferings, and conformity to his death,' an honour and privilege to be bought at the dearest rates, Phil. iii. 10. All things should be dung and dross to gain this experience and honour.

2. God would have his people seen in their proper colours; that they are a sort of people that love him above all that is dear and precious to them in the world, and that they do not own Christ upon extrinsic and foreign motives, that their example may be a help to promote mortification in the world; therefore all his people shall be tried: James i. 12, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love him;' and Rev. ii. 10, 'Behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried;' 1 Peter i. 7, 'That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.' God will try the foundation that men build upon, and whether his people love him above all, yea or no; and teach the world to subordinate the animal life to the divine and spiritual.

3. God will have the world seen in their proper colours; the far

greater part of the world do live an ungodly, sensual life, and they cannot endure those that would disgrace their delights by a contrary course: John xv. 19, 'The world loveth its own; but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you;' 1 Peter iv. 4, 'They think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot.' A contrary course produceth contrary affections and interests; thence cometh their hatred and malignity against the saints, because they upbraid them with their sins. The wicked and the righteous, the spiritual and the carnal, the sensual and the heavenly, the formal and the serious, can no more agree than the wolf and the lamb, the raven and the dove.

4. It is needful that our pride and carnal affections should be broken by the cross: 1 Peter i. 6, 'Ye are in heaviness for a season, if need be.' This smart discipline is needful to reclaim us from our wanderings, to cut off the provision for the flesh, which is an enemy; to humble us for sin, which is the greatest evil; to wean us from the world, to make us more mindful of heavenly things, to make us thankful for our deliverance by Christ. How lazy and vain do the best grow when they live in wealth, honour, and power! Graces are eclipsed, duties obstructed, thoughts of heaven few and cold. We often fear the dejection of the godly; we need more fear their exaltation. What lamentable work do they make in the world when they get uppermost; so that we have more cause to thank Christ for our afflictions than our prosperity.

*Use 1.* Is instruction: that we have no reason to doubt of God's favour and presence with us though we be exercised with calamities, and divers calamities. Single calamities are consistent enough with the love of God to his people. God is a Father when he frowneth, as well as when he smileth. Christ was the Son of his love, and yet a man of sorrows. And so for christians: Rev. iii. 19, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.' God loveth those most whom he doth not leave to perish with the godless and unbelieving world; and divers calamities, or variety of troubles, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, call it by what name you will, it is all incident to the saints. Some trials, to ordinary sense, seem to speak wrath, utter wrath, rather than love; as when he seemeth to have broken off his ordinary course of kindness to his people, and to cast them out of his protection, leaving them in the hand and will of their enemies, so that they are reproached, troubled, and reduced to great straits and necessities. All this is necessary; for till an utter exigence, carnal supports are not spent, and one trial by continuance is blunted and loseth its edge till God send another; therefore we need not one affliction only, but divers. But how many soever they be, we have no reason to question the love of God: Job v. 19, 20, 'He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death, and in war from the power of the sword.' In nakedness he will clothe thee, in persecution preserve thee, in peril protect thee, in distress comfort thee; though it cometh to the greatest trouble, yet we have no cause to despond, as if God had cast us off, or withdrawn his love from us.

2. That if we meet with many troubles, this will be no excuse or

plea to exempt us from our duty; for as afflictions should not make us doubt of God's love to us, so they should not make us abate of our love to God: Ps. xlv. 17, 'All this is come upon us, yet we have not forgotten thee, nor have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.' They had suffered hard things, yet all this could not shake their constancy and resolution for God. All our interests were given us that we might have something of value to esteem as nothing for Christ.

3. It showeth us what a good allowance we should make Christ when we enter into covenant with him, and with what thoughts we should take up the stricter profession of christianity. Many think they may be good christians, yet their profession shall cost them nothing. This is as if a man should enter himself a soldier, and never expect battle; or a mariner, and promise himself nothing but calms and fair weather, without waves and storms. A life of ease is not to be expected by a christian here upon earth. If God will suffer us to go to heaven at an easier rate, yet a christian cannot promise it to himself, but must be a mortified and resolute man, dead to the world, and resolved to hold on his journey to the world to come, whatever weather he meeteth with. Among other of the pieces of the spiritual armour, the apostle biddeth us 'be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' Eph. vi. 15. If a man be not thus shod, he will soon founder in hard and rough ground. But what is this preparation of the gospel of peace? Peace noteth our reconciliation and peace with God, and interest in his favour, and love, and peace, arising from the gospel. The law showeth the breach; the gospel the way of reconciliation—how it is made up for us. But there is also *ἐτοιμασία*, preparation or readiness of mind; the apostle's *ἐτοιμῶς ἔχω*, Acts xxi. 13, 'I am ready, not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;' and 1 Peter iii. 15, 'Be ye (*ἐτοιμοί*) ready to render a reason of the hope that is in you;' meaning there, not sufficiency of knowledge in the mind, but strength of resolution and will, so that this preparation is a resolution to go through thick and thin, to follow Christ in all conditions. Alas! else when we have launched out with Christ, we shall be ready to run ashore again upon every storm. Now, that we may thus resolve, Christ would have us sit down and count the charges, for he would not surprise any. We should be ready to suffer the sharpest afflictions, though it may be the Lord doth not see fit to exercise us with them. God never intended Isaac should be sacrificed; yet, when he would try Abraham, he must put the knife to his throat, and make all things ready to offer him up.

4. How thankful we should be if God call us not to severe trials, such as tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword; which the primitive christians endured, that were purer christians than we are. If he deal more gently with us, what use shall we make of this indulgence? Manifold—(1.) Partly to be more strict and holy; for when we are not called to passive obedience and sufferings, our active obedience should be the more cheerfully performed: Acts ix. 31, 'Then the churches had rest, and were edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.' Alas! the first christians suffered more willingly for Christ than we

speak of him, and went to the stake more readily than we go to the throne of grace. Our peace and comfort will cost us more in getting; therefore we should be more eminent in service. (2.) Partly, that we should be more mortified to the world; he that liveth a flesh-pleasing life becometh an enemy to God without temptations: James iv. 4, 'Know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity to God?' Man under trouble is forced;—you yield of your own accord; your act is more voluntary;—they for a great fear, you for a little pleasure, hazard the hopes of eternal life. (3.) Partly, to be more ready to communicate and distribute to the necessities of others: 1 John iii. 17, 'But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' He that cannot part with this world's good things freely, will be loth to part with them by constraint. How will you take the spoiling of your goods joyfully, Heb. x. 34, when you part with them as with a drop of blood? Surely he that grudgeth at a commandment will murmur at a providence. (4.) Partly, to bear lighter afflictions patiently: Jer. xii. 5, 'If thou hast run with footmen, and they have wearied thee, how canst thou contend with horses?' If you cannot bear a disgrace, a frown, a loss of dignity and honour and preferment, how will you bear the loss of life? Heb. xii. 9, 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.' (5.) Partly, by diligence in the heavenly life. A man traineth up himself to endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, by degrees; by meekness, and poverty of spirit, and humility, he is fitted to endure tribulation; by resignation and resolute dependence on God, to endure distress; by weanedness from house and home, to endure persecution; by sobriety, to endure famine; by modesty in apparel, to endure nakedness; by close retirements, to endure a prison; by carrying our life in our hand, to endure peril; by heavenliness of mind, to endure death. *Malum est impatientia boni.* If it be irksome to put the body to a little trouble for holy duties, how will you endure tortures and sufferings to such an eminent degree as they did? (6.) That we should not be dismayed when troubles come actually upon us; it is not in the power of any persecutor on earth to put us out of the favour of God. What do we suffer? Tribulation! and do any enter into the kingdom of God without it? And we have that promise of rest which will sweeten it. Distress! Christ was nonplussed, John xii. 28. You must stick the closer to God who will relieve you in your distresses. Persecution! The Lord Jesus in his cradle was carried into Egypt, Mat. ii. 14. We that know no home in the world should know no banishment; Jesus Christ had not where to lay his head. Famine! Man liveth not by bread only; better our bodies famished than our souls; if we have God to our Father, we have bread to eat the world knoweth not of. Nakedness! Better pass naked out of the world than go to hell with gay apparel; your rags are more honourable than the world's purple. Is it peril? No danger so great as losing Christ and his salvation. Sword! It is the ready way to send you to Christ, who is your bountiful Lord and Master, and to loose you from the body, that you may be ever with the Lord.

*Doct. 2.* That none of these things can dissolve the union between Christ and believers.

1. That there is a strict union between Christ and believers, the scripture doth everywhere manifest it; and the word 'separate' here implieth it,—for nothing can be separated, but what was first conjoined. He is the head, and we are the members; we are the spouse, and he is the husband; 1 Cor. xii. 12: 'He is the head of the church, and the saviour of the body,' Eph. v. 23; 'He is the root, and we are the branches,' John xv. 5; he is the stock, and we are the graft or scions, Rom. vi. 5.

2. This union is by the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on ours. By the Spirit: 1 Cor. vi. 17, 'But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;' 1 John iii. 24, 'And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.' The bond on our part is faith: Gal. ii. 20, 'And the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God;' and he is said 'to dwell in our hearts by faith,' Eph. iii. 17.

3. Both these bonds imply love, which makes the union more firm and indissoluble. The Spirit is given as the great fruit of Christ's love, so is our faith; and when once it comes so far that Christ in love hath given his Spirit, and we by faith love him again, nothing can unclasp these mutual embraces by which Christ loveth us and we love him. The Holy Ghost, as the bond of union, is given us as the fruit of his love; Christ prayeth, John xvii. 26, 'that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.' What is the love wherewith God loved Christ? The gift of the Spirit: John iii. 34, 35, 'For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure to him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.' This love is manifested to us, and so is Christ in us. And then faith on our part is a faith working by love, Gal. v. 6. Christ hath hold of a believer in the arms of his love; and so a believer hath hold of Christ. A christian is held by the heart rather than by the head; only some men's religion lieth in their opinions barely, and then they are always wavering and uncertain; bare reason will let Christ go, when love will not permit us to leave him. If men have a faith that never went deeper than their brains and their fancies, this opinion, or bare superficial assent, will let him go; but it is the faith that worketh by love which produceth this stable and close adherence. A christian is loth to leave Christ, to whom he is married, who hath so loved him, and whom his soul so loveth. Again, the heart is Christ's strong citadel or castle, where he resideth and maintaineth his interests in us. A sinner will not leave his lusts and worldly profits, because he loveth them; and so a christian is loth to leave Christ, because of his love to him. Faith resents to the soul what Christ hath done for us: washed us in his blood, and reconciled us to God; espoused us to himself, and spoken peace to our souls.

4. That Christ's love is the cause and reason of ours; and therefore the stability of our love to him dependeth upon his love to us, and it is the reason; Christ loveth us first, best, and most: 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him, because he loved us first;' that is, because of the great things

he hath done for us, in a way of satisfaction, to reconcile God to us; and in a way of conversion, to reconcile us to God; and in a way of preparation for our eternal blessedness, in the fruition of God. In a way of satisfaction; it was his love engaged him to die for us: Gal. ii. 20, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me;' Rev. i. 5, 'Who hath loved us, and washed us in his blood.' This was the internal bosom-cause of all that he did for us. His love in conversion, in that he brought us home to God: Eph. ii. 4, 5, 'For his great love wherewith he loved us, when we were dead in sins, he quickened us.' So his rich preparations for our blessedness: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;' and 1 John iii. 1, 2, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not. Behold now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Now what is of such moment as to cause us to cease loving him who hath loved us at such a high rate? Secondly, It is the effective cause, not an exciting argument only; for his love inclines to improve his power to preserve us in a state of grace. Three things concur to that: his intercession with God, his giving the Spirit to his people, and his government over the world.

[1.] Christ intercedeth for us in all our conflicts and temptations, because he loveth us, and is mindful of us: Heb. ii. 18, 'For that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted;' and Heb. iv. 15, 16, 'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are. Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need.' He knoweth what it is to suffer hunger, and nakedness, and poverty, and exile, and contempt in the world. He knoweth the heart of a tempted man; therefore he will have compassion upon us, and procure seasonable help for us. He knoweth how hard a thing it is to be tempted, and not to sin; he himself was hard put to it, though he had such power to overcome temptations. He sitteth at the right hand of God for this end and purpose.

[2.] His giving the Spirit to help us and relieve us, and preserve his people in temptation: Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me;' Phil. i. 19, 'For I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ;' 1 John iv. 4, 'Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world;' 2 Tim. iv. 17, 'Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.' If Christ will stand by us, and keep us in his own hand, what shall separate?

[3.] Christ hath the government of the world, or a power and dominion over all things which may help or hinder his people's happiness; therefore his love inclineth him to order all things so as may be for their good: John v. 22, 'He hath committed all judgment to the Son;' and John iii. 35, 'He hath given all things into his hand;' so Eph. i. 22, 'Head over all things to the church.' Things are not left



to the arbitrament or uncertain contingency of second causes, but are under the government of a supreme providence, the administration of which is in the hands of him that loved us; and therefore he will exercise his dominion as shall be for God's glory and our good, and so curb all opposition, and moderate all temptations, as may be consistent with his love and care over us: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able.' In short, being so near to God, and having the dispensation of the Spirit and the administration of providence, his great love maketh him pity his people in their necessities; they are his dear purchase, therefore he will not lose them: John xiii. 1, 'Jesus having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end.' They were in the world when he was to go out of the world—left in the midst of waves when he was got ashore. He knew the dangers to which they were exposed; if they miscarry, his own people miscarry; therefore his heart is moved with all their dangers and difficulties; and when we are most in danger, then is love most at work to provide help for us in all our temptations, as the mother keepeth with the sick child.

5. That love which cometh from the impression of this love is of an unconquerable force and efficacy: Cant. viii. 6, 'Love is strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are as the coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.' There the vehemency and unconquerable constancy of love is set forth; it will not be quenched, it will not be bribed. At this rate Christ loved us; his love was as strong, and stronger, than death; he debased himself from the height of all his glory to the depth of all misery for our sakes, suffered death, and overcame all difficulties. His love carried him to us, his love could not be quenched by the waters of affliction, for he 'endured the cross, and despised the shame,' Heb. xii. 2. And his love would not be bribed by the offers of preferment: Mat. iv. 9, 'All these things will I give if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' Ease: Mat. xvi. 22, 'Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.' Honour: Mat. xxvii. 40, 42, 'If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him.' None of this could draw him from his work; and in their measure, it is fulfilled in christians; waters cannot quench it: Acts xxi. 13, 'What mean ye to weep, and break my heart? for I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem;' Rev. xii. 11, 'And they loved not their lives unto the death;' they have not learned to love at a cheaper rate. It will not be bribed: Mat. xix. 27, 'And Peter said, We have forsaken all, and followed thee;' Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple.' Now this love that is in us, being of such a vehement nature, it can be resisted no more than death or the grave can be resisted. No opposition can quench or extinguish it, no pleasures, or honours, or profits, can bribe it. If men would give all their substance, such a soul will be faithful to Christ; so that by this

love Christ maintaineth his interest in our souls. The stony ground could not abide the heat of the sun; the thorny ground was choked with the deceitfulness of riches and voluptuous living. Waters or bribes may carry away some unmortified souls; but sincere love to Christ will not suffer us to be tempted away from him.

*Use 1.* Is information. How a christian cometh to be safe in the midst of temptations.

1. It is by Christ's love to us, and ours to him. (1.) His love to us. Once be persuaded that Christ loveth you, then what need you fear? Nothing that he doth will be grievous to you; but how shall I bring my heart to this? His love to sinners is plainly demonstrated in our redemption: Rom. v. 8, 'But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' But his special love to us is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Rom. v. 5; he giveth the effects and the sense. The general love must be apprehended by faith: 1 John iv. 16, 'We have known and believed the love God hath to us;' and improved by serious consideration: Eph. iii. 18, 19, 'That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;' by taking this way to be possessed of this love; Prov. viii. 17, 'I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me;' and the effects of it sought after. What is every day done more to heal and recover our wounded and self-condemned souls, and to rescue us out of the misery incurred by sin, to appease our griefs and fears? What power against sin? What assistance of grace in your duties and conflicts? 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 'Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?' This is to seek a proof of Christ in you. (2.) For the other, we get it by patience in afflictions, Rom. v. 5; by fruitfulness in obedience: John xiv. 21-23, '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. If a man love me, and keep my commandments, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' Converse with God in solemn ordinances: Cant. i. 4, 'Draw me, we will run after thee; the king brought me into his chamber; we will be glad, and rejoice in thee; we will remember thy love more than wine.'

2. Our love to Christ. This must be taken in; for it is we are assaulted, not Christ; we are conquerors, not God; nothing shall divorce us. Christ will never forsake a loving soul; nor will a loving soul easily forsake him; they have such an esteem of Christ that all things else are but dung and dross, Phil. iii. 8-10. Let deceived souls desire worldly greatness, they can be satisfied with nothing but Christ; nothing can supply his room in their hearts.

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