

4. To all duties to our neighbour: Eph. v. 9, 'For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth;' Gal. v. 22, 23, 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.'

SERMON XXII.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.—Rom. VIII. 15.

THE words contain a reason why those who are led by the Spirit are the children of God. The reason is, because they have received the covenant of grace; and the spirit which accompanieth the new covenant is not the spirit of bondage, but adoption. It is propounded,—1. Negatively; 2. Affirmatively.

1. Negatively. They were freed from the servile fear of condemnation, which the legal covenant wrought in them.

2. Affirmatively. They were endowed with the spirit of adoption, or a persuasion of their Father's love, or of God's admitting them into his family, and the right of inheritance; and so were drawn to obedience by noble motives, suitable to the covenant they were under.

For the first clause in the text, *ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.*

In which words observe,—

1. The state of men under the law-covenant—it is a state of bondage.

2. The operation of the Spirit during that dispensation,—it made men sensible of their bondage: 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage.' There is the Spirit mentioned, and, *παλιω, again*, implying that during that dispensation they had it.

3. The impression left upon the heart of man, *εις φόβον*, unto fear. There is a twofold fear, filial and servile, child-like and slavish. The one is a lawful and necessary fear, which doth quicken us to our duty: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;' and is either the fear of reverence, or the fear of caution. The fear of *reverence* is nothing but that awe which we, as creatures, are to have of the divine majesty, or an humble sense of the condition, place, and duty of a creature towards its creator. The fear of *caution* is a due sense of the importance and weight of the business we are engaged in, in order to our salvation. Certainly none can consider the danger we are to escape, and the blessedness we aim at, but will see a need to be serious; and therefore this fear is good and holy. Secondly, There is besides this, a *slavish* fear, which doth not further, but extremely hinder our work; for though we are to fear God, yet we are not to be afraid of God. This servile fear may be interpreted either with respect to the precept or the sanction of the law. First, with respect to the precept; and so it showeth us how men stand naturally affected to the duty of the law;

whatever they do is merely for fear of being punished. Secondly, to the sanction, penalty, and curse. The fear of evil is more powerful upon us than the hope of good; the greater the evil, the greater the fear, and the more tormenting.

Doct. That men under the law-covenant are under a spirit of bondage.

Here I shall enquire,

1. What is the spirit of bondage?
2. How is it the fruit of the law-covenant?
3. Whether it is good or bad?

1. What is the Spirit of Bondage? To open it, we must explain three things,—(1.) The nature of the object; (2.) The work of the Spirit; (3.) The disposition of man.

[1.] The nature of the object, the law requiring duty of the fallen creature, and threatening punishment in case of disobedience. For the law hath a twofold office; to convince of sin, Rom. iii. 20, 'Now by the law only cometh the knowledge of sin;' and to bind over to punishment; therefore it is said, 'The law worketh wrath,' Rom. iv. 15. In both respects the old covenant is called the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2. The law as a covenant of works is called a law of sin, because it only showeth our sin; and a law of death, because it bindeth us over to death.

[2.] The work of the Spirit. Every truth is quickened by the Spirit, and made more powerful upon our hearts. The comfort which we have from the truth of the gospel is by the Spirit, and therefore it is called joy in the Holy Ghost. So law-truths are applied to the conscience by the Spirit: Jer. xxxi. 19, 'After I was instructed, I smote upon the thigh;' and 'when the commandment came,'—that is, in the light and power of the Spirit,—'sin revived, and I died,' Rom. vii. 9, that is, was made sensible of his sinful and lost condition. And indeed the usual work wherewith the Spirit beginneth with men, is to show them their sin and misery, their alienation from God, and enmity to him, and insufficiency to help themselves.

[3.] The disposition of man, which is corrupted, under the workings of the spirit of bondage. And so this spirit of bondage, or servile fear, worketh several ways, according to the temper of men.

(1.) In the profane it giveth occasion of further sinning, as conscience being awakened by the Spirit, urgeth either the precept or the curse. The *precept*, as a bullock at first yoking groweth more unruly, or a river swelleth when it meeteth with a dam and restraint: Rom. vii. 5, 'For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death.' Sinful practices were more irritated by the prohibition; and so our obligation to death increased. Or else by urging the *curse*, which produceth the sottish despair: Jer. xviii. 12, 'And they said, there is no hope; we will walk after our devices.' There is a double despair of pleasing, or being accepted; there is a lazy, sottish despair, as well as a raging and tormenting despair, by which men cast off all care of the soul's welfare: 'There is no hope.' (2.) In a middle sort of men, that have a legal conscience, it puts them upon some duty and course of service to God; but it is not done comfortably, or

upon any noble motives. That which is defective in it is this: First, it is constrained service. This bondage, which is a fruit of the law, doth force and compel men to some displeasing task. A christian serveth God out of love, but one under the spirit of bondage serveth God out of fear; a love to God and true holiness prevaileth with the one, more than the fear of wrath and punishment; for the spirit of adoption disposeth and inclineth him to God as a father; but one under the spirit of bondage is forced to submit to some kind of religiousness, for fear of being damned. Indeed both are constrained, the one by love, the other by fear, 2 Cor. v. 14; only the constraint of love is durable, and kindly, and sweet; the other, his task is grievous and wearisome, Mal. i. 11, and holdeth most in a fit; when danger is nigh, they are frighted into some devotion, Ps. lxxviii. 34-38. Secondly, That service which they are forced and compelled to yield to God, is outward service and obedience, Isa. lviii. 7; hanging the head for a day, like a bulrush; and as they do, Mic. vi. 7, offer thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil, or the firstborn of their body, for the sin of their souls. It is a sin-offering rather than a thank-offering; more to appease conscience, than to please God; consists in rituals rather than substantial; and those invented by men, rather than commanded by God. Whereas the true christian is otherwise described: Phil. iii. 3, 'For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' But the false christian is one (Mat. xv. 8) that draweth nigh to God with the mouth, but their heart is far from him; their heart is averse from God, though they must have an outward religion to rest in; and so they serve God not as children do a father, but as slaves serve a hard and cruel master.

(3.) In some the Lord may make use of it to bring on conversion; for according to our sense of sin and misery, so is a saviour and redeemer welcome to us, and prized by us. There must be a sensible awakening knowledge of our great necessity, before we will make use of Christ for our cure and remedy. None but the sick will care for the physician, Mat. ix. 12; the burdened for ease, Mat. xi. 28, 29; the pursued for a sanctuary and refuge, Heb. vi. 18; none but the condemned, to be justified and acquitted, Rom. viii. 33, 34; the lost and miserable to be saved, Luke xix. 10.

2. How is it the fruit of the law-covenant? The law-covenant is double: either the covenant of nature, which concerned both Jew and Gentile; or the first administration of the covenant of grace, made with the Jews only. [1.] The covenant of nature, which we are all under naturally, breedeth bondage and shyness of God; we are sensible that we are his creatures, and so owe him duty and subjection; that we have failed in our duty to him, and therefore lie obnoxious to his wrath and punishment. Heathens, that had but some obscure notions of God, felt somewhat of this bondage, Rom. i. 32; they 'knew the judgment of God, and that they which commit such things are worthy of death.' They stood in dread of angry justice; and not only they, but all mankind are under it, Rom. ii. 15. According to that natural sense which men have of religion, so is their bondage more or less; still under fear of death, and the consequence thereof. This sense or

conscience of sin and wrath, which the breach of God's law hath made our due, is so engrained in the nature of man that he cannot dispossess himself of it. The apostle compareth it to the bond of marriage, which is indissoluble till one of the parties die, Rom. vii. 1-3. The conscience of man is either married to the law as its husband, or Christ as its husband; not to the latter, till it be dead to the former: ver. 4, 'Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye might be married to another, even to him that was raised from the dead.' Well then, this bondage is the effect of the law, or covenant of nature, impressed upon the heart of man, and ariseth from a consciousness of guilt, and obnoxiousness to God's wrath and displeasure, because of God's broken covenant.

[2.] The first administration of the covenant of grace. That bred a spirit of bondage; witness that allegory, Gal. iv. 22-26. Abraham's two wives did represent the two covenants; the first and second administration of the covenant of grace. The first gendered to bondage, men of a servile spirit, doing what they did, not out of love, but slavish fear: 2 Cor. iii. 9, 'But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away;' 'for if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness excel in glory.' *Διακονία κατακρίσεως*, their gospel was dark, and had little efficacy to change the heart of man; it did little allay and vanquish this shyness of God; rather increased it, as it conduced to revive the knowledge of God in their minds, and held forth the ransom and way of appeasing God's angry justice obscurely and darkly; rather showed our distance from God. Israel was God's first-born, and so his heir, but an heir in non-age, Gal. iv. 1, 2; their ordinances were a bond, ours an acquittance; but what is this to us? *Answer.* Much every way:—

(1.) That we may bless God for the greater advantages that we have to breed a child-like spirit in us by the new covenant; where the Lord who is offended by sin, is propitiated by the death of Christ, and willing to admit man into his presence; and bless him, that God as a judge driveth us by the spirit of bondage to Christ as mediator; that Christ as mediator by the spirit of adoption may bring us back again to God as a father; and then having God for our father, we may have Christ for our advocate, and the Spirit for our comforter and sanctifier, to enable us to observe the gospel precepts of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and so be made capable of the promises of pardon and life. One covenant maketh us sensible of the grace of the other; Christ dealeth with us as children of the family, requiring duty from us upon reasonable and comfortable terms.

(2.) Because those that live under the gospel dispensation, and have not received the power of it, may be yet under a spirit of bondage, and cherish a legal way of religion. In every one that entertaineth thoughts of religion, law and gospel are at conflict in his heart, as well as flesh and corruption; this is clear by Gal. v. 17, 18; 'For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that

ye would ; but if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.' As spirit and flesh do lust against, and constantly oppose one another, and labour to suppress and diminish each other, so do law and grace. Those that are slaves to their sinful lusts, and are not enabled by the spirit of the new testament to do in some measure what the rule enjoineeth, have their comforts obstructed ; and while sin reigneth, the law reigneth : Rom. vi. 14, 'For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but grace.' Partly, by its irritating power ; and partly, by its condemning power ; leaving them under a fear of condemnation, and urging them to do what they cannot do.

(3.) The children of God by regeneration and adoption, while sin remaineth, may have somewhat of bondage remaining in them. Look ; as under the old testament, when the ingenuous and noble motives of the gospel were in a great measure unknown, there was somewhat of a free spirit in the eminent saints, Ps. li. 12, though but sparingly dispensed ; so under the gospel dispensation, there are many sad and drooping christians who do not improve the comforts provided for them, and when they are called upon to rejoice in the Lord always, Phil. iv. 4, rather go mourning all the day long ; but it is their fault. The people under the law-dispensation were either the godly, or the wicked, or the middle sort ; the eminently godly then had a free spirit ; the wicked were either terrified, or stupified ; the middle sort, who were touching the righteousness of the law blameless, Phil. iii. 6, had a zeal for outward observances, but not according to knowledge, Rom. x. 2 ; were merely actuated by a legal spirit. So under the gospel there are the eminently godly, who evermore rejoice, 1 Thes. v. 16, or at least are swayed more with love, than fear ; the weak godly, who have much of their ancient fears, and the love of God in them is yet too weak to produce its effects ; though this love to God do prevail over sin, yet not ordinarily over fear of punishment ; but much of that influences their duties, more than their love to God. There is too great averseness in their hearts from God and holiness, and they seek to break it by the terrors of the Lord. Not sin, but fear is predominant.

3. Is this spirit of bondage good, or bad ? I answer,—

[1.] We must distinguish of the three agents in it. This bondage cometh partly from a good cause, the Spirit of God breeding in us a knowledge of our duty, and a belief of the threatenings of God, from whence ariseth a sense of our sinful and miserable condition ; so far it is good and useful. Partly from an ill cause, the devil, who delighteth to vex us with unreasonable terrors : 1 Sam. xvi. 14, 'The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord vexed him ;' the devil both tempteth and troubleth ; as the huntsman hideth himself till the poor beast be gotten into the toils, then he appeareth with shouts and cries. Partly from the corruption of man's heart, which either turneth this work to an utter aversation from God, or some perfunctory and unwilling way of serving him. Some know the right use of the covenant, others not ; and therefore we must consider not only how it is wrought by the Spirit, but how it is entertained by man through our corruption ; our conviction of sin and misery by the Spirit turneth into bondage and servitude.

[2.] The spirit of bondage is better than a profane spirit. Some

cast off all thoughts of God and the world to come, and are not so serious and mindful of religion as to be much troubled with any fears about their eternal condition; it were happy for them if they were come so far as a spirit of bondage; they that are under it have a conscience of their duty, but such as perplexeth them, and lasheth, and stingeth them with the dread and horror of that God whom they serve. Now this is better than the profane spirit that wholly forgets God: Ps. x. 4, 'God is not in all their thoughts;' whether he be pleased or displeased, honoured or dishonoured. This may tend to good; the *gradus ad rem, gradus in re*; yea, it may in some degree be consistent with sincerity; for though to have no love to God is inconsistent with a state of grace, or to have less love to God than sin; yet to have more fear than love is consistent with some weak degree of grace, especially if the case be so, that in act, love is less felt than fear; and therefore, though men are conscious to much backwardness, yet keep up a seriousness; though to their feeling it is more fear than love which moveth them, yet we dare not pronounce them graceless; for there may be a love to God, and a complacency in his ways, though it be oppressed by fear, that the spirit of adoption is not so much discovered for the time.

[3.] That it is an ill frame of spirit to be cherished or rested in. For while men are under the sole and predominant influence of it, they are never converted to God; fear doth begin the work of conversion, but love maketh it sincere. The Spirit by fear doth awaken men to make them see their condition, terrifying them by the belief of God's threatening, and the sense of his indignation, that they may flee from wrath to come, Mat. iii. 7; or cry out, 'What shall I do to be saved?' Acts ii. 37. But yet, though they have a sensible work, they have not a saving work. Some by these fears are but troubled and restrained a little, and so settle again in their sensual course, but to their great loss; for God may never give them like advantages again. Others betake themselves to a kind of religiousness, and forsake the practice of those grosser sins which breed their fears; and so resting here, continue in a state of hypocrisy and self-deceiving religiousness.

Use 1. Is information and instruction, to teach us how to carry it as to the spirit of bondage.

[1.] It is not to be slighted; partly, from the matter which breedeth the fear and bondage, which is the law of God, the supreme rule and reason of our duty, by which all debates of conscience are to be decided; partly, from the author; this sense of sin and misery is stirred up in us, and made more active by the operation of the Spirit of God; partly, from the faculty wherein it is seated,—the conscience of a reasonable creature, the most lively and sensible power of man's soul, which cannot be pacified, but upon solid grounds and reasons; partly, from the effect, the fear of eternal death, the greatest misery that can befall us; for surely 'it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' Heb. x. 31. To smother and stifle checks of conscience doth increase our misery, not remove it; and produceth hardness of heart, and contempt of God; therefore when our souls are at this pass, that we see we are in bondage to sin, and know not how to help it; in bondage to wrath, and know not how to quench these fears which are awakened in us by the Spirit; surely we should look

after solid satisfaction and peace of soul, settled on us upon gospel terms; run to the blood of sprinkling, Heb. x. 22.

[2.] Yet it is not a thing to be chosen, prayed for, or rested in. Partly, because it is a judiciary impression, a spark of hell kindled in the conscience. A tender conscience we may and must pray for, but not a stormy conscience; when we ask legal terrors, we know not what we ask; a belief of the threatenings belongs to our duty, as well as a belief of the promises; but we must not so reflect upon terrors, as to exclude the comfort and hope of the gospel. When under a spirit of bondage, we are in a most servile condition, far from all solid comfort, courage, and boldness. But is it not an help to conversion? Answer, Let God take his own way; we are not to look after the deepness of the wound, but the soundness of the cure; not terrible representations of sin and wrath, but such an anxiousness as will make us serious and solicitous. Partly, because the law-covenant is an antiquated dispensation, the law of nature bindeth not as a covenant; for the promise of life ceased upon the incapacity of the subjects, when under a natural impossibility of keeping it; the threatening and penalty lieth upon us indeed, till we flee to another court and covenant. The Jewish covenant was abolished when Christ repealed the law of Moses; that covenant dealt with us as servants, the gospel dealeth with us as sons, in a more ingenuous way, and inviting us to God upon nobler motives. And partly, from the nature of that fear that doth accompany it; it driveth us from God, not to God, Gen. iii. 8. Adam hid himself among the bushes; and he gives us this reason, because he was afraid; and still we all fly from a condemning God; but to a pardoning God we are encouraged to come nigh: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' In the wicked, the fear of God's wrath once begun, it increaseth daily, till it come to the desperate fear of the damned; and the fault is not in the law, or in the Spirit, but in man, who runneth from his own happiness, and maketh an ill use of God's warnings.

Use 2. Is to put us upon trial, and self-reflection. All that attend upon ordinances, receive some spirit or other—a spirit of bondage, or a spirit of adoption; now what kind of spirit are we actuated withal? God's children, who are adopted into his family, may have some degree of the spirit of bondage, great mixtures of fears and discouragements; for only 'perfect love casteth out fear,' 1 John iv. 18; but these fears are overbalanced by the spirit of adoption; they have some filial boldness, a better spirit than a slave; do not wholly sin away the love of a father, though the delight and comfort be much obstructed. It was a sad word for a child of God to speak: Ps. lxxvii. 3, 'I thought of God, and I was troubled.' The remembrance of God may augment their grief, when conscience representeth his abused favours as the cause of his present wrath and displeasure with them; but this is not their constant temper, but only in great desertions. For a constancy, while sin remaineth, somewhat of bondage remaineth; but there is a partial and a predominant legality. The *partial* may be found in the regenerate, who do by degrees overcome the servile fear of condemnation, and grow up more and more into a gospel spirit; certainly where that prevaileth, there will be liberty: 2 Cor. iii. 17. Though for a while

the heir differeth nothing, or nothing to speak of, from a servant, yet in time he becometh himself as a son, and is treated as a son; and they get more comfort and joy in the service of God. But the *predominant* legality is in the carnal; it may be known by the governing principle,—fear or love; the inseparable companion of the spirit of bondage is fear; and love and sonship, the spirit of adoption, go together. Where slavish fear prevaileth and influenceth our religion, it may be known by these two things:—

[1.] By their unwillingness and reluctancy to what they do for God. The good they do, they would not; and the evil they do not, they would do; that is, they would fain live in a sinful life if they durst, and be excused from religious duties, except that little outward part which their custom and credit engages them to perform; like birds that in a sunshine day sing in the cage, though they had rather be in the woods. They live not an holy life, though some of the duties which belong to it they observe, out of a fear to be damned; if they had their freest choice, they had rather live in the love of the creature than in the love of God; and the pleasures of the flesh than the heavenly life. But now they that have the spirit of adoption, and are inclined to the love of God and holiness, have hearts suited to their work: Ps. xl. 8, 'Thy law is in my heart;' and Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my law into their minds, and write them upon their hearts.' They obey, not from the urgings of the law from without, but from the poise and inclination of the new nature; not barely as enjoined, but as inclined. They do not say, O that this were no duty, or this sinful course lawful! but, O how I love thy law! Ps. cxix. 97. 'O that my ways were directed!' Ps. cxix. 5. They do not groan and complain of the strictness of the law, but of the remainders of corruption, Rom. vii. 24. Not, who will free me from the law? but who will free me from this body of death? Their will is to serve God more and better, not to be excused from the duties of holiness, or serving him at all.

[2.] By the cause of their trouble about what they have done, or left undone. They are not troubled for the offence done to God, but their own danger; not for sin, but merely the punishment; as Esau sought the blessing with tears, when he had lost it, Heb. xii. 17. He was troubled, but why? *Non quia vendiderat, sed quia perdiderat*. Not because he sold it, which was his sin; but lost the privileges of the birthright, which was his misery. So many carnal men, whose hearts are in a secret love and league with their lusts, yet are troubled about their condition, not because they are afraid to sin, but afraid to be damned; it is not God's displeasure they care for, but their own safety. The young man went away sad and grieved, Mark x. 22, because he had great possessions; because he could not reconcile his covetous mind with Christ's counsel and direction. Felix trembled, being convinced of sins, which he was loath to discontinue and break off. Slavish fear, though it doth not divorce the heart from its lusts, yet it raiseth trouble about them.

Use 3. Is to press you to get rid of this spirit of bondage, and to prevail upon it more and more. For motives,—

[1.] It is dishonourable to God, and supposeth strange prejudices and misrepresentations of God; as if his government were a kind of

tyranny, grievous and hurtful to man; and we think him a hard master whom it is impossible to please; as the evil and slothful servant, Mat. xxv. 24, 25, 'I knew that thou wert an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowed, and gathering where thou hast not strawed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.' His fear was the cause of his negligence and unfaithfulness; which fear is begotten in us by a false opinion of God, which rendereth him dreadful, rigorous, and terrible to the soul. While we look upon God through the glass of our guilty fears, we draw a strange picture of him in our minds, as if he were a rigid lawgiver, and a severe avenger, harsh, and hard to be pleased, and we are therefore unwilling to submit to him.

[2.] It is prejudicial to us, in many regards.

(1.) It hindereth our free and delightful converse with God. The legal spirit hath no boldness in his presence, but is filled with tormenting fear and horror at the thoughts of him; the spirit of adoption giveth us confidence and boldness in prayer, Heb. iv. 16; and Eph. iii. 12; but on the contrary, the spirit of bondage maketh us hang off from God. As Adam was afraid, and ran to the bushes, Gen. iii. 8; and David had a dark and uncomfortable spirit, and grew shy of God after his sin, Ps. xxxii. 3, 4, fain to issue forth an injunction or practical decree in the soul to bring his backward heart into his presence, ver. 5. 'And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord of Hosts,' Gen. iv. 16, as unable to abide there, where the frequent ordinances of God might put him in remembrance of him. And Jam. ii. 19, 'The devils believe, and tremble;' they abhor their own thoughts of God, as reviving terror in them. The Papists think it boldness to go to God without the mediation and intercession of the saints; the original of that practice was slavish fear, when God had opened a door of access to himself.

[2.] It breaketh our courage in owning the ways of God, and truths of God. The apostle when he presseth Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor his servants, and to be partakers of the afflictions of the gospel,—urgeth this argument, 2 Tim. i. 7, 8, 'For we have not received the spirit of fear, but the spirit of love, and power, and of a sound mind: πνεῦμα δουλίας is πνεῦμα δειλίας,—a poor, cowardly, dastardly spirit, mated or overcome with every difficulty; but now a spirit confirmed in the love of God, and the faith and hope of the gospel, is a spirit of power and fortitude. 'The righteous is as bold as a lion,' Pro. xxviii. 1. Dan. iii. 17, 18, 'If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king! but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' And Rom. viii. 37, 38, 'I am persuaded, that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

[3.] It hindereth the readiness and cheerfulness of our service, and crippleth our endeavours. The slothful servant was afraid, Luke xix. 21, 22. When we do not know whether we shall please or be accepted or no, it is a very discouraging thing; and we drive on heavily, when

nothing appears to us but fear; but love maketh a willing people: 1 John v. 3, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.'

[4.] It resisteth sin unwillingly; we had rather let it alone than go about it; the mortifying of lust is like the cutting off of an arm with a rusty saw; rather let go anything than sin; but grace furnisheth us with the most powerful arguments.

For means,—

1. Cherish good thoughts of God. The spirit of bondage is increased upon us by unreasonable fears and jealousies of God; 'The Lord is good, and doth good,' Ps. cxix. 68. His commands are not grievous: Mat. xi. 30, 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light.' The trials sent us by him are not above measure, nor beyond strength: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'Who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able;' nor his punishments above deserving: Neh. ix. 13, 'Thou hast punished us less than we deserved.' He is not hard to be pleased, nor inexorable upon our infirmities: Mal. iii. 17, 'And I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.' 'He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Heb. xi. 6.

2. Study the nature and constitution of the gospel, which maketh rich preparation of grace, help, and comfort for you. This is God's act of oblivion, which easeth you of your troubles; for here God promiseth to blot out your transgressions, and remember your sins no more; this is a sanctuary and refuge for your distressed souls to fly unto, when pursued by the law's curse; the charter of your hopes, or the word of salvation which secureth you against the law's curse, or the fears of the damnation of hell. The law is good, as a rule of duty, but the gospel is glorious, 1 Tim. i. 8, 11. In short, your souls will never sit easily within you, till you resolve not to seek for that in the law which is only to be found in the gospel,—peace of conscience, and reconciliation with God; the law can save only the innocent; but the gospel pardoneth the penitent sinner. Look not for that in self, which is only to be found in Christ, a perfect righteousness and merit to appease God's justice, and propitiate him to us; this is only by the blood and obedience of Christ; never look for that on earth which is only to be had in heaven, which is exact and unspotted holiness, Jude 21. 'Then we are presented faultless in his presence.'

3. A hearty and sincere love to God: 1 John iv. 18, 'There is no fear in love, for perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment, and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.' He speaketh not of a child-like reverence of the divine majesty, or a carefulness not to displease him; but of slavish fear of condemnation, which is the life and soul of many men's religion; but they are never soundly converted till God hath their hearts, that is, their love. Now this strong and fervent love, arising from faith in Christ, driveth and forceth this tormenting fear out of the heart. Men will never be afraid of him whom they love; and on the other side, will not love him whom they look upon as ready to condemn them, and cast them into hell. Surely God will never damn the soul that loveth him; therefore if we would get rid of the fear of wrath or hell, let us love God with our highest and best affections. We have reason to love him, if we consider the

wonder of his love and good will to sinners, manifested to us in and by Jesus Christ.

4. Live holily, and obey the motions of the sanctifying Spirit. We deprive ourselves of comfort by falling into sin ; the more the Spirit is a sanctifier, the more a comforter. Holiness breedeth a generous confidence: 1 Jolin iii. 2, 'Behold, now we are the sons of God.' Gal. v. 18, 'But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.' If we are not watchful against sin, our bondage returneth ; therefore David saith, Ps. li. 12, 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy free Spirit.' The Holy Spirit withdraweth and suspendeth his comforts, when we walk vainly and loosely ; then we cannot serve God with any delight and readiness of mind ; it is not a free spirit, but a servile, that then governeth us, and influenceth our actions.

SERMON XXIII.

But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.—ROM. VIII. 15.

IN the words we have,—

First, A privilege,—'Ye have received the spirit of adoption.'

Second. One special fruit and effect of it,—'Whereby we cry, Abba, Father.'

In setting down the effect, the change is emphatical ; *ye* received ; *we* cry ; he includeth himself, and puts in his own name together with theirs, to show that it is a privilege common to all that receive the new testament ; the meanest and least of God's children have an affectionate and child-like way of praying unto God.

Doct. That the spirit which we receive under the new covenant dispensation, is a spirit of adoption.

I shall explain these five things :

1. The state of adoption which we obtain under the new testament.

2. The spirit of adoption consequent thereupon.

3. Whether all that live under the new testament dispensation have the spirit of adoption.

4. Whether all that have it, know it.

5. The reasons why this is the fruit of the new covenant dispensation.

1. What is the state of adoption ? Our admission into God's family, that he will be a father to us, and we shall be his children : 2 Cor. vi. 18, 'I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' Which is a great privilege, if we consider three things, (1.) His relation to mankind in the general ; (2.) His relation to the ancient church under the legal covenant ; (3.) The estate wherein his grace found us, when he was pleased to take us into his family.

[1.] His relation to mankind in general. So he is the father of all

the world, as he created them; and Adam is called the son of God, Luke iii. 38. He is a father to any, who giveth them being, and hath a right to govern them; so is God to us; he made us, and is the sole cause of our being and not being, and so hath a right in us to dispose of us at his own pleasure. But the relation that we have to God by adoption is distinct from the natural being; this is our new being, which we have from him as his redeemed ones; our natural being flowed from his benignity and common bounty, but our spiritual being from his special grace and love to us in Christ. By creation we are his children, as he formed us in the womb, and created the soul within us; called therefore the Father of spirits, Heb. xii. 9, in opposition to the fathers of our flesh; but he is our father by adoption, as we are regenerated by the Holy Ghost: John i. 12, 13, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; being born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Our new birth and spiritual being in Christ, is the next ground of our adoption, and so we come into a nearer relation to him, that we may be capable of receiving the fruits of his special love; it is the benefit of our redemption applied by his sanctifying Spirit to all them that shall be heirs of life. By the common relation, God hath a title to our dearest love, but we have no title to his highest benefits; and therefore he is our father in a more comfortable sense, as we are his workmanship in Christ.

[2.] His relation to the ancient church through the legal covenant. So God was a father to them, and they were his children; for Israel was called his first-born, Exod. iv. 22, in opposition to other nations, who were left to perish in their own ways; and their descendants are called 'the children of the kingdom,' Mat. viii. 12, because they had the ordinances and means of grace. But the gospel-church is properly 'the church of the first-born,' Heb. xii. 23, as they have a clearer knowledge of the privileges belonging to God's children, and a larger participation, and more comfortable use of them; and so are freed from that rigour and servitude which belonged to the first administration of the covenant of grace. They have that which answereth the privilege of primogeniture, *jus sacerdotis, et jus hæreditatis*. The right of priesthood,—as they are 'a royal priesthood,' 1 Pet. ii. 9; 'made kings and priests unto God,' Rev. i. 5, because they 'offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,' 1 Pet. ii. 5. They are separated by the election of God from the rest of the world, and have an unction from his Holy Spirit, 1 John ii. 20; and so are qualified to offer up themselves, Rom. xii. 1, and prayers and praises, and alms unto God, Heb. xiii. 15, 16. The other privilege of the birth-right is, *jus hæreditatis*; the first-born had a double portion, not only of possessions, but of dignity and honour, above their brethren. All God's children are heirs, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance; the multitude of co-heirs doth not lessen the inheritance, nor make the privilege less glorious; they are 'heirs of salvation,' Heb. i. 14.

[3.] The estate wherein his grace found us, when he was pleased to take us into his family. We were by nature children of wrath, wretched children, Eph. ii. 3, that had deprived ourselves of the inheritance, wasted our patrimony, forfeited our right to the promises; but our

inheritance is redeemed, and the forfeiture taken off by Christ; we are brought back again into the family, dignified with the privileges of the first-born, made priests unto God; and above all his other creatures, do become his special portion: *Jan. i. 18*, 'Of his own will begat he us, to be a kind of first fruits of his creatures;' and made heirs of the kingdom, *James ii. 5*. Now for us to have the blessed God, whom we had so often offended, to become our reconciled father in Christ,—O what wonderful love is this! That we should be admitted into the church of the first-born, have free liberty to worship God, and have a right to such a blessed and glorious inheritance!

2. What is the spirit of adoption? First, We are made sons, and then we have the Spirit of his Son, *Gal. iv. 6*; being adopted into God's family, we have a spirit suitable. They that use to adopt children give them some kind of token to express their love; so here is a gift answerable to the dignity of our estate, and the love of a father, and that is the gift of the Spirit; the dignity is inward and spiritual; and the gift answereth it: 'He hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.' God would not distinguish the good from the bad, the heirs of promise from the children of wrath, by the blessings of his common providence; but with what suiteth better with that intimate communion that we have with him as a father: *1 John iii. 24*, 'Hereby we know that we dwell in God, and God dwelleth in us, by his Spirit that he hath given us.' Spiritual things are best manifested and discovered to us in a spiritual manner, and by the effects proper to them. Secondly, it is the highest demonstration of God's love to us. In giving us worldly things, he giveth something without himself; but in giving us the Spirit he giveth us himself; for the Godhead is undivided, and God hath no greater thing to give us than himself; as the apostle saith, *Heb. vi. 13*, that when God had no greater thing to swear by, he sware by himself, so we may say here, it was the evidence of God's love to Christ as mediator: *John iii. 34*, 'He loved him, and gave him the Spirit without measure;' so those that are Christ's, because God loveth them, he giveth them the Spirit. Other things may be given in anger, but not the Spirit: *Prov. iii. 32*, 'The froward is an abomination to the Lord, but his secret is with the righteous;' implying, that those that are an abomination to the Lord may have other things, and perish for ever; but if his secret be with us, his illuminating, sanctifying, comforting Spirit, we have a sure pledge of his love. The context showeth wicked men may have worldly felicity, even to envy, but they have not his secret, which the righteous have. Though their condition be very mean and base in the world, he dealeth with them as with friends, yea, as children; the one hath the visible blessings, the other hath his secret, the inward comforts and operations of his Spirit.

But yet the business is not dispatched. The text speaketh not only of the gift of the Spirit, but of the spirit of adoption. What is that? Answer. We must distinguish between the spirit of regeneration, and the spirit of adoption; they are two acts of the same Spirit, and the one maketh way for the other; yet the consideration of them is different. The Holy Ghost, as a Spirit of regeneration, doth close us first with Christ; and afterwards, as a Spirit of adoption, maketh his abode in our hearts. As a Spirit of regeneration, he worketh in us the first

grace, and causeth us to believe unto justification and adoption; and having made his entry into our souls after believing, he is given to us in a more eminent manner than before, and doth possess us in the name of Christ, as his agent, and keepeth a-foot his interest in our souls. The spirit of regeneration is tied to no condition, but is dispensed according to the good pleasure of God; only we are to use the means; to attend upon the word and pray, and our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, Luke xi. 13. If any miss the gift, it is of themselves; if they have it, it is the mere grace of God. But the Spirit of adoption is tied to conditions, and is promised to those that with true faith and repentance do seek after the grace of God in Jesus Christ: Eph. i. 13, 'After ye believed, ye received the Holy Spirit of promise;' and Gal. iii. 14, 'Receive the promise of the Spirit by faith;' and Acts ii. 38, 'Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;' and Prov. i. 23, 'Turn you at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you;' Acts xix. 2, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?' John vii. 39, 'This he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive;' Acts v. 32, 'The Holy Ghost, which he hath given to them that obey him.' In these and many more places, the Spirit of adoption and further sanctification is spoken of. As a Spirit of regeneration, he buildeth an house for himself; and then, as a Spirit of adoption, he dwelleth in the house so built and furnished; as bees first make their cells, and then dwell in them. By repentance and faith there is a fit mansion prepared for him, and then he taketh up his residence and abode in us. The first grace is given that we may believe; the second upon believing; the first is the Spirit's renewing; the second is the Spirit's inhabiting.

But yet the business is not finished. The Spirit is called the Spirit of adoption, from his use and effect; and implieth that work of the Holy Spirit whereby the souls of believers are framed to a son-like disposition. One effect is mentioned in the text, his inclining us to have recourse to God as a Father: 'The spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;' but other things are intended. They may be reduced to these three heads: 1. Child-like love. 2. Child-like obedience. And 3. Child-like hope and dependence.

[1.] A child-like love to God. The design of the gospel is the revelation of God's love to us, and the recovery of our love to God; therefore the work of the Spirit is to reveal the love and mercy of God to sinners, or the way of reconciliation to God by Christ; not God's love to us in particular at first. For we do not as yet see our own particular interest, but come afterward, when we are reconciled to God, and live in obedience to him. Then he becometh a witness to us, verse 16; but at first he openeth a door of hope to us, by revealing God's love to sinners on gracious terms; it is revealed in the gospel; but it is 'shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost,' Rom. v. 5. That love spoken of there respects the offer of pardon and life founded on the death of Christ; therefore a spirit of love bred in us by the wonderful grace discovered in the gospel, is the first effect of the spirit of adoption. It is great love that God will so freely pass by our many offences, and adopt and take us into his family; that we do no longer

fly from him as a condemning God, but have recourse to him as a pardoning God. This love is manifested by our desires after him, delight in him, and frequent recourse to him in prayer, representing all our grievances and wants to him. This crying to him as a father mentioned in the text, through the hope we have by Christ, is the instinct of the spirit of adoption.

[2.] A child-like obedience. The great duty of children is to love, please, and honour their father; and God standing in this relation to us, expecteth it from us: Mal. i. 6, 'If I be a father, where is mine honour? If I be a master, where is my fear?' He will do all that can be expected from a father, and therefore we must do all that belongeth to children: So 1 Pet. i. 14, 'As dear children, not fashioning yourselves to the former lusts of your ignorance;' and verse 17, 'If ye call on the Father,' etc. 'Be ye followers of God, as dear children,' Eph. v. 1. Now the Spirit enableth and inclineth us to an affectionate and child-like way of serving God; partly, as he reneweth and healeth our natures, and sanctifieth us unto God: 'I will put my Spirit into them, and they shall walk in my ways,' Ezek. xxxvi. 27; and partly, by gratitude and filial love he possesseth us with a desire and care to please him. For as the benefits we have from God's fatherly love are the best, and greatest, and surest; so it calleth for the best returns of our thankfulness and obedience; the privileges of our adoption being the sweetest and strongest bonds and obligations to duty that can be laid upon us; therefore it must be done in a free and child-like way.

[3.] A child-like hope and dependence, not only for what we want in this world, but chiefly for the happiness of another and better world. What may we not expect from a father, and from an almighty father? If God be your father, you can want no good thing, either for soul or body. Our Lord dissuaded anxiety and carefulness of mind upon this ground, because we have a father, and a father that careth for us, Mat. vi. 25, 32. But chiefly, he doth incline us to the blessed inheritance; being made children, we begin to look after a child's portion. He revealeth the truth and worth of it, Eph. i. 17, 18; and farther confirmeth us of the certainty of it, as a pledge and earnest, by working and dwelling in our hearts: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit;' prepareth us, fits us for it: 2 Cor. v. 5, 'He that hath wrought us to this selfsame thing, is God;' raised our hearts to long after it, and comforts our hearts with the hopes of it: Rom. viii. 23, 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies;'—and so begetteth that free, noble, and princely spirit which upholdeth us with courage in the midst of all trials and difficulties, and maketh us go on cheerfully in the work of holiness, waiting for the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. This in short, is the spirit of adoption, a spirit of love, holiness, and heavenly-mindedness. Love inclineth us to God; holiness suiteth us to our work, that we may have a complacency in it; heavenly-mindedness giveth us a confidence, and a princely noble spirit, that is gotten above the hopes and fears of the world.

3. Whether all that live under the new testament dispensation, have the spirit of adoption?

Answer. No; But take these considerations:

[1.] This showeth what the doctrine of the gospel can do, and should do: But it doth not always do it, because many come under the profession of the gospel, but not under the power of it. But this is the Spirit that came down to accompany the gospel, and the ministry of it; and if it be not received and entertained by men, they may blame themselves. The gospel is serviceable to this end and purpose, to produce such a spirit. If men carry it as if they knew not whether there be a Spirit of adoption, yea or no, there is no fault or defect in the gospel, but they are wanting to themselves, strangers to the grace of the covenant under which they live, by their own negligence and folly. If manna fall about the tents of Israel, and the people will not go to gather it to fill their omer, they may starve, though the bread of heaven be dispensed by such a liberal provision. The Spirit is ready, but they are lazy; the Spirit, by accident, is a cause of servile fear; but these motions are his proper effects.

[2.] A superficial christianity is rewarded with common gifts, but the real christianity with special graces. All that profess the faith, and are baptized into Christ, Gal. iii. 26, 27, are visibly adopted by God into his family, and are under a visible administration of the covenant of grace. So far as they are adopted into God's family, so far they are made partakers of the Spirit. Christ giveth to common christians those common gifts which he giveth not to the heathen world; knowledge of the mysteries of godliness; abilities of utterance and speech about spiritual and heavenly things; some affection also to them, called 'tasting of the good word, the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come,' Heb. vi. These will not prove us true christians, or really in God's special favour, but only visible professed christians.

[3.] Among the sincere, some have not the spirit of adoption at so full a rate as others have; neither so pure and fervent a love to God; nor such a respectful obedience and submission to him; nor such an holy confidence and boldness, becoming that great happiness which they are called unto, who have the right and hope of the blessed inheritance; and so not so much of that son-like disposition, which the Spirit worketh by revealing the love and mercy of God, contained in the gospel, in the hearts of his people. Some do more improve their privileges than others do; now they cannot rationally expect the best and richest fruits of this gift, and to be enabled and enlarged by the Spirit, who do not give such ready entertainment and obedience to his motions, as the more serious and fruitful christian doth.

4. But do all that have it, know that they have it? I answer,—

[1.] The spirit of adoption is in some weak, and therefore not so perceptible as it is in others; for small and weak things are hardly discerned. All God's children have the spirit of adoption in the effects, though not in the sense and feeling of it. They have the spirit of comfort, though not the comfort of it; for 'if any have not the Spirit of Christ, they are none of his,' Rom. viii. 9. The witness of his Spirit is spoken of, as distinct from receiving the Spirit, ver. 16; there is a child-like inclination and impression left upon them, though they know

it not, own it not. There is a difference between the thing itself, and the degree; we cannot say we have not the spirit of adoption, because we have not so much of this spirit, calming our hearts, rebuking our fears, and filling us with joy and peace in believing. The Spirit was given to Christ without measure, but to christians in a different measure and proportion, as they yield up themselves more or less to the conduct of his grace, and overcome the enemies of their peace, the devil, the world, and the flesh. The impression is left upon some in a smaller, upon some in a larger character; all are not of a growth and size; some are more real christians, others only *ἐν ὀνόματι*: eminent grace will more discover itself, than a little grace under a heap of imperfections; a fervent love will be felt, and a lively hope of heaven demonstrate itself, and an exact obedience less liable to dispute, as we increase in love, and heavenly mindedness; so the Spirit discovereth his presence in us.

[2.] Where the Spirit of adoption acteth at the lowest rate, there is something to difference it from the spirit of bondage.

(1.) They are carried on to wait upon God upon gospel grounds, though they cannot apply the comforts, and enter themselves heirs to the privileges thereof; some know they are of the truth, and can make out their title with clearness and satisfaction: 1 John iii. 14, 'And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him;' others depend on God's general offer, while their claim and sincerity is as yet questionable. God offereth to be a father in Christ to all penitent believers, and so we are encouraged to come to him by Christ; the apostle telleth us, Heb. vii. 19, that the gospel brought in a better hope, by virtue of which we draw nigh to God. There is a child-like inclination, when there is not a child-like familiarity and boldness; the soul cannot keep away from God, but will come to him that he may pardon our sins, and heal our souls, and save our persons. Now this is the spirit of adoption in the lower, or more obscure way of addressing ourselves to God as a father.

(2.) There are child-like groans, as well as child-like comforts; compare Rom. viii. 26, 'The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with sighs and groans, which cannot be uttered;' with 1 Pet. i. 8, 'In whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' In some the Spirit only discovereth himself by hungering and thirsting after righteousness; in others he worketh peace which passeth all understanding, and joy unspeakable and full of glory.

(3.) There is a child-like reverence, when there is not a child-like confidence. They are afraid to offend their heavenly Father, though they cannot challenge all the fruits and effects of his fatherly love as belonging to them; when they cannot own him as a father with delightful confidence, yet they dare not offend him; for all God's children have a child-like love to him, when they have not a full sense and assurance of his paternal love to them; for he hath a title to our dearest love, before we can make out a title to his benefits. Now they that love God, hate evil, Ps. xvii. 10; are tender of omitting any duty, or committing any offence. Where there is this holy awe, there is a spirit of adoption; it is an owning of God as a father: 1 Pet. i. 17, 'If ye

call on the Father,' &c., and therefore this reverence we call filial fear.

(4.) The heart is carried out to heavenly things, though we cannot call them ours; all that are children, do look after a child's portion. There is a twofold hope, First, a hope which is the effect of regeneration, 1 Pet. i. 3; and a hope which is the effect of experience, Rom. v. 4. Now this puts a difference between the spirit of bondage, and the servile mercenary spirit, when the current of thine affections is carried out after the eternal inheritance; servants and mercenaries must have pay in hand; they covenant with you from day to day, or from quarter to quarter, or from year to year; a child in the family tarrieth for a child's portion: Mat. vi. 4, 'When thou dost thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogue, and in the street; they have their reward;' *Ἀπέχουσι τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν*. Present wages they look for, discharge God from other things; if he will give them the honour and pleasure of the world, they are satisfied, and look for no more.

5. Why this is the fruit of the new covenant dispensation? There are three things which must not be severed, [1.] The object. [2.] A powerful agent. [3.] The disposition of the subject thence resulting.

[1.] There is an object, and that is the gospel, offering pardon and life, reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory. In the gospel or new covenant, we have the highest discovery of God's fatherly goodness, that he might be more amiable and lovely to us, and be loved by us. The great end of reconciling and saving lost man by Christ, his wonderful condescension in his incarnation, life, sufferings and death, was to commend his love to us: Rom. v. 8, 'Herein God commended his love to us, in that when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' To this end also tend his merciful covenant and promises, that we might not look upon God as a condemning judge, but as a gracious and reconciled father, offering to be so to all that will accept Christ, and submit to him. God would not immediately beget this persuasion in our minds by his own secret power, but use this objective means, work upon our love by love, because he will work on man agreeably to the nature of man; his covenant shall speak him a father, that we may apprehend him as a father.

[2.] There is an internal powerful agent, and that is the Spirit. Besides the external objective means, there must be an internal effective cause; for though God's fatherly love doth shine resplendently without us, in the person of the mediator, and the riches of the gospel; yet the dead and dark heart of man is not affected with it:—John i. 5, 'And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not,' till God shine into our hearts: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;'—unless this doctrine of God's fatherly love and grace be accompanied with his illuminating, sanctifying, comforting Spirit, who sheds abroad this love in our hearts which is revealed in the gospel.

[3.] The disposition thence resulting from the application of this object to us by the Spirit. Such as the object is, such are the affec-

tions stirred up in us; as by law-truths the Spirit worketh conviction terrors of conscience, legal contrition, Acts ii. 37, and thence bondage ariseth; so by the gospel, where God is represented as the Father of mercies, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our God and Father, the impression must be suitable. This Spirit that worketh by the gospel, must needs be the spirit of adoption, or such a spirit as worketh a child-like disposition in us, for the impression must always be according to the stamp.

Use 1. To persuade us to look after the spirit of adoption. We never do seriously and closely christianize, till we get it; but either have a literal christianity, a form of knowledge in the gospel, without the life and power; or a legal, old-testament spirit. To quicken you, consider these motives or privileges which you will have by it,—

[1.] Peace of conscience,—a rest from those troubled and unquiet thoughts which otherwise would perplex us: Rom. xiv. 17, ‘For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;’ and Rom. xv. 13, ‘Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.’ This calm of mind differeth from the deadness and benumbedness of a stupid conscience; that is a thing we never laboured for, groweth upon us we know not how; it is maintained by idleness, rather than by watchfulness and diligence; and is inconsistent with serious thoughts of God and our eternal condition; but this is the fruit of our reconciliation with God, and those blessed privileges we enjoy in his family; it stirreth up admiration and thankfulness.

[2.] Liberty in prayer. For the great help we have in prayer is from the spirit of adoption: Zech. xii. 10, ‘I will pour out upon you the spirit of grace and supplication.’ That Spirit which cometh from the grace and free favour of God, stirring up child-like addresses to God, Rom. viii. 26; Jude. 21, ‘Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.’ Without this, our prayers are but a vain babbling.

[3.] Readiness in duty: 2 Cor. iii. 17, ‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.’ They serve God with a free spirit; the holy life is carried on with more sweetness and success; not by compulsion, but with ready mind: Ps. li. 12, ‘Uphold me with thy free Spirit;’ John viii. 32, ‘If the truth shall make you free, then are you free indeed.’ Men are under shackles and bondage if they have not the spirit of adoption; they drive on heavily, have not largeness of heart, and love to God, heaven, and holiness: Ps. cxix. 32, ‘I will run the ways of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.’ When the heart is suited to the work, there needs no other urgings; but if we force a course of religion upon ourselves, contrary to our own inclination, all is harsh, and ingrate, and cannot hold long.

[4.] Comfort in afflictions. Their true consolation and support in afflictions is the spirit of adoption: Heb. xii. 5, ‘Have you forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children?’ and therefore he pursueth it all along. They that enjoy the privileges of the family, must submit to the discipline of the family; God will take his own course in bringing up his children; ‘he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,’ Heb. xii. 6, 7, 8. While we have flesh in us,

there is use for the rod; if God should suffer us to go on in our sins, we were not legitimate, but degenerate children; children take it patiently if beaten by their parents for their faults. Parents may err through want of wisdom; their chastisement is arbitrary and irregular; there is more of compassion than passion in God. God's rod is regulated with perfect wisdom, ordered by the highest love, and tends to the greatest end, our holiness here, and happiness for ever; and we have Christ's example, John xviii. 11, 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' The bitterest potions come not from God as a judge, but as a father; are tempered by a father's hand.

[5.] Hope of the benefits of the new covenant, pardon and life. First, Pardon. We often forget the duty of children, but God doth not forget the bowels of a father; our adoption giveth us hope that he will not deal severely with us, Mal. iii. 17; Ps. ciii. 13. The relation of a child is more durable, not so easily broken off, as that of a servant; a child is a child still, and therefore allowed to remain in the family, when a servant must be gone. Secondly, For life everlasting and glory: Rom. viii. 17, 'And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him.' 1 John iii. 1, 2. The spirit of adoption doth both encourage, and incline us to wait for it, Rom. viii. 25. But what shall we do to get this spirit of adoption?

(1.) It is certain that the gift of the Spirit is the fruit of our reconciliation with God. The general reconciliation with mankind, was evidenced by pouring out the Spirit; personal and particular reconciliation with God, is the ground of giving the spirit of adoption to us: Rom. v. 11, 'We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.' Therefore do what God requireth in order to reconciliation; enter into conditions of peace; enter into covenant with God; abhor your former disobedience; cast away the weapons of defiance; and love God, and delight in him.

(2.) Steep your minds in frequent thoughts of God's fatherly goodness: 1 John iii. 1, 'Behold what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!' Consider it, and admire it!

Use 2. Reflection. Have we the spirit of adoption? It is known,—

[1.] By a kind of naturalness to come to God, and open our hearts to him; in all our wants to go and cry, Abba, Father. The spirit of adoption much worketh and discovereth itself in prayer; to cry to our Father is an act becoming the sons of God; the manner is fervent, affectionate; this cry is not by the tongue, but by the heart; the Lord needeth no interpreter between him and the hearts of his children; he that heareth without ears can interpret our desires, though not uttered by the tongue; desires are strong cries: Ps. x. 17, 'Thou hast heard the desires of the humble; Ps. xxxviii. 9, 'Lord! all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee.' This crying is opposite to that careless formality and deadness, which is in other men's prayers; this crying to God, as one that is able and ready to help us, is a great fruit of the spirit of adoption; it is a childlike boldness.

[2.] A childlike ingenuonsness in the course of obedience to him; both in our abstaining from sin,—as the Rechabites are an emblem:

Jer. xxxv. 6, 'We dare not break the commands of our father,'—and in a ready diligence in our obedience: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of God constraineth us; for we thus judge, if one died for all, then were all dead,' &c. The will of our Father is instead of all reasons; Christ ever urged this, 'This is the will of my Father,' John vi. 26, 38. So to christians, 1 Thes. v. 18, 'This is the will of God in Christ concerning you:' 1 Thes. iv. 3, 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.' That is enough, beyond all enforcements.

[3.] As to the inheritance, they are very chary of it, and will not hazard the hope and comfort of it upon easy terms: Heb. xii. 16, 'Let there not be found a profane person, as Esau, who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage;' 1 Kings xxi. 3, 'And Naboth said to Ahab, the Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my father to thee.'

Use 3. Is direction to us in the Lord's supper. This is the seal of the new covenant; the table which God keepeth for the entertainment of his family; the feast for souls; God's children are sure of welcome; it is children's bread we eat; we come hither both to remember the grounds of our adoption, and to receive the comfort of it; we come to meditate on the fatherly love of God, and to get a new taste and experience of it in our own souls. Here we have special communion with him as children with a father; we come for a further participation of the Spirit, 'for we all drink into one Spirit,' 1 Cor. xii. 13. Here we look up unto God, and in our hearts cry, *Abba, Father.* We bind ourselves also to perform the duty of children; with new resolution to submit to his fatherly government, both in his laws and providences, to his commanding and disposing will; and we lift up our hope for the eternal inheritance.

SERMON XXIV.

The Spirit itself witnesseth to our spirits, that we are the children of God.—Rom. VIII. 16.

IN the words we have,—1. The privilege assured: That we are the children of God. 2. The double testimony by which it is confirmed,—The Spirit itself beareth witness to our spirits; or if you will, here are *testes, et testimonium*; the thing witnessed,—that we are the children of God; and the witnesses,—they are two, the Spirit itself, and our spirits; and in the mouth of two or three witnesses every thing is established. The Spirit itself is the Holy Ghost, and our spirits are our renewed consciences.

Doct. That our adoption into God's family is evidenced by the testimony of the Spirit to our spirits.

First, I shall show you the worth and value of the privilege; *Secondly,* Speak something of this double testimony by which it is assured to us.