

SERMON UPON PSALM VIII. 2.

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and avenger.—Ps. viii. 2.

THE scope of this psalm is to glorify God for the singular dignity he hath put upon man above all his works. The expressions literally and apparently refer to God's works of creation and providence about him; but in a divine and more spiritual sense the mysteries of redemption are intended, and secretly couched under them, as appeareth by the frequent quotations of this psalm in the New Testament.

There is a double honour put upon mankind—

1. That God hath ordained man, that feeble and weak creature, to subdue and conquer his enemies.

2. That God hath made him lord of all his other creatures; both which concern not only man in general, but especially Jesus Christ, God made man, and therefore both are applied to him. The first when the children welcome him with the acclamations proper to the Messiah: Mat. xxi. 15, 16, 'When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, Hosanna to the son of David, they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? and Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?' The other in many places, especially Heb. ii. 6-8, 'But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet: for in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.' So that man is both his champion and his deputy. He is his deputy: ver. 6, 'Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.' His champion, in the text: 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength,' &c.

In explaining these words, I shall inquire—(1.) Who are these babes and sucklings? (2.) Who is the enemy and avenger? (3.) What is the miracle and wonder that raised the prophet's admiration, and moved him to praise God for this?

I. Who are these babes and sucklings?

1. Man in general, who springeth from so weak and poor a beginning as that of babes and sucklings, yet is at length advanced to such power as to grapple with and overcome the enemy and the avenger.

2. David in particular, who being but a ruddy youth, God used him as an instrument to discomfit Goliath of Gath.

3. More especially our Lord Jesus Christ, who assuming our nature and all the sinless infirmities of it, and submitting to the weakness of an infant, and after dying, is gone in the same nature to reign in heaven, till he hath brought all his enemies under his feet, Ps. cx. 1 ; and 1 Cor. xv. 27, 'For he hath put all things under his feet ; but when he saith he hath put all things under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him.' Then was our human nature exalted above all other creatures, when the Son of God was made of a woman, carried in the womb as long a time as other infants are, Luke ii. 6 ; sucked as a babe, and afterwards died, and was received unto glory.

4. The apostles, who to outward appearance were despicable, in a manner children and sucklings in comparison of the great ones of the world, poor despised creatures, yet principal instruments of God's service and glory. Therefore it is notable that when Christ glorifieth his Father for the wise and free dispensation of his saving grace, Mat. xi. 25, he saith, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid those things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes ;' so called from the meanness of their condition. Compare the parallel places, Luke x. 21, and you shall see it was spoken when the disciples were sent abroad, and had power given them over unclean spirits : 'In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' This he acknowledged to be an act of infinite condescension in God.

5. Those children that cried hosanna to Christ make up part of the sense, Mat. xxi. 16 ; for Christ defendeth their practice by this scripture, when he was condemned by the wisest and greatest and proudest men in the world, such as were the scribes and pharisees at that time, he was praised and welcomed as the Messiah or son of David by the children.

6. Not only the apostles, but all those that fight under Christ's banner and are lifted into his confederacy may be called babes and sucklings—(1.) Because of their condition ; (2.) Their disposition.

[1.] Because of their condition. God is pleased often to make choice of the meanest and lowest : 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 'But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen ; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are ;' that is, God in the government of the world is pleased to subdue the enemies of his kingdom by weak and despised instruments.

[2.] Because of their disposition ; they are most humble spirited. We are told, Mat. xviii. 3, 'Except ye be converted, and become as

little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God.' As if he had said, you strive for pre-eminence and worldly greatness in my kingdom; I tell you my kingdom is a kingdom of babes, and containeth none but the humble, and such as are little in their own eyes, and are contented to be small and despised in the eyes of others, and so do not seek after great matters in the world. A young child knoweth not what striving or state meaneth; and therefore, by an emblem and visible representation of a child set in the midst of them, Christ would take them off from the expectation of a carnal kingdom.

II. Who is the enemy and the avenger? In the letter Goliath, in the mystery the devil and his agents and instruments. He is *ὁ ἐχθρὸς*, the enemy of God and man: Mat. xiii. 39, 'The enemy that soweth them is the devil;' and with him all the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15. These are wicked men: John viii. 44, 'For ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do;' 1 John iv. 4, 'Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.' The war is carried on between two heads and two seeds.

III. What is the miracle and wonder that raised the heart of the psalmist to praise God? It lieth in three things—(1.) That God hath ordained strength; (2.) That this lieth in their mouth; (3.) That this strength is sufficient to still the enemy and the avenger.

1. That there is strength in such weak creatures. Christ himself to outward appearance was a mean and despicable person, scorned, scourged, crucified, yet made perfect through sufferings, and crowned with glory and honour: Heb. ii. 9, 10, 'But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings.' And he hath strength enough to remove the impediments of our salvation, and doth powerfully conquer and subdue all his and our enemies. Christians are in themselves weak creatures, but there is strength ordained for them to do and suffer all things that belong to their duty, or may befall them in the way of their duty. As Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me,' and 'When I am weak, then am I strong,' 1 Cor. xii. 10. And this strength is said to be 'ordained,' or 'founded,' because it standeth upon a good foundation, the everlasting merit of the Son of God, who came out from God's bosom to reduce and call us to the dignity of his servants. The angels, those glorious creatures, when they fell by pride, were never restored, but are become the enemies of God and mankind. They usurped the honour due to God, and plunged man into their apostasy, but God hath ordained strength to recover man out of this thralldom, and vindicate his own glory, that mankind might not be wholly lost to him, Col. ii. 15, 'Having spoiled principalities and powers,' that is, spoiled them of their prey, on his cross. And afterwards by the power of his grace rescueth man: Col. i. 13, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.'

2. That this strength cometh out of the mouth; that is, it is not

by the power of the long sword, or by visible force and might, but by the breath of his mouth; that is to say—

[1.] By the word preached. Therefore it is said that he shall consume antichrist by the breath of his mouth, 2 Thes. ii. 8; and Rev. xix. 15, 'Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, wherewith he should smite the nations;' and Isa. xi. 4, 'He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,' that is, subdue and vanquish opposition by his wonderful word; therefore the word is called 'the rod of his strength,' Ps. cx. 2.

[2.] By confessing his name: Rom. x. 9, 10, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.' And this is one means of conviction, especially when this confession is accompanied with self-denial: Rev. xii. 11, 'They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony; not loving their lives to the death.' This bold confession is the fruit both of the word preached, and the spirit of faith given to them, 2 Cor. iv. 13, and also of Christ's actual assistance: Luke xxi. 15, 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom which your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay.' Now that by such means the kingdom of sin, Satan, and antichrist should be ruined in the world, this is and should be matter of admiration and praise.

[3.] The effect, to 'still the enemy and the avenger;' either by bridling their rage: Ps. lxxvi. 10, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain;' or silencing their contradiction: Acts vi. 10, 'They were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake;' Acts viii. 13, 'Simon wondered, beholding the signs and miracles that were done;' or changing their hearts, as Paul's, Acts ix. 6, and making him to be instrumental in changing others, Acts xxvi. 18, and determining interests, that the church hath liberty and opportunity to worship God: Acts ix. 31, 'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost.' Nay, the kingdom of Satan and his adherents plainly and apparently goeth to wreck. The devil, that proud and rebellious enemy of God and goodness, is by this means subdued and brought down; first cast out of a great part of his kingdom in men's hearts, none but obdurate sinners being left to him: John xii. 31, 32, 'Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me;' that is, the kingdom of Satan shall be destroyed, and a great part of the world brought to believe in me. And at last he shall be utterly confounded and destroyed: 1 Cor. xv. 24-27, 'He hath put all things under his feet;' all enemies, not one excepted, but shall be subdued to Christ.

Doct. That victory over Satan in our nature is matter of great praise and thankfulness to God, that the same nature that was lately foiled should yet be victorious.

1. I take this for granted, that Satan is the enemy and avenger; for the text speaks of an enemy and enemies, one chief; for so the

devil is said to be, Mat. xiii. 39, 'The enemy that soweth them is the devil.' He is an enemy to God and man. To God, as he affected and usurped divine honour, and for his pride was cast out of heaven into the torments of hell; falling by pride is therefore called the condemnation of the devil, 1 Tim. iii. 6, so James iii. 15, 'Sensual, earthly, devilish.' The glorious condition in which he was created tempted him to aspire higher than he was; and all ambition is devilish wisdom, called so from his sin. Also he is an enemy to mankind, because by his temptation came our fall and misery, and therefore he is said to be a murderer from the beginning. A malicious, proud, and bloody murderer of soul and body, and still he seeketh our destruction: 1 Peter v. 8, 'The devil like a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour.' In the text he is not only called the enemy and the avenger, but 'thine enemies.' The word 'thine' showeth that he is an enemy to God, and all goodness, and all good men who belong to God. And the plural expression, 'enemies,' noteth either the multitude of evil spirits who are with Satan, and are set to ruin mankind, or those their confederate party in the world, who are also many, and usually great and powerful. For the conflict is not only between the chiefs, but also the instruments on either side; between Satan on the one side, the head and father of the wicked, and Christ on the other, the captain of our salvation, Heb. ii. 10; or between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent: Gen. iii. 15, 'I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed, and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' The seeds are concerned in this enmity as well as the chiefs.

2. The nature of this enmity. It is double; as on Satan's part, both of nature and design, so on Christ's part, both of nature and office.

[1.] There is a perfect enmity between the nature of Christ and the nature of the devil. The nature of Satan is sinful, murderous, and destructive, for it is said he was a liar and murderer from the beginning, as before. So 1 John iii. 8, 'He that committeth sin is from the devil, and the devil sinneth from the beginning;' ver. 12, 'Cain was of that wicked one who slew his brother.' It is the devil's work to do all the hurt and mischief that he can to the bodies and souls of men, but the nature of Christ is quite contrary. It is his work to do good, and only good: Acts x. 38, 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him.' Christ did nothing by way of malice and revenge; he used not the power that he had to make men blind, or lame, or to kill any; no, not his worst enemies; but he went up and down doing good, giving sight to the blind, limbs to the lame, health to the sick, life to the dead; he rebuked his disciples when they called for fire from heaven to consume those that despised them, telling them they knew not what spirit they were of, Luke ix. 55, 56. No; all his miracles were acts of relief and succour, not pompous and destructive; bating only the blasting of the unfruitful fig-tree, which was an emblematical warning to the Jews, and his permitting the devil to enter into the herd of swine, which was a necessary demonstration of

the devil's malice and destructive cruelty, who, if he could not afflict men, would destroy swine.

[2.] An enmity of design; for Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8, as the devil seeketh to oppose the kingdom of Christ. Christ was set up to dissolve that sin and misery which Satan had brought upon the world; and the devil sought to keep it up and hinder our salvation. The devil is the disturber of the creation, and Christ the repairer of it; and these two, salvation and destruction, are perfectly opposite.

Now such an enmity as there is between Christ and Satan, such there is also between the confederates on either side.

(1.) An enmity or contrariety of nature. The seed of the serpent inherits his venomous qualities; for as they are an estate opposite to God, so they are to the people of God. All people of a false religion, whether infidels, or idolaters, or heretics, are of bloody and desperate principles, partly by the influence of their great guide and leader, partly because their false religion efferateth their minds, and stirreth them up into a blind, bitter zeal: 'These go in the way of Cain,' Jude 11. On the other side, Christ conveyeth his holy, meek, and lamb-like nature to his sincere worshippers and followers. Their righteous souls are vexed indeed with the impure conversations of the wicked, but so as to stir them up, not to passion, but compassion. They are grieved to see people go by droves to hell, and would fain rescue them out of the snares of the devil, but aim not at their destruction: Jude 22, 23, 'And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted with the flesh.'

(2.) There is an enmity of design, seeking to pull down what Satan would set up, all that sin, idolatry, error, and superstition whereby the world is corrupted: 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, and casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;' that is, to bring down all the disputings and reasonings and prejudices which are raised up against the power of the gospel, and hinder the acknowledgment and practice of the truth. Satan's end is to draw men into sin and damnation, and to dishonour God; theirs, to glorify God in the world, and save their own souls, and the souls of all about them.

3. This enmity of Satan and his instruments is carried on, both against Christ and his people, with much rage and fury: 'I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,' Gen. iii. 15. There is something common to both; for the word 'bruised' is used mutually both of the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. In this war, as usually in all other, there are wounds given on both sides. The devil bruisech Christ, and Christ bruisech Satan; only Christ's heel is bruised, but the devil's head is crushed; that is, he is finally destroyed.

[1.] Certain it is that Christ himself was bruised in the enterprise of redeeming poor captive souls, which showeth how much we should value our salvation, since it cost so dear. The Lord Jesus thought

not his whole humiliation from first to last too much, nor any price too dear, for overthrowing the devil's kingdom, and rescuing us into the liberty of God's children. But how was he bruised by the serpent? Certain it is on the one side that Christ's sufferings were the effects of man's sin, and a demonstration of God's holiness and governing justice. Therefore it is said, Isa. liii. 10, 11, 'It pleased the Father to bruise him.' Unless it had pleased the Lord to bruise him, Satan could never have bruised him. But, on the other side, they were also the effects of the malice and rage of the devil and his instruments. In his whole life he was tempted by Satan, often vexed with his instruments. Therefore he saith, 'Ye are of your father the devil.' But the closing stroke was at his death, Satan then doing the worst he could against him. When Judas contrived the plot, it is said the devil entered into him, Luke xxii. 3. When the high priest's servants came to take him, ver. 53, he telleth them, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' They did prevail at last to cause his shameful death; this was all they could do; this was the time the devil and they were permitted to work their wills upon him.

[2.] No christians are exempted from trials of their sincerity. God will have all obedience to be tried and honoured by opposition, and sometimes by grievous and sharp opposition: Rev. ii. 10, 'The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried.' Thus Job was permitted to be vexed by Satan for his trial, Job i. 12; and Paul had his messenger of Satan to try him, to see what shift he could make with sufficient internal grace against outward and vexatious evils, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8. Now it is better to undergo the fiery trial than the fiery torment. Tried we are then, but not destroyed; yea, sometimes hurried to death, and yet we overcome, Rev. xii. 11. Christ doth prevail upon opposition and by opposition. When Satan's instruments were killing christians, they were pulling down Satan's throne and advancing Christ's; and when they were butchered and slaughtered, yet they multiplied.

4. The means and manner of victory is to be considered.

[1.] Christ overcometh this enmity by taking our nature. He might have destroyed him by his divine power, but the conqueror is the seed of the woman, or the Son of God incarnate. He conquered in the same nature that was so lately foiled, and thereby Satan's main design is crossed and counter-worked, which was double—partly to make man jealous of God, as if he were envious of our happiness, and by this false representation to alienate our hearts, and make a breach between us and him: Gen. iii. 5, 'God knoweth that in the day ye eat thereof ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' This way would he weaken the esteem of God in our hearts; but hereby we have a fuller manifestation of his love to make him the more amiable to us: Rom. v. 8, 'But God commended his love to us, that when we were sinners, Christ died for us;' and John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;' and 1 John iv. 9, 10, 'In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him: herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent

his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' We would be as God, and Christ would be as man. Partly to depress the nature of man, which in innocency stood so near to God; that was the end of his malicious suggestion. But now it is advanced, and set up far above the angelical nature, and admitted to dwell with God in a personal union: Heb. ii. 16, 'For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.' The nature of man being only assumed by Christ, the angels are not concerned in it immediately. Man had the benefit and honour put upon him, especially in his glorified estate, Eph. i. 20, 21.

[2.] By his passion or death on the cross: Heb. ii. 14, 'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' Christ would not only take our nature, but also suffer in it, so to frustrate and make void the devil's design, which was to keep men for ever under the power of death, wherein he had involved him. He had brought sin upon us, and by sin, death, and in this condition, as the executioner of God's curse, he would still have held us, but that Christ came to put us into a condition of holiness and happiness, and so make us capable of eternal life. The devil did not conquer Christ by death, but Christ did conquer the devil. When the Roman soldiers were parting and spoiling his garments, he was spoiling principalities and powers.

[3.] By his resurrection and ascension. After he had been a sacrifice for sin, by his resurrection he overcame death, hell, and sin, and soon after he ascended into heaven, that he might triumph over the devil, and lead captivity captive, Eph. iv. 8. His enemies were foiled upon the cross, but his triumph over them was at his ascension, whereby he hath assured the world of his conquest, that he hath carried the day, and gained an absolute and complete victory; for our Lord in heaven is out of the reach of enemies, as having done his work; we are only left behind to scatter the relics of the battle.

[4.] By his sitting at the right hand of God he doth two things—
 (1.) He poureth out the Spirit, endowing his messengers with all gifts and graces, ordinary and extraordinary, to preach the gospel to the heathen world, whereby the old religion by which the devil's kingdom was supported went to wreck everywhere; his oracles were silenced, his superstitions suppressed; no more the same temples, the same rites, the same gods; all fell before God as worshipped in Christ: John xvi. 11, 'The Spirit shall convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.' It is true, in some parts of the world Satan yet reigneth, where Christ hath not pursued him with his gospel, or withdrawn his gospel for the ingratitude of men; but where it cometh, it prevaieth mightily, and the world cannot resist its convincing power.

[5.] By his secret and invisible providence he defendeth his people, and stilleth the enemy and avenger. Christ, as God incarnate, having the grant of a kingdom, is every way furnished with power to maintain it by means proper to the mediatory dispensation; by his word, Spirit, and providence. This last we are upon. All judgment is put into his hands, John v. 22. Though there be many vicissitudes and

changes in the outward condition of the church, yet by invisible ways God doth notably defeat Satan and his instruments. And though there be ebbings and flowings of the two kingdoms, yet we have much experience that Christ is upon the throne, by his protecting, strengthening, and assisting his faithful people, and prospering their just endeavours for the advancing of his kingdom. Sometimes he destroyeth enemies: Isa. xxvii. 4, 'Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle, I would go through them, and burn them together.' Sometimes he infatuateth their counsels: Job v. 12, 13, 'He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in his own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.' Sometimes he hideth his people in the secret of his presence, Ps. xxxi. 20. Sometimes he blasts all their prosperity by an invisible curse: Job xx. 26, 'A fire not blown shall consume them.' Or else he divides them, as you may read in 2 Chron. xx.

5. The degree of the success. How far is the enemy and avenger stilled? I answer—

[1.] *Non ratiōne essentiæ*; not to take away his life and being. No; there is a devil still, and shall be when the whole work of Christ's redemption is finished; for it is said of that time, Rev. xx. 10, 'That the devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet shall be tormented day and night for ever and for ever.' So Mat. xxv. 41, 'Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels.' Then eternal judgment is executed on the head of the wicked state. Sentence was passed before, and the devil feareth it: Mat. viii. 29, 'Art thou come to torment us before the time?' He was condemned before, but then the sentence is fully executed upon him; he is finally punished, and shall for ever remain among the damned.

[2.] *Non ratiōne malitiæ*, not in regard of malice and enmity, for the enmity ever continueth between the two seeds, and Satan will ever be doing, though it be to his loss: 1 John iii. 8, 'He sinneth from the beginning;' and therefore he is not so destroyed as if he desired not the ruin and destruction of men. He is as malicious as ever. He is always at the old trade of destroying souls, and watcheth all advantages to that end and purpose: 2 Peter v. 8, 'The devil like a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour.'

[3.] Then affirmatively, it remaineth that it is *ratiōne potentiæ*, in regard of power. But how far is his power destroyed? for still he governeth the wicked, and possesseth a great part of the world. The devils are called, Eph. vi. 12, 'Rulers of the darkness of this world;' the gods of the heathen, idolatrous, superstitious world. And still he molesteth the godly, whether considered singly and apart, or in their communities and societies. Singly he may sometimes trouble them, and sorely shake them, as wheat is tossed to and fro when it is winnowed in a sieve, Luke xxii. 31; or in their communities and societies the devil by his instruments may sorely distress them: Ps. cxxxix. 1, 2, 'Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth upward;' that is, from the beginning of their being a people unto God; or else corrupts them: 1 Cor. xi. 3, 'I fear lest by any means Satan should corrupt you;' and therefore we must see how far his power is destroyed.

I answer—It may be considered either (1.) With respect to Christ, the author of our deliverance; or, (2.) With respect to men, who are the subjects of this deliverance, or the persons delivered.

First, With respect to Christ our deliverer.

1. There is enough done by way of merit to break the power of Satan, or that whole kingdom of darkness which is united under one head, called the devil. The price and ransom is fully paid for captive souls, and there needeth no more to be done by way of merit and satisfaction to dissolve that woful work which Satan hath introduced into the world: Col. ii. 15, 'He hath spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them on his cross;' 1 John iii. 8, 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' Both these places show there is enough done for the benefit of particular believers, and for the success of the gospel over false religions. He hath divested evil spirits of their power, thrown them out of their temples, silenced their oracles; he hath made it publicly discernible by the success of the christian religion in the world; he hath purchased the power of recovering souls out of their apostasy at a dear rate: 1 Peter i. 18, 'We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God.' Well, then, the value of the blood of Christ is sufficient.

2. Christ is upon the throne, and we are under his protection; therefore the devil cannot totally prevail over those that have an interest in him, either as to single believers: John x. 28, 'And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;' or to their communities and societies: Mat. xvi. 18, 'Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' The gates of hell signify their power and policy; there was their armoury, and there they sat in council. Christ expecteth their most fierce and furious assaults, but all should be to no purpose, but as the dashing of the waves against a rock, which ends in foam, and the shame of the oppressors and assailants. So that besides his merit on the cross, there is his power in heaven, where he is to rule in the midst of his adversaries: Ps. cx. 1, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.' There he is exalted, in that human nature which he had assumed, to the highest pitch of glory, majesty, and authority.

3. Though there be not a total destruction of the kingdom of Satan, yet it remaineth in an absolute subjection to the throne of the mediator. The kingdom of sin and Satan are so far destroyed, as not to hinder God's great design, the demonstration of mercy to the elect, and to be subservient to the demonstration of his justice towards others, who either contemn or neglect the remedy offered; that the elect may obtain, though the rest be hardened: 2 Thes. ii. 9, 13, 'Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders,' &c. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.'

4. Christ will in time destroy all opposite reigns and kingdoms.

some sooner, others later ; but there will be an universal and absolute subjection to Christ at the day of judgment, when infernal spirits shall bow the knee to him : Isa. xlv. 23, compared with Phil. ii. 10, ' He hath given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ; ' and Rom. xiv. 10, 11. The mystery of iniquity will then be finished, and come to nothing ; and the saints shall judge the evil angels, 1 Cor. vi. 3 ; that is, when they are crowned, they shall pass sentence against the evil spirits. But in the meantime you will say, We are assaulted. Therefore—

Secondly, With respect to men who are to be delivered, so Satan's power may be considered with respect to single persons, or his interest in the corrupt world.

1. As to single and individual persons ; so Satan's power over them is by reason of sin, which was introduced into the world by his subtlety and malice. Now these may be considered with respect to conversion and confirmation.

[1.] Conversion. When the reign of sin is broken, they are rescued out of Satan's hands: Col. i. 13, ' Who hath delivered us from the power of Satan, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son ; ' and Acts xxvi. 18, ' To turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God ; ' Luke xi. 22, ' When a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted. ' It is the fruit of his victorious grace. As long as sin reigneth, Satan is in peaceable possession ; for when he had lost his seat in heaven, he affected to set up a throne in the hearts of men, and to lord it over them as his slaves ; but now the reign of sin is broken, when he puts an enmity into your hearts against it. Sin dieth when the love to it dieth. All that are converted to God are possessed with an enmity to Satan and his ways, such as they had not before, when they remained in the degenerate state. They have a new heart and a new spirit ; not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God. The natural spirit, that spirit that dwelleth in us, is the spirit of the world, the spirit that inclineth us to worldly and sensual satisfactions ; but the Spirit maketh them look after the things promised by Christ and required by Christ : 1 Cor. ii. 12, ' For we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God. ' The natural spirit was a spirit that lusteth to envy, James iv. 5 ; and so the satanical spirit. But this is a Spirit of love to God and man, that maketh us to seek his glory, and the good of others. Till this Spirit be planted in us, we have not changed masters.

[2.] As to confirmation and perseverance, Christ will not lose the prey that he hath recovered out of the hands of Satan. Indeed, while anything of sin remaineth, there is somewhat of Satan left, which he worketh upon. There is a remnant of his seed in the best. The godly are yet in the way, but not at the end of the journey ; therefore Satan hath leave to assault them while they are here, but Christ will perfect the conquest which he hath begun, and the very being of sin shall at length be taken away. At death sin is totally disannulled : Jude 24, ' And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory ; ' Eph. v. 27, ' That he may present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be

holy, and without blemish.' When the veil of the flesh is rent once, there is a ceasing from sin. The physician of souls will then perfect the cure, and finish the work. The question then is, How far Satan's power is destroyed as to the converted? I answer—Negatively, not so far as to exclude our duties or trials; but affirmatively, the victory is secured by promise to the striving christian.

(1.) Negatively, not to exclude our duty. There is still room left for prayer, watchfulness, sobriety, serious resistance, that we may use the means appointed for our safety.

(1st.) There is required of us sobriety, or an holy moderation of the comforts and delights of the present life. The devil, the flesh, and the world join in conspiracy against us. By the baits of the world Satan enticeth our flesh to a neglect of God and heavenly things, therefore we must be sober, 1 Peter v. 8, use the world as not abusing it, 1 Cor. vii. 31, that our hearts be not depressed and disabled from looking after our great end and happiness.

(2d.) Vigilance and watchfulness is necessary, that we may stand upon our guard, avoiding snares, forecasting hazards, lest we fall as a ready prey into the mouth of the tempter: 1 Cor. xvi. 13, 'Watch ye, stand ye fast in the faith; quit you like men, and be strong.' The first point of a christian soldier is to watch. Conscience must stand porter at the door of the soul, examining what goeth in and what cometh out. The devil watcheth all advantages against us to espy where we are weakest. Men that have no great tenderness of conscience fear not much the loss of their souls, and are most easily wrought upon by Satan: Eph. iv. 27, 'Neither give place to the devil.' If you but set open the door to Satan, the capital enemy of man's salvation, he will re-enter his old possession, and seek to exercise his old tyranny; therefore watch.

(3d.) A steadfast resistance: 'Whom resist, steadfast in the faith.' When we are yielding, Satan gets ground, but he is discouraged by steadfast resistance. This must be in the faith, or by a close adherence to God's word: 1 John ii. 14, 'I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' Adhering to the privileges of the gospel as our happiness, and persevering in the duties as our work, or resolving by a constant continuance in well-doing to wait for Christ's mercy.

(4th.) We are also to pray earnestly: Ps. cxix. 133, 'Order my steps in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.' We had need to pray earnestly, because sin will put strongly for the throne again; therefore beg direction.

(5th.) All is bound upon the conscience by continual mindfulness of our baptismal vow and covenant, which must be often called to remembrance: Rom. vi. 11, 'Likewise also reckon yourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto God;' Rom. viii. 12, 'We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.' If Christ had so destroyed the devil as to exclude our endeavours and our duty, the whole gospel would be in vain, and the promises and precepts of it to no purpose, and all that furniture of grace which he hath provided for us lost and useless. Surely the enemy and avenger is not so stilled but that we need to

be sober and watchful, and steadfast in the faith, and much in prayer, and ever mindful of our covenant and vowed death to sin. A man that is baptized, he hath a debt and bond upon him. Secondly, Christ hath not so stilled the enemy and the avenger to exempt us from trials of our sincerity. God will have all obedience to be tried and honoured by opposition, and sometimes sharp and grievous opposition: Rev. ii. 10, 'The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried.' Job was permitted to Satan for his trial, Job i. 12. Paul had his messenger of Satan for his trial, to see what shift he could make, with sufficient internal grace, under outward and vexatious evils, 2 Cor. xii. 7-10. Now it is better to undergo the fiery trial than the fiery torment: tried we are, but not destroyed, exercised with temptation, but not overwhelmed.

(2.) Affirmatively. (1st.) It is so far broken and destroyed, that we have necessary assistance provided for us: 2 Cor. xii. 9, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Perfect, that is, manifested to be perfect. When the world is of Satan's side, God is of our side: 2 Tim. iv. 17, 'Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me;' 1 Cor. x. 13, 'But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape.' (2d.) The final victory is secured by promise to the striving christian: Rom. xvi. 20, 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.'

2. As to his interest in the corrupt world, the kingdom of Satan is more and more subdued; for Christ must divide the spoil with the strong, Isa. liii. 12. Christ prevails upon opposition, and against opposition, and by opposition. For—

[1.] Christ having a grant of a kingdom over the nations, is every way furnished with power to obtain it, by means proper to the mediatory dispensation. His kingdom is to be a spiritual kingdom, therefore his means are suited—his Spirit, his word, his providence.

(1.) His sweet but powerful Spirit, convincing men of the truth of his religion. And what can stand before the all-conquering force of it? John xvi. 8-11, 'And when he is come, he shall reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me: of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more: of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.' He shall demonstrate to the world that Christ was the Messiah; and therefore they are guilty of great sin who will not believe on him, that he was a righteous and innocent person, and no seducer, because he rose from the dead, and went to the Father; that he was an exalted prince above Satan, or whatever was looked upon as divine powers, because he converted most parts of the habitable world, and brought home sinners from their idolatries to repentance and change of life.

(2.) His word, which is called the 'rod of his strength,' Ps. cx. 2, and the 'power of God to salvation,' Rom. i. 16. These weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God. The world cannot resist its convincing power: 2 Cor. x. 4, 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.' Those that feel it not, fear it: John iii. 20, 'Every one that doeth evil

hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.'

(3.) His providence. All judgment is put into his hands, John v. 22. All events that fall out in the world, they are not left to an uncertain contingency, but under the government of a supreme providence, which is in Christ's hands.

[2.] In the external management of the mediatorial kingdom there are many vicissitudes and changes of the outward condition of the church. The harmony of providence requireth it, for the punishment of the unthankful, for the trial of the sincere, for the reward of the faithful, and destruction of the ungodly. Sometimes God doth notably defeat Satan and his instruments, and the devil's kingdom visibly goeth to wreck; as at the first promulgation of the gospel, though the whole world lay in wickedness, and Satan everywhere had his temples wherein he was worshipped, his oracles resorted to with great reverence; he ate the fat of their sacrifices, drank the wine of their drink-offerings, yea, often the blood of their sons and daughters was offered to him; yet all his strongholds were demolished, the idols whom their fathers prayed to in their adversity and distresses, and blessed in their prosperity, are on a sudden set at nought.

[3.] Why this is great matter of praise and thankful acknowledgment.

(1.) Because this is the great instance of the favour God hath put upon man; his dignifying of them above other creatures; that he would not wholly desert us in our fallen estate, when the devil had overthrown us by sin; that the Son of God must come from heaven to deliver us from the bondage Satan had led us into. There was *φιλανθρωπια*, 'a love to man,' in our redemption: Titus iii. 4, 'After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared.' Surely this is a great mystery, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Christ made man, died for men, rose again, carried our nature into heaven, reigneth there over all his enemies as God incarnate. What will raise your hearts in thanksgiving, if these things do not? They are plain points; they need no descants, more than a diamond doth painting.

(2.) The many benefits that result to us thereby.

(1st.) A capacity to serve and please God; the most considerable part of the creation had been else out of joint. God was robbed of the use and service of mankind: Luke i. 74, 75, 'That he would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.' We were, in our natural estate, governed and ruled by Satan, Eph. ii. 3, 4, easily taken captive by him, working upon the desires of our flesh, 2 Tim. ii. 26. We had no remorse for it, nor desire to change our condition, Luke xi. 21, 22; all was in a sinful quiet and peace, as when wind and tide go together; but now this carnal security is disturbed, we are recovered and changed, and made meet to serve and please God.

(2d.) A right to the privileges of the new covenant, which are pardon and life: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them

which are sanctified;’ and Col. i. 12–14, ‘Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.’

(3d.) The honour that redoundeth to God thereby. By weak and despised means God brings about the ends of his glory. The party delivered was fallen man, who gave up at first assault; the deliverer is Christ, found in fashion as another man: 1 Cor. i. 25, ‘The weakness of God is stronger than men.’ That which in man’s opinion hath least wisdom, strength, and virtue in it, that doeth all; by man and man crucified.

Use 1. If it be so great a mercy, see that you be partakers of it; see that Satan’s power be destroyed as to your souls. Christ doth not only enter upon the world by conquest, but hath much to do with every individual person before he can settle his kingdom in their hearts. There is a combat between Christ and Satan for the rescue of every sinner, and we are not easily brought to change masters. It is long ere we awaken: 2 Tim. ii. 26, ‘That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.’ And after we are awakened, ere we consent to part with our beloved lusts. Now yield to him; suffer him to save you. You look to the outward interest of Christ in the world, and you do well; but it is easier to bring men to own the true religion, than to bring them under the power of it. The victory we are concerned in is the taming our own flesh, and overcoming the corruptions and carnal inclinations, or to set up Christ’s government in the heart where once Satan ruled. The kingdom of Christ within us is most comfortable to us, Luke xvii. 20, 21. If once you are Christ’s, you will most really be for his interest in the world, and there is an enmity put into you: Gen. iii. 15, ‘I will put enmity between the two seeds.’

2. If it be so great a mercy, then do not lose it, but use the means appointed for your safety.

[1.] By baptism you are engaged, for you are listed under Christ’s banner; we take an oath to be true to the captain of our salvation: Rom. vi. 13, ‘Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.’

[2.] In the Lord’s supper we come to quicken our zeal, and renew our holy resolutions to adhere and cleave to Christ, renouncing Satan, that we may steadfastly persevere in the duties of our heavenly calling. There our baptismal vow is ratified; we are apt to forget it.

3. The armour is faith, hope, and love: 1 Thes. v. 8, ‘Putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.’ Faith owns Christ to be what he is, and so breedeth a constant adherence to him. Love casteth out fear of persecution, and maketh us delight in him; and hope waiteth for the eternal reward.

4. The manner of using this armour; it must be with sobriety and watchfulness: 1 Peter v. 8, ‘Be sober, be vigilant.’

[1.] Sobriety, or moderation as to the good things of the present world, lest we be enticed to a neglect of God and heavenly things.

[2.] Vigilancy noteth tenderness of conscience, when conscience standeth porter at the door, examining what goeth in and what cometh out. Men that have no great tenderness of conscience fear not much the loss of their souls, and are most easily wrought on by Satan.
