

practice is a denying of the faith, 1 Tim. v. 8, that cannot endure this strict life, love a sinful, sensual life, coldness in duty. The strength of your faith must appear by the fervour of your duties and seriousness of your endeavours, 2 Thes. i. 11, 12. If there be cold prayers and carnal conferences, slightness in religion, it shows you do not believe the gospel. You may know a believer by his affection, diligence, self-denial, and his faith and fear; as Noah: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark,' &c.

SERMON X.

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.—2 THESS. i. 11.

THE apostle had given thanks for them, ver. 3; now he prayeth for them. He gave thanks for the work begun and carried on hitherto; he prayeth now that God would perfect the work of salvation begun in them of his mere mercy. Love and power began this work, and love and power still carry it on. In his thanksgiving he saith, 'We thank God always for you, brethren;' and in his prayer, 'We pray always for you.' That is said to be done always which is often done, upon all meet occasions. If you have any success, we always give thanks for you; if any fear or danger of receding from the faith, we always pray for you. The apostle durst not trust the event or force of his own ministry, nor the experiment of their sincerity, but ascribeth all to God, commendeth all to God; the beginning, progress, and end of our salvation cometh from him alone. They had begun well, therefore he blesseth God; that they might end well, he prayeth to God, 'Wherefore also we pray always for you,' &c.

The matter of his prayer is delivered in three expressions, 'That our God,' &c. All which intimate—(1.) A double cause; (2.) A double effect.

1. The double cause—(1.) God's free goodness; (2.) Infinite power. God's goodness appointed this happiness for us; his power bringeth us to the enjoyment of it.

2. The double effect—(1.) Perseverance in their duty; (2.) Attainment of everlasting happiness. All the expressions concern both end and means.

Now, that I may give you the full meaning of the text, I shall first lay down a general observation; secondly, open the three expressions, which contain the matter of the apostle's prayer.

For the general observation, take it thus—

Doct. That the whole business of our salvation floweth from the pleasure of God's goodness, and is effectually accomplished by his divine power.

First, I must prove to you that it floweth from the pleasure of his goodness. The apostle's word in the text is *ἐνδοκία ἀγαθωσύνης*.

Ἐυδοκία signifieth his most free will; *ἀγαθωσύνη*, his benignity. In the whole course of our salvation, the pleasure of his goodness is to be observed. The coming of Christ: Luke ii. 14, 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.' The covenant of grace: Col. i. 19, 20, 'It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell: and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.' The ministry: 1 Cor. i. 21, 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' The grace to embrace the covenant offered: Mat. xi. 26, 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' It is God's good pleasure to reveal it to some and not to others. The grace to keep the covenant; so in the text, and Phil. ii. 13, 'He worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' So that God's will is the rise and root of all. So for the blessings of the covenant, they all come from his good pleasure. The blessing by the way: Deut. xxxiii. 16, 'For the good will of him that dwelt in the bush, let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, because of his gracious favour.' So for the blessing of the end of the journey, for eternal life: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;' *ἔνδοκῆσε*, out of his own accord, and the inclinations of his singular mercy. Our Father's pleasure doth not only concern our final happiness, but all the ways and means which conduce thereunto, to give it in such a way as best pleaseth him.

To make this more evident to you, take these considerations—

1. That God hath absolute power and sovereign right to dispose as he will of all his creatures, not only as to their temporal but eternal concerns: Mat. xx. 15, 'I may do with mine own as it pleaseth me.' As the master over his goods, as the potter over his clay. Nothing before it had a being had a right to dispose of itself; neither did God make it what it was by necessity of nature, nor by the command, counsel, or will of any superior, nor the direction of any coadjutor; neither is there any to whom he should render any account of his work; but merely produced all things by the act of his own will, as an absolute agent and sovereign lord of all his actions: Rev. iv. 11, 'Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' None can call him to an account, and say, 'What makest thou?' and why dost thou thus? Isa. xlv. 9. Why dost thou dispose of me in this or that manner? If the question be, Why God made me a man, and not a beast, not a plant, &c.?

2. The sovereign will is the supreme cause why he did pass by some and elect others: Rom. ix. 18, 'Therefore he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.' God is not bound to render any reason beyond his bare will: 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,' ver. 16. God is to be considered as the governor of the world, or as a free lord. God will not show mercy so as to cross his government, nor so bind himself to his government as shall cross his liberty as an absolute lord and free agent. Compare 1 Cor. ix. 24, 'So run that ye may obtain.' It is not in him that runneth, yet, 'So run.' The first place belongeth to God's dispensation of grace as a free lord, the second as a righteous governor. God is

arbitrary in his gifts, but not in his judgments ; his judgments are dispensed according to law and rule, but his gifts of grace according to his own pleasure. So God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy ; it is his prerogative to convert whom he will ; that is not an act of right and wrong, but of favour and grace ; therefore the cause that moved God to elect any, or one more than another, is his absolute sovereign pleasure, or favour and good-will towards those whom he did elect.

3. This absolute dominion and sovereign will is sweetly tempered with his goodness, or rich favour and gracious condescension toward his elect ones. His will to them was good pleasure, or the pleasure of his goodness. God hath a gracious good-will towards his people. The propension or self-inclination that is in God to do good to his people is called his benignity or goodness ; but as it is free, it is called the pleasure of his goodness ; as it is to persons in misery, it is called his pity and mercy. We are to consider it here as free and independent in regard of the creature. What could he foresee in us to move and incline him but what was the fruit of his own grace ? The first grace is the mere fruit of his mercy and pity to us, giving us a new heart, whereby we repent and turn to him. More expressly to the case is James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures ;' Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.' In all the subsequent grace, though we are qualified according to the rules of his government, yet we merit nothing there ; the continuance of what is received is a part of the pleasure of his goodness ; for as he begat us of his own good-will, so by the same good-will he continueth us in the state of grace to which he hath called us : Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy ;' Phil. i. 6, 'He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' They that walk most accurately stand in need of mercy ; all our comforts and supplies are the fruit of undeserved grace. For our final consummation, the same pleasure of his goodness which laid the first stone in the building doth also finish the work : Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' We take glory out of the hands of mercy, and it is mercy that puts the crown upon our heads. It is mercy that pardoneth our failings, accepteth our persons, rewardeth our faithfulness, pitieth our miseries, relieveth our wants ; it is mercy that maketh us worthy of the glory of the blessed. In short, it is mercy doth all for us. The whole progress of this work from first to last is all from God ; not from any worth of ours, nor by any power of ours, but merely from the pleasure of his goodness.

Secondly, As it is from the pleasure of his goodness, so it is accomplished by his almighty power. The scriptures speak of the power of God, which is necessary—(1.) To bring us into a state of grace ; (2.) To settle and maintain us in a state of grace.

1. To bring us into a state of grace. Nothing but the almighty power of God can overcome man's obstinacy, and change our hearts, and subdue us to God. Man is so corrupt that he cannot change himself, for there is no sound part left in us to mend the rest : Job xiv. 4, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ?' Therefore Christ

died to purchase the Spirit, to renew and sanctify us; and his work must not be lessened and disparaged as if it were needless, or not so great as some would have it to be. The scripture always heighteneth it, and we must not lessen it. It is called a new creation: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;' Eph. ii. 10, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works.' So Eph. iv. 24, 'That ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' Now creation is a work of omnipotency, and proper to God. There is a twofold creation which we read of: in the beginning God made something out of nothing, and some things *ex inhabili materia*, out of foregoing matter, but such as was wholly unfit and indisposed for those things which were made of it; as when God made Adam out of the dust of the ground, and Eve out of the rib of man. Now take the notion either in the former or in the latter sense, and you will see that God only can create. If in the former sense, something and nothing have an infinite distance between them; and he only that calleth things that are not as though they were can raise the one out of the other. To this sanctification is compared: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts,' &c. *ὁ εἶπεν*. It alludeth to that, 'Let there be light, and there was light.' Or if you will take the latter notion, creation out of unfit matter, he maketh those that are wholly indisposed to good, averse from it, perverse resisters of what would bring them to it, to be lovers and followers of holiness and godliness: 2 Peter i. 3, 'By the divine power all things are given us which are necessary to life and godliness.' God challengeth this work as his own, as belonging to his infinite power. By life is meant not life natural, nor life eternal, but life spiritual; and by holiness, the fruits of it, or holy conversation. All is accomplished by the exercise of his controlling omnipotent power; so that this work must not be looked upon as a low, natural, and common thing, nor the benefit of the new creation be lessened and disparaged, lest we lessen our obligation to God.

2. To keep us and maintain us in a state of grace. Here consider—(1.) The necessity of the power of God; (2.) The sufficiency of it to keep us.

[1.] The necessity of God's power: 1 Peter i. 5, 'Ye are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.' None but this almighty guardian can keep us and preserve us by the way, that we may come safe to our journey's end. This will appear to you—

(1.) Partly because habitual grace, which we have received, is a creature, and therefore in itself mutable; for all creatures depend in being and working on him that made them: Acts xvii. 28, 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being.' Now as God assisteth all creatures in their operations, so doth he also the new creature: Heb. xiii. 21, 'The Lord make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight.' Not only is conversion wrought in us by God, but when we are converted, grace is no less necessary to finish than to begin. Our new estate dependeth absolutely upon his influence from first to last; he worketh all our works for us and in us, not only giveth us habitual grace, which constituteth our spiritual being, but actual grace, which quickeneth us in

our operations. By this dependence on him God doth engage us to a constant communion with him. If we did keep the stock ourselves, God and we would soon grow strange; as the prodigal, when he had his portion in his own hands, goeth away from his father. The throne of grace would lie neglected and unfrequented, and God would seldom hear from us; therefore doth he keep grace in his own hands, to oblige us to a continual intercourse with him.

(2.) Because it is much opposed by the devil, the world, and the flesh. Within there is corruption, and without there are temptations; within there is the flesh always warring against the better part; our cure is not fully wrought: Gal. v. 17, 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.' The flesh is importunate to be pleased, and it will urge us to retrench and cut off a great part of that necessary duty which belongeth to our heavenly calling; yea, if we hearken to it, it will crave very unlawful and unreasonable things at our hands. And as there is opposition within, so it is exposed to temptations from without; from Satan, who watcheth all advantages against us: 1 Peter v. 8, 'Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour.' Now when his temptations assault us with considerable strength, without seasonable relief or grace to help in time of need, how shall we be able to stand? Adam had habitual grace, but he gave out at the first assault. So for the world, either its terrors or its delights will shake and weaken our resolutions for God and heaven. Its terrors, which was the case in the text, and the power of God can only relieve us against them: 2 Tim. i. 8, 'Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God.' So delights corrupt us while the soul dwelleth in flesh, looketh out by the senses; these things are grateful to us, to wear our hearts from them, and that we do escape the corruption that is in the world through lust, is the fruit of God's grace: Mat. xix. 26, 'With God all things are possible.' That our affection to riches, and the pleasures and honours of this life, may not corrupt us, and hinder us in our duty to God, and pursuit after the happiness of the world to come.

[2.] The sufficiency of this power. It is the power of God, and surely that is sufficient for all things: ver. 24, 'To him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory.' God is able and ready to help the diligent and waiting soul.

(1.) His power is enough to enable for all our duties: Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me;' Eph. iii. 16, 'That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.'

(2.) To support us under all our trials: Dent. xxxiii. 22, 'The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are his everlasting arms.' God telleth Paul, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' It was Anstin's observation, *Job in stercore*, Job is more happy in his misery than Adam in innocency; he was victorious on the daughill when the other was defeated on the throne; he gave no ear to the evil counsel of his wife, when the woman seduced Adam; he despised the assaults of Satan, when the other suffered himself to be worsted at the first temptation; he preserved his

righteousness in the midst of his sorrows, when the other lost his innocency in the midst of the delights of paradise.

(3.) To resist temptations. The devil hath great strength, but the Spirit of God hath greater: 1 John iv. 4, 'Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.' Satan is in the bait, but God supporteth: Eph. vi. 10, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' When the spiritual armour is spoken of, we have the all-sufficient and omnipotent power of God engaged for us; and therefore he is able to sustain us against the opposition of men or devils. It is a lamentable thing to see what a poor spirit is in most christians, how soon they are captivated or discouraged with every slender assault or petty temptation, and their resolutions are shaken with the appearance of every difficulty they meet with in the heavenly life. This is affected weakness, not so much want of strength as sluggishness and cowardice, or want of care. Men will not set about their duty, then cry out they are impotent, like lazy beggars, that personate and act diseases because they would not work. They are not able to stand up before the slightest motions of sin, because they do not improve the strength God vouchsafeth to them by his Holy Spirit. There are two extremes—pride and sloth. Pride and self-confidence is when we think we do not need God's power; sloth, when we do not improve it, neglect what is given, and complain rather than encourage ourselves to make use of his grace.

Use 1. If the whole business of our salvation floweth from the pleasure of God's goodness, and is accomplished by his divine power, then God must have all the praise; for no consequence can be so naturally deduced as that which the apostle inferreth from this principle: Rom. xi. 36, 'Of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen.' Under the law the first-fruits and the tenths were the Lord's portion; the first, which is the beginning, and the tenth, which is the perfection of numbers. All things are upheld by him as their continual preserver, therefore all things must tend to him as the ultimate end; especially the whole dispensation of grace in the calling and converting of sinners is to be imputed to the pleasure of his goodness and almighty power. God is not to be robbed, neither in whole nor in part, of this glory.

1. If you consider the pleasure of his goodness, you will see abundant cause to praise God. First let us state the difference between man and man, which can come from God only. That there is a heaven and a hell is not only evident by the light of scripture, but in a great measure by the light of nature. That heaven is for the good and just, and hell for the naught and wicked, is as evident as the former; for men's different course of life causeth the apprehension of these different recompenses. It cannot easily go down with any man, that hath but a spark of reason and conscience left, that good and bad should fare alike. Well, but now let us inquire into the causes of this difference, why some are good, others bad. Nothing can be assigned but their different choice; some choose the better part, others abandon themselves to their lusts and brutish satisfactions; for this is indeed the next cause, their own choice and inclination. But we will carry the

inquiry higher. Whence cometh this different choice and inclination? And there is reason for this question, for both scripture and experience will tell us that man from his infancy and childhood is very corrupt, and more inclinable to evil than to good: and you may as well expect to gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles, as that man of his own accord should be good and holy. Whence is it? Either it is from temper and education, or, which is akin to it, the advantages of means and outward instruction that some have above others. Is it from temper and constitution of body? The truth is, this is a benefit and a gift of God to have a good temper and constitution, the dispositions of the mind following very much the temperament of the body. But this cannot be all; if it be any cause, it is but a partial cause; it cannot be the whole, for then the blemish of a man's actions would light upon the Creator who formed him in the womb with a diseased temper; and when the foolishness of his heart perverteth his way, he would be in a great measure justified in his fretting against the Lord, who gave him no better temper of body. Besides, experience contradicteth it; how many are there who be of brave wits, and spoil an excellent constitution of body by their intemperance and incontinency, and so do not make this good choice by which they might be everlastingly happy? And on the other side, we see many of crabbed and depraved tempers, that master their ill dispositions by grace; and God doth often choose beams and rafters for the sanctuary of the most crooked timber, and doth wonderfully change them by his grace, and of a sour and rugged temper maketh them to become meek and holy. Surely temper is not all, the wise men among the heathen themselves being judges.

Come we then to the next cause, good education, and setting their inclinations right from their infancy. I cannot wholly reject this; it is an advantage, and parents are justly culpable before God for not bringing up their children in the nurture and information of the Lord, and setting them straight betimes in a course of virtue and religion. Harken to Solomon: Prov. xxii. 6, 'Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' There is very much in the education of children; the first infusions in our instruction stick by us, and conduce much, if not to conversion, yet at least to conviction, and reproach men all their days for warping from that good way wherein they are educated. But allowing this a means, it doth not exclude the first cause and author of grace; and besides, we see many not only quench brave wits and spirits in filthy excess, but also wrest themselves out of the arms of the best education; and though they have been brought up in the most religious families, where they are little acquainted with vice and sin, and have been choicely educated in the grounds and principles of christian religion, yet have spit in the face of their education, and turned the back upon those holy instructions and counsels that have been instilled into them.

Well, then, let us go to the third cause, since education, though it does much to fashion men, yet it cannot change their hearts. The third is the means of grace, or the institutions of Christ, which certainly in a way of means have great authority and power; for Christ is so good and wise, that he would never set us about fruitless labours; he

knoweth what keys will fit the wards of the lock, and what is most likely to do the deed, and prevail upon the heart of man : Ps. cxix. 9, 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word;' Acts xv. 9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith.' The doctrine of the gospel well understood and applied will do it, or nothing will do it; but many hear the gospel who are not one jot the better: Rom. x. 16, 'They have not all believed the gospel; for Isaiah saith, Who hath believed our report?' We see the same sun that softeneth wax hardeneth clay; the same seed that thriveth in the good and honest heart is lost on the highway, the stony, thorny ground; the difference is not in the seed but in the soil; therefore whatever helps or means you can imagine, good temper, good education, powerful ministry, all will do nothing, till God puts a new heart and life into us, to incline us to seek after him, and other things as they lie in subordination to him.

Let us gather up this discourse now. Surely man doth not determine himself to good, is not the supreme cause and author of his own happiness. Man is evilly inclined, and no culture, no education, no institution, can subdue and alter it: Job xiv. 4, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' Man's heart will not be changed, and so no foundation laid for a different course. Suppose, for disputation's sake, the means could do it without God, yet the question returneth, how is it that some have better tempers, better education, better institution than others? There is a kind of election and reprobation within the sphere of nature: Ps. cxlvii. 20, 'He hath not dealt so with every nation.' Some have fairer advantages, and more favour in the use of outward means; that is only to be ascribed to God's providence: but besides external providence, the scriptures teach us there is a necessity of internal grace, that all saving faith is the gift of God, Eph. ii. 8; it must come from him.

Why doth God work faith in some, not in others? Inquire as long as you will, you must come to this at last: 'Even so, Father, because it pleased thee,' or, as it is in the text, it is merely the pleasure of his goodness. God acts freely, and giveth grace when and to whom he pleaseth. The free gift of God dependeth on some eternal decree and purpose; for God doth nothing rashly and by chance, but all by counsel and predestination. There was some eternal choice and distinction made between man and man. Why we, not others? It was merely the good will of God and his free choice that made the difference. Election implieth a choice; for where all are taken, there is no choice: 'One of a city, and two of a tribe,' Jer. iii. 14; or, as it is, Mat. xxiv. 41, 'One taken, and the other left.' Jacob, not Esau; Abel, not Cain. Why will he reveal himself to us, and not to the world? Others were as eligible as we, our merits no more than theirs, we were as bad as they. All souls are God's, Ezek. xviii. 4. He created them as well as you, saw as much original sin in you as them. 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' Mal. i. 2. They had as much means as you, your prejudices and obstinacy as strong as theirs, as blind in mind, as perverse in heart: 'Who made you differ?' 1 Cor. iv. 7. Why you, not they? You were as ignorant of God, as averse from him, as corrupt in manners; so that when God had all

Adam's posterity in his prospect and view, it was mere grace distinguished you.

2. His almighty power. It is very great sacrilege to rob God of his glory. Surely every thankful christian should say, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' It is by his all-conquering Spirit that any are brought in to him: Acts xi. 21, 'The hand of the Lord was with him, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.' So Isa. liii. 1, 'Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' How diversely are people affected with the same things? One is convinced of his misery, the other not at all moved; one is drawn to Christ, the other goeth away dead and still averse to him. Some are pricked at heart, Acts ii. 37, others cut at heart, and gnash with their teeth at the delivery of the same doctrine, Acts vii. 50. Consider—

[1.] God doth not only invite and solicit us to good, but doth incline and dispose the heart to it. They are taught of God, and drawn of God: John vi. 44, 45, 'No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.'

[2.] God doth not only help the will, but give the will itself; not by curing the weakness, but by sanctifying it, and taking away the sinfulness of it. If the will were only in a swoon and languishment, a little excitation would serve the turn; it is not dead, but sleepeth; but it is stark dead to spiritual things. And God's grace is not only necessary for facilitation, as a horse for a journey, that a man might not go on foot, but absolutely necessary. God giveth us not only a power to will if we please, or a power to do if we please, but the will itself: Jer. xxiv. 7, 'I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord;' Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.'

[3.] Not only at first, but still all our work is done by his power. As he giveth us the habits which constitute the new creature, so he furnisheth us with those daily supplies by which the spiritual life is maintained in us; therefore we must still put the crown on grace's head, in whatever we have done and suffered for him: Luke x. 16, 'Thy pound hath gained,' &c.; Gal. ii. 20, 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God;' 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' Of his own we still give him, therefore let us ascribe all to him.

Use 2. To encourage prayer for grace; God is able and willing.

1. For his willingness, here is the pleasure of his goodness. We are conscious to ourselves of undeservings and ill-deservings; but when we can see no reason for his showing mercy to us, his goodness should keep up our addresses to him. We are unworthy, but these blessings come not from our deserts, but the pleasure of his goodness; he is not moved by any foreseen worthiness in us. You will say, His goodness I could depend upon, but I doubt of his pleasure, whether to me. I answer—We must not dispute away the help offered to us. A man in danger of drowning with others will catch at the rope that is cast forth to him, not dispute what is the mind of him who casts out the cords and

lines by which he is brought to shore. If a rich man cast money among the poor, would they stand scrupling whether the giver intendeth it to them? No; every one would take his share. These scruples are affected, and must be chidden, not cherished.

2. For his power. He that can turn water into wine can change the heart of a graceless sinner, and make it gracious, a bad man to become good. Wait for this power in the use of means: Jer. xvii. 14, 'Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved;' Jer. xxxi. 18, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.' No creature can be too hard for him; God can find a passage into the most obstinate heart.

SERMON XI.

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of his calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.—2 THESS. i. 11.

WE come now to examine the particular expressions which contain the matter of the apostle's prayer. The first is, *ἵνα ὑμᾶς ἀξιώσῃ τῆς κλήσεως*, 'That he would count you worthy of his calling.' Thence we note—

Doct. That it is an excellent benefit, and the mere fruit of the Lord's grace, to be counted worthy of the calling and privilege of being christians.

First, Let us see what is this calling. It is to be called to christianity. Now our christian calling is set forth by a double attribute—it is a holy calling: 2 Tim. i. 9, 'Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling;' and it is a heavenly calling: Heb. iii. 1, 'Wherefore, brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,' &c. The one relateth to the way, the other to the end; therefore it is said, 'He hath called us to glory and virtue,' 2 Peter i. 3, meaning by 'glory,' eternal life, and by 'virtue,' grace and holiness; the one is the way and means to come at the other.

Now both may be considered, either as they are represented in the offer of the word, or as they are impressed upon our hearts by the powerful operation of the Spirit.

1. In the offer of the word. There God is often set forth as calling us from sin to holiness: 1 Thes. iv. 7, 'God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness.' The end of his calling is to make us become saints: and this must be the business of our lives, to be such, and show ourselves as such more and more. So also he hath called us from misery to happiness; as 1 Peter v. 10, 'The God of all grace, who hath called us to obtain eternal glory by Jesus Christ.' So 2 Thes. ii. 14, 'He called you by my gospel to the obtaining of eternal glory by our Lord Jesus Christ.' The Lord doth not invite us to our loss when he calleth us to christianity, but to our incomparable gain

and eternal happiness. There is a rich prize set before us, a blessed estate offered to us, if we will take it out of Christ's hands upon his terms.

2. As it is impressed upon us by the powerful operation of the Spirit. And the calling hath had its effect upon us, if we heartily listened to God's call, to seek after eternal glory in the way of faith and holiness. God offereth it, and we embrace. 'This is that which is termed 'effectual calling,' by which the heart is changed and sanctified and turned unto God, and so we are made a holy people: Rom. i. 7, 'Beloved of God, called to be saints.' And also by this we have a right to the heavenly blessedness: Heb. ix. 15, 'They who are called do receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.' So that they are effectually called who are altered both in their disposition and condition. As to their disposition, of unholy they are made holy; as to their condition, of miserable they are made happy. They are a people called out of the world, and set apart for this use, to honour and glorify God; and also for the present they are heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and in due time shall be brought into the possession of it.

Secondly, What is it to be counted or made worthy of this calling which the apostle prayeth for? The word *ἀξιόσθη* is indifferent to either interpretation. To be made worthy is to be enabled, to be counted worthy is to be accepted; and so the sense may be, that God by his grace would enable you to walk worthy of the calling and privilege of being christians, or count you worthy to be taken into this holy and heavenly estate, or preserved therein until the participation of that glory to which he hath so graciously called you.

But for more distinctness, let me observe to you, that there is a threefold worthiness—

1. A worthiness of desert and proper merit. So the word is sometimes taken: Rev. iv. 11, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power.' Surely God deserveth all that the creature can give him, and infinitely much more. So Rev. v. 12, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, and honour;' that is, to be served with our best. There is no doubt on that side, but God and Christ deserve not our best only, but our all. But let us give it in a lower instance, between man and man, where worthiness signifieth merit: Mat. x. 10, 'The workman is worthy of his meat.' When preachers are sustained by their hearers, it is not an alms, but a debt; they are worthy of their sustenance, or to be entertained for all necessaries by them, taking so much pains for the benefit of others. So 1 Tim. v. 17, 'Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honour.' Allowed to enjoy it. The double honour was the elder brother's portion; but is it so between us and God? Are we worthy of those favours bestowed upon us by Christ? Oh no; there is no such merit, no such worthiness, no not of the mercies of daily providence, much less of the eternal recompenses: Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies.' In this sense the apostle would never pray that God would count them worthy of this calling.

2. There is a worthiness of meetness and suitableness, without any respect to merit and proper justice. So we are said to 'walk worthy

of God,' Col. i. 10; 'Worthy of the gospel,' ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. We translate it 'becoming the gospel.' So 'worthy of our calling,' Eph. iv. 1, so as may beseem the duties and hopes of christians, that the life of christianity may show forth itself in us. In this sense God maketh us worthy, when we are made more holy and more heavenly, for this is becoming our calling. So 1 Thes. ii. 12, 'Walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory.' God is a holy God, and the happiness we are called unto is a glorious estate; then we are worthy when we are made more suitable to this holiness and happiness. Both together are expressed, Col. i. 12, 'Made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' It is the inheritance of saints, and therefore the meetness consists in sanctification. It is in light; by it I understand glory, or a happiness abstracted from those dreggy contentments wherein men usually seek their satisfaction. Therefore this meetness must consist in a heavenly frame of heart, that can forsake or deny all earthly things for Christ's sake.

[1.] This meetness consisteth in holiness: 1 Peter i. 15, 'As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' The calling puts a holy nature into us, obligeth us to live by a holy and perfect rule, offereth us a pure reward, and all to engage us in the service of a God who is pure and holy, who will be sanctified in all that are near unto him. Therefore to make his people such who were once sinners, he hath appointed means and ordinances, Gal. v. 26, and providences, Heb. xii. 10, and all accompanied with the almighty operation of a Holy Spirit: 2 Thes. ii. 13, 'Through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.' Therefore the more pure and holy, the more doth God make us meet.

[2.] This meetness consisteth in heavenliness; for God by calling inviteth men, and draweth them off from this world to a better; the more they obey this call, the more heavenly they are. It is heaven they seek: Col. iii. 1, 2, 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God: set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.' Heaven they hope for: 1 Peter i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' Heavenly things they savour and count their portion: Mat. vi. 20, 21, 'Lay up treasures in heaven, &c.; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' They count heaven their home and happiness: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on earth.' Their work and scope: Phil. iii. 14, 'I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ.' Their end, solace, and support: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' Their course becometh their choice: Phil. iii. 20, 'Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour.' These are worthy, or made meet.

There is *dignitas dignationis*, or worthiness of acceptance. So it is taken, Acts v. 41, 'They went away, rejoicing that they were counted

worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Christ ;' that this honour was put upon them. So we in common speech say, Such a one counted me worthy of his company or his presence, or conference with him, or to sit down at his table ; by these phrases of speech, not ascribing any worth to ourselves, but condescension in the party vouchsafing the honour to us. So here the apostle prayeth that they may be accounted worthy of this calling ; that is, that God would vouchsafe them to partake of his grace and glory. This worthiness is nothing else but God's gracious acceptance of a sinner through Jesus Christ, calling them to this grace by the knowledge of the gospel, and giving them eternal life because they are worthy ; which noteth liberality in the giver, but no worth in the receiver. So it is taken, Luke xxi. 36, ' That ye may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man ;' and Rev. iii. 4, ' They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy ;' because in Christ they are accepted as worthy, having given them a right by his grace. All is to be ascribed to God's dignation ; for Christ's sake God doth take our carriage in good part, though many failings.

Thirdly, That this is an excellent benefit, and the mere fruit of the Lord's grace.

I shall prove two things—

1. That it is an excellent benefit to be counted worthy of the calling and privilege of christians.

[1.] By this calling your natures are ennobled. You are made most like God of all creatures under heaven : 2 Peter i. 4, ' Partakers of a divine nature ;' 2 Cor. iii. 18, ' We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' There is no such glorious and valuable being on this side heaven as the new creature. God is a holy and happy being ; here you are made like him in holiness, hereafter in happiness. The heathen, when they would express the excellency of any person, they would say, He is like to God. Certainly holiness is the beauty of God, for it is his image impressed upon us.

[2.] This calling bringeth us into an estate, wherein not only we are amiable unto God, but God is amiable unto us ; for he doth adopt us into his family, pardon our sins, accept our persons, deliver us from the flames of hell and wrath to come ; for we are called to be the sons of God, 1 John iii. 1. By this calling we are severed from the world, to be a peculiar people unto God : Rom. i. 6, ' Among whom are ye the called of Jesus Christ.' It is a great and excellent privilege.

[3.] Being called unto this estate, we are under the special protection and care of God, so that all things that befall us are either good or turn to good, Rom. viii. 28. The called, *κατὰ πρόσθεσιν*, are his special charge, and God will not be unmindful of them ; all things do concur and co-operate to their advantage.

[4.] They are not only preserved by the way, but are admitted into everlasting blessedness at the end of their journey ; for this calling mainly respects our estate in heaven : Eph. i. 18, ' That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints.' So it is called, Phil. iii. 14, ' The high prize of the calling of God in Jesus Christ.' We are called to the participation of glorious things ; and where this calling is effectual, we have

a sure right. When once we are renewed by the Spirit, and believe God's offers, and give hearty obedience to them, what a large door of hope is opened to us of access to an excellent and glorious inheritance ! So it is said elsewhere, 1 Peter iii. 9, ' We are called to inherit a blessing.' A blessedness which consists in the clear vision and full fruition of God, which is much for us, who are naturally under the curse, that we should be called to possess this blessing ; it should make us more apprehensive of the greatness of the privilege.

2. That it is the mere fruit of the Lord's grace. This will appear, because the scriptures are so tender in this point of preserving the honour of grace in our calling, and do everywhere show that on God's part the grace is rich, on ours undeserved ; as Rom. ix. 11, ' That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.' That the purpose of God, founded in his own free choice, and manifested and declared by the effectual vocation of his Spirit, enlightening their minds and changing their hearts, was the only reason of their calling or bringing them into a state of grace. So again, 2 Tim. i. 9, ' He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling ; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ before the world began.' God recovered us, and rescued us from the evil sinful estate, not because we had deserved this mercy, but out of his mere goodness, designed to us in Christ long ago. No work of ours did merit this calling, or move him thereunto, but only that mere grace which he appointed to the elect by Christ. So that you see how tender the scriptures are in this point, to make effectual calling the fruit of his elective love ; for as by elective love we are distinguished from others before all time, so by calling in time separated and set apart from others to honour and please God, and seek after eternal life.

But that you may more distinctly see how freely he loved us and called us, let us distinctly consider—(1.) The beginning ; (2.) The progress ; (3.) The final consummation of this calling in our eternal reward ; and then your souls will be fully possessed with this truth, that all is to be ascribed to God's dignation, and that it is merely his grace which counteth us worthy of this calling.

1. For the beginning, that he was pleased to call us at first. Two considerations will evidence that—

[1.] The estate wherein he found us ; in an estate of sin and wrath, opposite to God and our own happiness, and unwilling to come out of our miserable condition, being blinded by the delusions of the flesh.

(1.) Wretched and sinful was our estate, objects of his loathing rather than of his love : Ezek. xvi. 8, ' I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live.' It is twice repeated, for the more emphasis. He called us, and gave us life, when we were wallowing in our own filthiness. We were indeed God's creatures, and so bound to serve him, but then we were not what we were when we were first his. As we came out of his hands we were pure and holy, but strangely altered and changed after we had departed from God, and had cast away the mercies of our creation. Like a servant that runneth from his master sound and healthy, but by bad diet and ill-usage is altogether become blind, deformed, and diseased ; will a master look after or care for him

in such a case? This was our estate before, we were become wholly depraved and unfit for his service.

(2.) We were loath to come out of it: John iii. 19, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.' We are not only careless of our remedy, but averse from it: Col. i. 21, 'Alienated, and enemies in our minds by wicked works.' Out of an indulgence to our fleshly and worldly lusts. How freely then did he love us, how powerfully did he work upon us, e'er we would be brought off from observing lying vanities to seek our own mercies! Sin having prepossessed us, and being affected by us, what through carnal liberty, what through legal bondage, we stood aloof from God, and would not come at him. Long did he continue calling and conquering, ruling and overruling all the passages of our hearts, until he had converted us to himself.

[2.] The second consideration is, how many were passed by. Thousands and ten thousands, who for deserts were all as good as we, and, for outward respects, far better than we: 1 Cor. i. 26, 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.' Some are altogether uncalled by the voice of scripture, whatever invitations they had to remember God by the voice of nature. Some only have an external call, that endeth in mere profession: 'Called, but not chosen,' Mat. xxii. 14. Some enjoyment of church privileges, and a participation of some common operations of the Spirit they have by it, but they are not effectually called and translated out of their natural estate into the state of grace; these are but few, very few, like two or three berries upon the top of the uppermost bough. Surely then it was the mere goodness of God that counted us worthy of this calling, and took us out of a state of sin, that we might be capable of everlasting glory.

2. For the progress, that we may walk suitably. God, that began the saving work of calling us to holiness and glory, still goeth on with it: 1 Peter v. 10, 'The God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' Mark, he speaketh to those that were already called, effectually called to the faith of Christ and hope of glory, yea, to those who had suffered for these hopes in some measure; yet these needed grace to make them perfect, and strengthen and settle them, and to carry them through their remaining conflicts. So in the text; he had given thanks for the growth of their faith, and the abounding of their love, yet because their trials were not over, nor their course ended, he still prayeth that God would count them worthy of this calling; for calling is not all perfected in the first instance of conversion. God must call us again, and by his efficacious persuasion confirm us in our christian hopes, and continue that grace which he hath begun. So elsewhere, when the apostle speaketh of progress in sanctification: 1 Thes. v. 24, 'Faithful is he that calleth you;' not that hath called, but still calleth; the present tense noteth a continued call. And the same means by which grace was begun are blessed and sanctified, that it may be continued and increased.

Now this is necessary for two reasons—

[1.] Because of the indisposition of the subject, our waywardness and

mutability. We are blind, and wander out of the way; God needeth to reduce us by his word, Spirit, and providence: Ps. cxix. 176, 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep;' ver. 57, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray.' And we do not only err in our minds, but in our hearts: Jer. xiv. 10, 'They have loved to wander.' Nothing more fickle and changeable than man, soon weary of a holy and heavenly frame; and except God did warn and guide us continually, how soon shall we mistake our way! Isa. xxx. 21, 'Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk in it, when ye turn to the right hand or to the left.' Unless God did give continual direction by his word and Spirit, we should never walk evenly nor uprightly in the way that leadeth to heaven and happiness. We are apt to languish and loiter, as well as to step aside and turn out of the way; and therefore we need that God should excite us and quicken us by his repeated calls. Certainly they never were acquainted with calling who despise further calling. So much of our old enmity remaineth as to beget at last a slowness and backwardness of heart to heavenly things. The spouse needeth to beg a new drawing, Cant. i. 4, and further grace to overcome our sluggishness.

[2.] The opposition and temptations to draw us off from the duties of this holy and heavenly calling, which we meet with from the devil, the world, and the flesh.

To begin with the flesh. The back-bias of corruption draweth us another way: James i. 14, 'Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts.' If we consider how averse the nature of man is from a strict course of holiness, and how addicted to carnal vanities, and that this nature is but in part broken in the best, how apt we are still to indulge the laziness of the flesh. You will find the best too backward and slothful, and need a renewed drawing.

So for the devil. How cunning he is, how assiduous in his temptations, that he may draw us back from the liberty which we have by Christ into our old slavery; how many cheats he puts upon the soul, that we may distinguish ourselves out of our duty, or live in a sin without remorse, by turning our liberty into an occasion unto the flesh!

Lastly, what lets and hindrances, what baits and snares, we shall find in the world; how much these hinder at least our growth in godliness and heavenly-mindedness! Surely we need more grace, that we may not be flattered by a vain tempting world, but may learn to live as heirs of glory.

3. That we may obtain the reward of our heavenly calling. It is God that must count us worthy to the very last; when we have done and suffered all, mercy alone counteth us worthy. This will sooner appear—

[1.] If we consider the infinite disproportion between our best services and greatest sufferings and the promised glory: Rom. viii. 18, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' As they should not be worthy in our reckoning, to weaken our resolution, so they are not in God's reckoning, to deserve our reward. There is no equality between the eternal enjoyment of the infinite God, and that

little that we do and suffer here in the world ; therefore the same God that took us with all our faults, and accounted us worthy of the first grace, doth still account us worthy of glory.

[2.] The imperfection and pollution of our best obedience : Isa. lxiv. 6, 'We are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.' We deserve rather to be sequestered from his sight, as unclean persons were shut out from the camp, than to be admitted into his glorious presence. Our best actions are not free from some default and defilement, as might render them odious to God, if he should look narrowly into them, and according to the exact tenor and rigour of his law. If you suppose that spoken as of the body of that people, yet the same truth is represented in other scriptures ; as Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant.' Not with his enemies, but his servant. So Job ix. 2, 3, 'How should man be just with God ? If he should contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.' Alas ! how impossible is it for us to bring out or plead any righteousness of our own by way of merit before God ! We do not see the thousandth part of what may be alleged against us. Again, Job xxx. 31, 'If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean ; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.' As if his own justification of himself would foul him the more, and render him impure in God's sight and his own.

[3.] Our unprofitableness to God, who is above our injuries and benefits : Job xxii. 23, 'Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise is profitable to himself ? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous ? or is it any gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect ?' Nothing that we do doth bring any advantage to God : Job xxxv. 7, 8, 'Thy righteousness may profit a man as thou art ; but what is it to God ?' Our good and evil reacheth not to him ; so our Lord Christ : Luke xvii. 10, 'When you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.'

[4.] The many interruptions of our obedience : James iii. 2, 'In many things we offend all ;' 1 John i. 10, 'If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.'

Use 1. To exhort us to behave ourselves as a people called by the Lord, or to walk worthy of the calling. I shall urge it upon you—

1. Because your calling is a peculiar favour vouchsafed to you, and denied to others. Certainly distinct privileges call for a distinct conversation, and they that have most favour from God should walk more holily and thankfully than others do, that they may comply with their obligations to him. Are all called ? No ; but a few only, that are distinguished by God's converting grace from the rest that perish in their sins. And should not they that are made partakers of this grace do more for God than others ? Surely when we consider what the grace of God hath made us, and the miserable estate of so many thousands who have the image of Satan engraven upon them, it should raise our thankfulness. Thus should we have been, and thus we were before grace surprised us. Now, shall we live as others, and, when God hath made such a difference, unmake it again, and confound all again by walking according to the course of this world ? We keep up the difference by holy conversation and godliness ; but conformity

to the world, if that still be, it is a confusion of what God hath separated and distinguished, a blending the children of light with the children of darkness, Eph. v. 8, 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light.'

2. Because the calling is a great honour, that God should adopt us, and take us into his family, and pardon our sins, and sanctify us by his Spirit, and qualify us for his glory, and continually set his heart upon us to do us good. Surely we should do some singular thing for God, who hath put such an honour upon us. Will not you honour him again who hath called you, and live to the great ends to which, and for which, ye are called? 1 Thes. ii. 12, 'That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.' So excellent is the dignity, so blessed are the privileges, so rich the enjoyments, that no mean thing will become you. Though this calling found you not saints, yet it should leave you so. We must have a spirit becoming the excellent estate we are advanced unto. Saul, when a king, had another spirit, a princely spirit put into him. So you should have a spirit and conversation becoming the honour you are advanced unto.

3. This calling is a rich talent, faculty, and power. As it is a favour and honour, it doth oblige us; but as it is a talent and power, it doth enable and incline us to do more for God than others. By calling we get a nature in part healed and sanctified: 2 Peter i. 3, 'Through his divine power all things are given to us that are necessary to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue.' By his first call he giveth us renewing grace, and by his continual calling he giveth us further degrees of grace, and power to walk acceptably in the ways of godliness; and if we be thus inclined and enabled, a singular sort of walking is expected from us; for all talents must be accounted for, the gifts of nature, the gifts of providence, the common gifts of the Spirit; much more God's regenerating grace. God's best gift must not lie idle, and be bestowed in vain.

4. It is a special trust. We are called by God, that we may be employed for his glory in the world: 1 Peter ii. 9, 'Ye are a chosen generation, that ye should show forth the virtues of him that called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;' τὰς ἀρετὰς; to be the image and visible representation of God in the world, that, from the effects of the singular change wrought in you, the world may know what God is, how pure, holy, wise, good. God trusts his honour in our hands. Now to fail in a trust, and disappoint a trust of so high a nature, how culpable doth it leave us before God! A christian should be the clearest glass wherein to see God, and the most lively resemblance of the divine perfections on this side heaven. But alas! most are but dim glasses; much of the satanical, little of the divine nature, is seen in them.

But now, what is it to show ourselves worthily of this calling?

It may be known by our suitableness to our principle, rule, and end.

[1.] To our principle, if we are suitable to the inclinations of the new nature. The apostle saith, 'Fashion not yourselves to the former

lusts of your ignorance,' 1 Peter i. 14. Heretofore you gave up yourselves to folly, to the satisfaction of your sinful desires, shaping and moulding your lives according to the wisdom of the flesh; but it must not be so now. Your principle is the new nature, which begets in us a love to God and a hatred of sin, so that it must be an unnatural thing to sin: 1 John iii. 9, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' And you must be carried to God with such a bent and inclinations, as light bodies move upward; serve him with all readiness of mind, Ps. xl. 8.

[2.] Our rule, which are the precepts of Christ: Phil. ii. 16, 'Holding forth the word.' Living in the constant practice of christian doctrine, that religion may be exemplified in you: 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ,' ministered according to the seal and stamp.

3. Our end, the hopes of the other world, as those that have a deep sense of the life to come, driving on a trade for the other world, Phil. iii. 10. Either living for heaven, as seeking it, or upon heaven, as comforting yourselves with the hopes of it in all our tribulations. We do but play with religion till we do thus.

Use 2. Since God counts us worthy of this calling, and the beginning, progress, and consummation cometh from his grace as the fountain, and is accomplished by his power, he must be sought to by prayer, waited on in the word and sacraments. To encourage us, what may we not obtain—

1. From our God, who is so propitious and favourable to us, so able to help us? We have undeserved goodness and infinite power to bestow glory upon us.

2. God by calling doth engage himself to perform his promise, that which is promised to the man that is called: 1 Thes. v. 23, 24, 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it;' 1 Cor. i. 9, 'God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ;' Phil. i. 6, 'He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

SERMON XII.

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.—2 THESS. i. 11.

I COME now to the second expression in the apostle's prayer, 'And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness;' that is, all those things which according to his good pleasure he hath determined to do for you. Now all the pleasure of his goodness respects both the kind and degree of the several graces to be wrought in them.

First, The several kinds of grace. Man is apt to divide ; some will have one sort of mercy, and not another ; whereas the whole mercy of God in Christ is necessary to our salvation, and none of us shall be saved without entire mercy. Thence note—

Doct. 1. That we must not sever God's benefits, and desire one with the exclusion of the rest.

Secondly, It respects the degree. Many, who imagine they have obtained some measure of grace and holiness, rest in those beginnings, and are asleep as to all desires and endeavours after growth and increase. Therefore—

Doct. 2. That a christian should not be contented with a little of God's grace, but seek to have all fulfilled in him.

For the first point, these reasons may enforce it—(1.) The causes of salvation must not be confounded ; (2.) Christ must not be divided ; (3.) The covenant must not be disordered ; (4.) Our cure must not be disturbed.

First, The causes of salvation must not be confounded one with another, nor separated one from another.

What are the causes and means of salvation ?

1. There are five things which do concur to this work, and all of them, in one place or another, are said to save—the love of God, the merit and satisfaction of Christ Jesus, the almighty operation of the Spirit, the conversion of a sinner, the word and sacraments, which in their place are said to save also. You shall find it is ascribed to all these things. To God the Father : 2 Tim. i. 9, 'Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling ;' because of his elective love in Jesus Christ. Mat. i. 21, To Christ : 'He shall save his people from their sins ;' because of his merit and satisfaction. To the Holy Ghost, because of his almighty efficiency, and powerful operation and influence : Titus iii. 5, 'He hath saved us, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' To conversion, by which repentance and faith is wrought in us. So we are said to be saved by faith : Eph. ii. 8, 'By grace ye are saved, through faith.' And by repentance and turning to God, to save ourselves from this untoward generation, Acts ii. 40. To the word and sacraments : the word discovereth and exhibiteth the grace whereby we are saved : James i. 21, 'The engrafted word, which is able to save our souls.' Yea, it is said of ministers as instruments, because of their subserviency to God's work : 1 Tim. iv. 16, 'Thou shalt save thyself, and them that hear thee.' So of the sacraments, as they represent and seal this grace to our hearts : 1 Peter iii. 21, 'Baptism saveth,' &c. Well, now, all these things must be regarded in their place.

[1.] The love and wisdom of God, in finding out a way how, with safety to the honour of his holiness and justice, sinners might be brought to life ; this is the bosom and bottom cause, and the first mover of all, that stirreth all the rest of the causes that conduce to our salvation : Johu iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,' &c.

[2.] The next is the merit and satisfaction of Christ, which is the result of that eternal wisdom and love, and without which the purpose of God could not take effect : Acts iv. 12, 'There is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.'

[3.] The omnipotent operation of the Spirit of God, who worketh

in us those things which are necessary on our part to the participation and application of the benefits intended to us by the love of God, and purchased for us by the satisfaction and merits of Christ. These things are indeed required of us, but because of our weakness and corruption cannot be performed by us, unless we be renewed and assisted by the Holy Spirit; so that as Christ is necessary to set all at rights between us and God, so the Spirit is necessary to qualify us, and fit us for the reception of the grace of Christ: 'He shall take of mine, and glorify me,' John xvi. 14. As it is not consistent with the holiness and justice of God to pardon sinners without a satisfaction, so not with his wisdom, and holiness, and justice, to dispense this grace to the unsanctified, who yet live in their sins.

[4.] Then cometh in the conversion of a sinner, as the fruit of the Spirit's work, which manifesteth itself in 'repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,' Acts xx. 21. By repentance we return to God, and by faith we are united to Christ, and live in him, and to him, that we may afterwards live with him.

[5.] The word and sacraments, by which the Holy Ghost doth first work, and then confirm faith and repentance in us; for faith cometh by hearing. And that grace which is offered in the word is sealed in the sacraments, which bind us more closely to God, and excite us with the greater confidence to wait for the grace offered by him, to bring us to life and salvation. Now these are the causes and means.

2. They must not be confounded one with another; we must not ascribe that to the sacraments which belongeth to the word. The word is appointed for conversion, as the sacraments for confirmation. A charter or indenture is first offered, and then sealed when parties are agreed: Acts ii. 41, 'They that gladly received the word, were baptized.' They received the word, then baptism is added; as in a treaty of marriage, consent to the proposals, solemnisation, and then cohabitation followeth. Neither must that be ascribed to one sacrament which is proper to the other. Initiation or implantation belongs to baptism: 1 Cor. xii. 13, 'By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.' Some things are proper to the holy supper which do not belong to baptism. We must live before we are fed. We must not ascribe that either to word or sacraments which belongeth to conversion, as the privileges of christianity. Many depend upon the outward participation for their title to pardon and life: Luke xiii. 26, 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.' So James i. 22, 'Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,' *παραλογιζόμενοι*. Frequenting the means is not our qualification, but sound and thorough conversion to God. Faith giveth the title, not the use of ordinances. Again, we must not ascribe that to our conversion which belongeth to the Spirit; our faith and repentance is necessary, but yet it is not of ourselves, but of God, Eph. ii. 8. Nor that to the Spirit which belongeth to Christ, as if our conversion were meritorious, or did deserve the benefits we are possessed of. No; that honour is reserved for Christ. Neither must we ascribe to Christ that which belongeth to God; for the mediator came not to draw us off from God, but to bring us to him: Rev. v. 9, 'Thou hast redeemed us to God.' Therefore all things must be ranged in their proper place, and we must distinctly consider what is proper to the

love of God, what to the merit of Christ, what to the operation of the Spirit, what to the conversion of the creature ; and so what to faith, what to works, what is proper to the word, what to sacraments, what is proper to baptism, what to the Lord's supper ; otherwise we shall fall into dangerous errors and mistakes, and hinder both our spiritual profit and comfort. As, for instance, if we so ascribe all to the mercy of God as to shut out the merit of Christ, we quit a great part of God's design, which is to represent his goodness to fallen man, without any derogation to his justice : Rom. iii. 24, 25, 'To declare, I say, his righteousness,' &c. On the other side, if we cry up the satisfaction of Christ so as to lessen our esteem of the love of God, we draw an ill picture of God in our minds, as if he were all wrath, and needed blood to appease him ; whereas Christ came to demonstrate the amiableness of God, and his goodness and love, to allure and draw our hearts to him ; for he was first in this design : 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.' If we conceive otherwise, we set Christ against God, and so urge his merit against the eternal love, which was the bottom and original cause of our salvation. Again, if we ascribe that to the merit of Christ which is proper to the operation of the Holy Spirit, we confound things that are to be distinguished, and beget an ill persuasion in the minds of men ; as if his blood would do us good without his Spirit, and there were nothing required of us but the believing of his righteousness and sufferings, and he were the best christian that did only credit the history of the gospel. No ; the Spirit of Christ is necessary to apply and enforce all upon us. And besides the elective love of God and the mediation of Christ, the Spirit's sanctification is necessary, 1 Peter i. 2, lest it beget looseness and licentiousness in us. Again, if a man should apply the conversion of the creature to his own power and strength, it is a wrong to the Spirit, by whose divine power this is accomplished, 2 Peter i. 3 ; or if he should apply the benefits of which we are possessed to the merit of our faith and repentance or new obedience, it is a wrong to Christ ; or if upon pretence of conversion we should neglect the means, or ascribe to the means what is proper to Christ and the Spirit, as if the work wrought did all, we should fall into dangerous errors ; for the means are but means, and the cause of all is God's mercy, which floweth freely to us by the merit of Christ, and procureth the Spirit for us, who worketh in us true conversion to God, evidencing and showing forth itself by faith and repentance, which are wrought by the word, and confirmed by the sacraments.

3. They must not be separated one from another. We cannot rest upon the grace of God without the satisfaction of Christ, for God will not exercise his mercy to the prejudice of his justice ; nor can we take comfort in the satisfaction of Christ without regeneration or true conversion wrought in us by the Spirit ; nor can we conclude that we are regenerated by the Spirit without faith and repentance, nor expect the operation of the Holy Ghost without the use of the word, neither must the word be used with the neglect of the sacraments : Eph. v. 26, 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' Though the Spirit be not bound to these things, yet we are

bound. Nor must one sacrament be separated from the other, as that we should content ourselves with baptism without a religious use of the Lord's supper. No; we make a dislocation of the method wherein God hath disposed his grace. Suppose, for instance, a poor creature troubled with the sense of his sin and misery, what shall he do? Keep away from God, or go to him? Not keep away, that is to shut the door upon himself. Go to him by all means, you will say. Well, to God he goeth. But he is a sinner, obnoxious to his wrath; how shall the poor man hope to speed? God heareth not sinners; true, but he hath declared his willingness to be reconciled in Christ; and so God doth in effect say, as the prophet Elisha said to Joram, 2 Kings iii. 14, 'Were it not that I regarded the presence of Jehosaphat the king of Judah, I would not look towards thee nor see thee.' So God saith, 'Were it not for Christ, I would have no respect to you.' Suppose the distressed sinner addresseth himself to Christ, to help him and pity him, that he may come to God by him. Christ remitteth him to the Spirit: 'He shall take of mine, and glorify me.' Well, then, he waiteth for the Spirit, whose office it is to convert the creature to God; but the Spirit referreth him to the ordinances: 'Tarry at Jerusalem till ye be endowed with power from on high.' In the word and sacraments ye shall hear of me. What then becometh the distressed creature but to submit to this method, and improve it to the best of his power till he be brought home to God? Thus the causes and means of salvation must not be confounded.

Secondly, Because Christ must not be divided. Surely men overlook or depress one office whilst they magnify the other, and so set those things against each other which God hath joined together, or at least we wholly spend our thoughts upon one thing, that we forget the other. As, for instance, in Christ, his natures and offices are considerable.

1. His natures, divine and human.

For his divine nature, there are ordinarily fewest practical mistakes about that, because it is a matter of faith, and we cannot sufficiently possess you with this truth, that Christ is the Son of God, yea, God, equal with him in glory. Yet there are found a sort of men who will be called christians that deny his godhead. But yet there may be an abuse of the orthodox assertion of the divinity of his person; for if we altogether reflect upon that, and neglect or overlook his great condescension in taking flesh, we miss the great intent of his design, the nearness of God to us in our nature, that he might be within the reach of our commerce. On the other side, if we altogether consider his human nature, and do not remember his godhead, we shall be in danger to deny his super-eminent power, virtue, and merit; as the Socinians do, who account him to be mere man, and deny him to be God. Man is always disturbing the harmony of the gospel, and setting one part against another. The Socinians on the one hand deny him to be God, and so impeach his merit and satisfaction, and press only his example and doctrine; but the carnal professor, on the other hand, only reflects upon his redemption as a means of our atonement with God, and so overlooks the necessary doctrine of his example, and Christ's coming to be a pattern of obedience in our nature, so often pressed in scripture:

John xiii. 5, 'I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done;' and 1 Peter ii. 21, 'Christ hath suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.' So 1 John ii. 6, 'He that saith, he abideth in him, ought also to walk as he hath walked.' So 1 John iv. 17, 'As he is, so we are in the world.' As the others make light of his merit, so these of his example. Now both together will do well. Our duty is not prejudiced when we consider we live by the same laws God lived by when he was in flesh; and our comfort is the stronger when we consider that the merit of his obedience and satisfaction, by reason of his godhead, expiates our defects.

2. His offices. His general office is but one, to be mediator or redeemer; but the functions which belong to it are three—to be king, priest, and prophet; for all these belong to the anointed Saviour. Note, one of these concerns his mediation with God, the other his dealing with us. We are to consider him in both parts: Heb. iii. 1, 'Consider the Lord Jesus, the great high priest and apostle of our profession.' The work of a high priest lieth with God, the work of an apostle with man. Now some look so to his mediation with God that they scarce observe his dealing with man; others so look to his mediation with man that they overlook his mediation with God. Nay, in his very priesthood, or dealing with God, some so observe his sacrifice that they make light of his continual intercession, and do not apprehend what a comfort it is to present our suits by such a worthy hand to God; yet both are acts of the same office.

[1.] Let us deal with these first, these that cry up his sacrifice and intercession, so that they make light of his doctrine and government. They look so much to the saviour that they forget the teacher and lord. You may observe that their whole religion runneth upon depending on Christ's merit, without any care of his laws or holy doctrine, by believing and obeying of which they are interested in the fruits of his merit and righteousness. The scriptures direct us to another sort of religion, and do not make one office destructive of the rest; but represent Christ under such terms as do not only intimate privilege to us, but bespeak duty and obedience; as Acts ii. 36, 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' He is lord and supreme governor, as well as Christ an anointed saviour; not only a saviour to bless, but a lord to rule and command. So again, Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God anointed to be a prince and saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins unto Israel.' Still the compounded terms occur, because of his double work, to require and give. Christ is such a saviour that he is also a prince, such a prince that he is also a saviour; and in this compounded notion must we represent him to our souls. So Eph. v. 23, 'Christ is the head of the church, and the saviour of the body.' On the one side, as Christ saveth his people from sin and misery, so he doth also govern and rule them; and on the other side, Christ's dominion over the church doth tend unto, and is exercised in, procuring and bringing about the church's salvation. The usual carnal part of the world catch at comforts, but neglect Christ as a teacher and lord. A libertine yokeless spirit is very natural to us: Ps. ii. 3, 'Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast his cords from us.'

They stick at his reign : Luke xix. 19, *Nolumus hunc regnare*, ' We will not have this man to reign over us.' If he will come as a saviour, he shall be welcome. He may have customers enough for his benefits, for pardon and glory, but we cannot endure to hear of his laws and strict doctrine, that he will be sovereign and chief. Men would not willingly obey him.

[2.] Some so cry up his mediation with man that they forget his mediation with God. They are of two sorts—

(1.) Some that cry up his doctrine, that they forget his giving of the Spirit, as if objective grace did all. No ; they must be taught and drawn, John vi. 44, 45. But men are apt to run into extremes ; they cannot magnify one thing but they depress, depreciate, and extenuate another ; as if the Spirit's work and all-conquering force did signify little, and his business did only lie in inditing scriptures, not in opening hearts, Acts xvi. 14.

(2.) Others urge him as a lawgiver, that they forget him as a fountain of grace. It is said, Acts viii. 35, that ' Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch.' The Greek word is, *εὐηγγελίστατο αὐτῷ τὸν Ἰησοῦν*, he evangelised Jesus, not legalised Jesus ; as the Samaritans had a temple at Mount Gerizim, but they had no ark or mercy-seat. They turn christianity into mere legislation ; they cry up the rule of the gospel and the example of Christ, but they depreciate his merit and satisfaction, do not represent Christ as a fountain of grace who worketh all in us.

Thirdly, The covenant must not be disordered, which, as David telleth us, is in all things ordered and sure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. There God hath so ordered all things that they may not hinder one another. None shall have any part in the covenant unless he take the whole bargain. The order of the covenant chiefly appeareth in the right stating of privileges and conditions, means and ends, duties and comforts.

1. Of privileges and conditions. He offereth pardon and life, but to the penitent and obedient believer : John iii. 36, ' He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life ; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' Is not this a condition which excludeth the infidel and includeth the penitent believer ? Without it we cannot, by it we may, obtain life. So John xiii. 8, ' If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.' Unless cleansed from the guilt and filth of sin by Christ, we can have no part in him or with him, that is, in his benefits. So Heb. v. 8, ' He is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.' Christ would contradict his own method, not act according to the covenant stated and agreed between him and us, if he should dispense his grace upon other terms. Now there are two extremes in the world ; some trust in their own external superficial righteousness, as if that were the only plea to be brought before God : Luke xviii. 9, ' He spake this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.' The other extreme is of those who teach men to look at nothing in themselves, neither as evidence, condition, nor means, and think the only plea is Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and merit, and no consideration is to be had of faith, repentance, and new obedience. Do you

think these men deliver you the covenant of grace? No; it is a covenant of their own making and modelling, not the covenant of God, which is your charter and sure ground of hope. The blood of Christ doth what belongs to it, but faith and repentance must do what belongs to them also. They have not the least degree of that honour which belongs to the love of God, or blood of Christ, or operation of the Spirit; yet faith, repentance, and new obedience must be regarded in their place. Surely none of the privileges of the new covenant belong to the impenitent and unbelievers; these are the portion of the faithful only. It is the Father's work to love us, of his own accord and self-inclination; Christ's work to be a sacrifice for sin or propitiation for us; the Spirit's work to convert us to God; but we must accept of the grace offered, that is, repent, believe, and live in obedience to God.

2. A right order of means and ends, that by the one we may come to the other. The great end of christianity is coming to God; the prime and general means is by Christ: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'Christ hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God;' and John xiv. 6, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me;' Heb. vii. 25, 'He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him.' The subordinate means are the fruits of Christ's grace, in sanctifying us, and enabling us to overcome temptations, more expressly by patient suffering and active obedience. Suffering: Rom. ii. 7, 'To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life.' Obedience: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' The great difficulty of religion lieth not in a respect to the end, but the means. There is some difficulty about the end, to convince men of an unseen felicity; but there is more about the means, not only to convince their minds, but to gain and convert their hearts, and bring them to submit to this patient, holy, and self-denying course, whereby we obtain eternal life. Many wish the end, but overlook the means, as Balaam, Num. xxiii. 10. When the Israelites despised the pleasant land, it was because of the difficulty of getting to it, Ps. cvi. 24, 25. The land was a good land, flowing with milk and honey; what ailed them? There were giants, sons of Anak, to be overcome first, walled towns to be scaled, numerous inhabitants to be vanquished. Heaven is a good heaven, but the way to it is to deny themselves. Few come to the apostle's resolution: Phil. iii. 11, 'If by any means I might obtain the resurrection of the dead.' To forsake what we see and love for a God and glory we never saw, there is the difficulty of religion. But the covenant bindeth this expressly upon us: Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me;' Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, &c., he cannot be my disciple.'

3. A right order of duties and comforts: Mat. xi. 28, 29, 'Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' Commands

and promises are interwoven ; comfort is more vanishing than grace, enjoyed only by him that works closely. If we will not be at the pains of seeking after the blessings of the covenant, no wonder if we miss them. Comfort is possessed more inconstantly, and with more frequent interruption, if we be not thorough in obedience.

Fourthly, Our cure must not be disturbed, to which many sorts of grace are necessary.

1. General and particular grace. There are some common benefits, as the offer of a new covenant to all sinners : Mark xvi. 16, ' He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; ' John iii. 16, ' Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish ; ' 2 Cor. v. 19, ' God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. ' This common grace must not be neglected. Then peculiar grace to the elect : John vi. 37, ' All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ' Special grace is built on general, as the application to us upon the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and ransom, and the offer of the covenant.

2. In the application we need Christ's renewing and reconciling grace : Isa. liii. 5, ' He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. ' Peace and healing, justification and sanctification ; both a relative and real change, in converting us to God and changing our natures, as well as redeeming us from the curse, are necessary.

3. In renewing grace, we must consider both the moral and powerful work : John vi. 44, 45, ' No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God ; every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me. ' God worketh on us by his word and persuasion, and the secret influence of his grace : Acts xvi. 14, ' Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, attended to the things spoken of Paul. ' The moral way is by counsel, winning the consent of the sinner ; the physical work by inclining the heart : *Fortiter per te, Domine, suaviter per me*—Powerfully by thee, O Lord, sweetly by me. He doth allure and persuade : Hosea ii. 19, ' I will betroth thee unto me for ever, ' &c. ; Gen. ix. 27, ' God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem ; ' and powerfully overcome the heart.

4. Besides renewing we need preserving grace, that God should continue and increase what he hath begun, till all be perfected in glory : Phil. i. 6, ' He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ. ' Some graces co-exist, others in due time follow one upon another ; as after conversion, preservation in holiness, and then perfection in holiness, and final enjoyment of God in glory are to come.

Use. To persuade us to look after, both in our desires and practice, an entire christianity. We must not pick out what liketh us best, and pass by the rest, but desire God, and labour by all due means, that he may fulfil in us all the pleasure of his goodness : Hosea x. 11, ' Ephraim is as a heifer that is taught, that loveth to tread out the corn, but will not break the clods. ' We affect privileges, but decline duties ; desire

one sort of grace, but neglect another ; some graces serve our turn more than another.

1. In regard of God, his way of giving, Eph. i. 3, with all spiritual blessings : blessings which are absolutely necessary to salvation are linked together, and cannot be separated. Where God bestoweth one, he bestoweth all. The concatenation you find, Rom. viii. 30, ' Whom he did predestinate, them also he called,' &c.

2. Our first entry into the covenant bindeth us to it : 1 Peter iii. 21, ' Baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience.' It is an answer to the Lord's offers and commands in the gospel, accepting the blessings offered, resolving upon the duties required.

3. The great hurt that redoundeth to us when we are partial, in with one thing and out with another ; it holdeth good in sins, graces, duties.

[1.] Sins. Many escape sensuality, but not worldliness, or escape fleshly lusts, but fall into errors. There is carnal wickedness and also spiritual wickedness, Eph. vi. 12. Now the grace of sincerity is to escape all, especially those that are most incident to us ; therefore the more hearty must our prayers be that God would ' order our steps in his word,' Ps. cxix. 133.

[2.] In graces. Men look so much to one that they forget the other. We are bidden to ' take to ourselves the whole armour of God,' Eph. vi. 11 ; not a piece, a breastplate without a helmet ; and 2 Cor. vi. 7, ' On the right hand and on the left.' Then we are provided against all temptations. Every grace is a help to the rest, and the neglect of one is a hindrance to all. We must not mind faith so as to forget love, or both so as to neglect temperance : 2 Peter i. 5, 6, ' Add to faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,' &c. Not one must be left out, not cry up knowledge so as to neglect practice, nor fervours of devotion so as to betray men to ignorant and blind superstition.

[3.] Duties. Every duty must be observed in its place and season. Most use one grace or duty against another ; as some set their whole hearts to mourn for sin, but little think to get a thankful sense of their Redeemer's love ; others prattle of free grace, but give over penitent confession, and care, and watchfulness against sin, and diligence in a holy fruitful life : Jude 4, ' Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.' Some cry up repentance without faith, others faith without repentance and new obedience.

Doct. 2. That a christian should not be contented with a little of God's grace, but seek to have all fulfilled in him.

These already were converted, and had attained to a good degree of eminency in faith and holiness, yet still the apostle prayeth for them, that ' God would fulfil in them all the pleasure of his goodness.'

1. While God hath a hand to give, we should have a heart to receive. If the oil faileth not, the vessels should not fail : Ps. lxxxi. 10, ' Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' There is no want in God, only we cannot take it in as fast as God freely giveth.

2. The latter grace doth not only increase, but secure the former. A weak measure of grace is often interrupted, and can hardly maintain itself in the midst of oppositions within and temptations without :

Rev. iii. 2. 'Strengthen the things which are ready to die.' Sin maketh daily breaches upon us; Satan assaults us; our hopes disturb our comfort, and too often betray the honour of God, and expose religion to contempt.

3. Though we have grace enough for safety, yet we may not have enough for comfort. Some may make a hard shift to get to heaven with weak grace: 'Scarcely saved,' 1 Peter iv. 18, and 'Saved as by fire,' 1 Cor. iii. 13. Yet they are not capable of the rich consolations of the gospel, have no peace and joy in believing, do not taste of God's feast, nor eat of that choice fruit which groweth upon the tree of life in the midst of paradise. The comfort of the gospel, it is called a strong comfort, Heb. vi. 18, because it overcometh the sense of all present infelicities; a full comfort answereth all necessities, John xv. 11. A ravishing comfort, Phil. iv. 7; it may be felt better than told. A glorious comfort, 1 Peter i. 8, because it is a taste of heaven, and it is the portion of the eminent fruitful christian.

4. Though we may have enough to save us and bring us to heaven, yet we have not enough to glorify God, by doing some eminent thing for him in the world. Surely it concerneth a christian to get his heart enlarged to such actions and services as may be most to the praise and glory of God, that we may carry his name up and down with honour. Now this is only done by some eminent degree of grace: John xv. 8, 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;' Phil. i. 11, 'Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise and glory of God;' and Mat. v. 16, 'Let your works so shine before men, that ye may glorify your Father in heaven.' When the grace is so plentiful, then it shineth forth.

Use. To press us to enlarge our desires, affections, and endeavours after grace. It is mere laziness to sit down with any measure of grace as enough, and not to care for an increase. The life of a christian must be a continual progress in holiness. We have not yet attained our full and perfect measure of spiritual growth. Our light must increase: Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' It is not high noon or perfect day with us yet; therefore we must propound to ourselves a higher pitch and further degree than yet we have attained unto: Phil. iii. 13, 'I have not apprehended, but forgetting those things that are behind, I press forward.'

1. For the honour of Christ. We should seek to return to our first estate, that Christ may be found as able to save as Adam to destroy; Christ aimeth at this, to present us faultless.

2. It is for our comfort that we should go to heaven with full sails: 2 Peter i. 11, 'So an entrance shall be administered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom.' Some are afar off, some not far, Mark xii. 34. Some enter with much ado, some with full sail.

3. Nothing engageth us to maintain communion with God so much as this, that we are filled with all his goodness. Narrow-mouthed vessels cannot take in all at once. Desire the word, 1 Peter ii. 2; prayer, 1 Thes. v. 23, 'I pray God your whole spirit,' &c.

4. Encouragement. *Deus donando debet.* Life, food, body, raiment. God giveth the former grace to make way for more, Zech. iii. 2.

SERMON XIII.

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.—2 THESS. i. 11.

DOCT. Then is the pleasure of God's goodness fulfilled in us, when we accomplish the work of faith with power.

1. What is the work of faith?

2. Why it is a sure note that the pleasure of God's goodness hath its effect in us.

1. What is the work of faith? Two things must be explained—faith, and the work of faith.

First, In what sense faith is here taken. For a belief of the truth of the gospel, or a receiving the testimony which God hath given us in the word concerning salvation by Christ. So it was taken ver. 10, 'Our testimony among you was believed.' And presently he prayeth that God would fulfil in them the work of faith with power, the work proper to this faith. And so it is described 1 John v. 9-11, 'If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; and this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son: he that believeth the Son of God, hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believed not the record which God gave of his Son: and this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.' Where—(1.) Faith is made to be a receiving God's testimony; (2.) That the sum of this testimony is eternal life, to be had by Christ; (3.) That this testimony is transmitted and conveyed to us by some unerring record, to which, if we give not credit, we put the lie upon God, rejecting a truth so solemnly attested; but if we do, we find the fruit of it in our own souls. I shall prove it by arguments.

1. That this truth is apt to produce the work here spoken of, that is, all holy conversation and godliness; for the gospel, or the doctrine of salvation by Christ, is a mystery of godliness: 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh,' &c.; and 1 Tim. vi. 3, 'If any consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.' The doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ is said to be a doctrine of godliness; that is, apt to breed it in the hearts of men, as delivering the most exact way of serving and pleasing God, upon the highest motives and encouragements. So that men offer violence, and resist the force of it, if they be not made godly by it; as the apostle speaketh of some who, having a form of godliness, deny the power thereof, 2 Tim. iii. 5. By 'a form of godliness' I understand a map or model of christian doctrine, as *μόρφωσις τῆς γνώσεως ἐν τῷ νόμῳ*, Rom. ii. 20, is a scheme of legal knowledge, or a delineation of the truths which concern legal doctrine: 'An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, who hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.' The meaning is, that, pretending to believe as christians, they do nothing like christians.

2. That where it is soundly believed and received, it will produce

this effect : 1 Thes. ii. 13, ‘When ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.’ Let truths be never so weighty and conducing to such an end, yet they do not attain that end unless they be rightly received by a sure faith ; for the manner of receiving is as considerable as the importance of the doctrine itself. As to a fruitful harvest and crop, there needeth not only good seed, but a prepared soil, so that the work may be brought forth into sight and view ; it is not enough to look that we receive the word of God, or his testimony concerning his Son, but also how we receive it, as the word of God, or his message sent us from heaven, as if he had spoken to us himself by oracle and audible voice.

3. The power of God goeth along with the preaching of the word and receiving of it, that it may attain those ends to which it is appointed. With the preaching : Col. i. 29, ‘We preach Christ in you, the hope of glory, whereunto I labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.’ In publishing the doctrine of salvation by Christ, the power of God did effectually concur with him. So in receiving the word : 1 Thes. i. 5, ‘Our gospel came to you, not in word only, but in power also, and in the Holy Ghost, and much assurance.’ To gain them to Christ by this doctrine, there was a mighty working of the power of God. Well, then, this is the true notion of faith, which must be fixed here ; a sound belief of the truth wrought in them by the power of God, whereby they receive God’s word as God’s word, and as it becomes those that had God’s testimony to secure them in their obedience and confidence. This needeth first to be stated, that we might the better proceed, and because there is an unusual¹ mistake of faith among christians, as if it were only a strong and blind confidence, which admits no doubt in the soul concerning their own salvation ; a vain conceit, which both hardens the impenitent and discourageth the serious.

[1.] It hardens the impenitent, for this strong confidence of their own good estate may happen to be the greatest unbelief in the world ; for in many it is a believing that to be true, the flat contrary of which God hath revealed in his word : 1 Cor. vi. 9, ‘Be not deceived ; know ye not that the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God ?’ They flatter themselves with the belief of the contrary, and if they can but bless themselves in their own hearts, and get the victory over their consciences and fears of wrath, and cry Peace, peace, loudly enough, they think all is well, and so embrace an imagination and dream of their own for true faith. This confidence is absolutely inconsistent with the doctrine of salvation by Christ.

[2.] It discourageth the serious, who foolishly vex their own souls, and disquiet themselves in vain, thinking they have no faith, because they have not such a peace as doth exclude all doubts and fears about their eternal estate, whereas faith is a receiving God’s testimony concerning his Son, or such an embracing of the doctrine of salvation by Christ, that we set ourselves about the duties required, that we may be capable of the blessings offered, even reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory. The mistake of the nature of faith leadeth christians to most of their perplexities. Do you receive the

¹ Qu. ‘usual’ ?—ED.

word as the word of God, that will put an end to your scruples? then thankfully accept Christ as the offered remedy, and take his prescribed way to come to God; depend on his mercy, and continue in obedience to his precepts, and you will soon find that he is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him, Heb. v. 9.

Secondly, What is the work of faith?

I answer in the general, all that work and business which belongeth to faith.

More particularly, let me tell you that there are two sorts of acts ascribed to faith, elicit and imperate, internal and external.

1. The internal and elicit acts of faith are assent, consent, and affiance.

[1.] Assent to the truth of the doctrine of salvation by Christ: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' It hath a just title to our firmest belief and choicest respect.

[2.] Consent; either to accept Christ for our Redeemer and Saviour: John i. 12, 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' Jesus is made welcome to the broken-hearted sinner, they then open the doors to him, receive him with the dearest embraces of their affection, subjecting themselves to him as their Lord, and waiting for his salvation. Or receiving the word as it is stated into the form of a covenant: Acts ii. 41, 'They received the word gladly,' resolving to live by the rule, and earnestly to seek the happiness of that covenant God hath made with the world in Christ.

[3.] Dependence, called a trusting in Christ: Eph. i. 12, 13, 'That we should be to the praise of the glory of his grace, who first trusted in Christ,' &c. Leaving the weight of our souls, and all our eternal interests, on this foundation-stone, which God hath laid in Sion, or depending on his promises, and looking for the performance of them.

2. The external and imperate acts.

[1.] A bold and open confession of Christ, and owning his ways, notwithstanding the sharpest persecutions. This is the work of faith, as put into the covenant: Rom. x. 9, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thy heart, thou shalt be saved.' There the duty of a christian is made to consist of two parts; one concerneth the heart, the other the mouth. There is believing with the heart, which is the internal principle; the other for the mouth, and that is open confession or profession, in spite of all persecution and danger; for all christians are saved, either as martyrs or as confessors; and therefore christianity is called a profession: Heb. iii. 1, 'Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession.' And because this exposeth to danger, we must venture all to make this profession; and that is the reason why the kingdom of God is compared to a wise merchant-man, that sold all for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 45, 46. It is the work of faith; therefore it is said, Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm to the end,' *παρρησίαν καὶ τὸ καυχῆμα τῆς ἐλπίδος*; that is, if we undauntedly continue our christian profession and cheerfulness in all that befall us for Christ's sake, knowing we can be no losers by Christ: Heb. x. 23, 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without waver-

ing, for he is faithful that hath promised.' Here faith produceth its work, when we are fortified against the terrors of the world, and the dangers feared do not make us waver in the ways of Christ, or the profession of his name. And this is that work of faith which is accomplished with power, meaning the divine power; as Col. i. 11, 'Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.' It is the grace and power of God that beareth us up under the afflictions we meet with in our christian course. So 2 Tim. i. 8, 'Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, by the power of God;' and here, 'The Lord fulfil in you the work of faith with power;' that is, complete in you all the good fruits of faith and patience; or enable you to bear christianity, whatever you suffer for embracing the truths of the gospel.

[2.] The next is ready obedience to the will of God, forsaking all sin, and walking in all newness of life to his praise and glory; then is our practice conformed to our faith. And faith is said to work by love, Gal. v. 6, that is, to produce holiness and obedience; when the drift and bent of our lives is for God and heaven, to please, glorify, and enjoy him. What we are to believe and do is the sum of religion, and the one is inferred out of the other. Doing ariseth out of believing, as the branch doth out of the root: 2 Peter i. 5, 'Add to faith virtue.' And therefore our obedience is called 'the obedience of faith,' Rom. xvi. 26, because it is animated and inspired by it.

Well, then, that which the apostle intendeth here is not the interior and elicit acts of faith, but the exterior and imperate; for the drift of his prayer is, that God would enable them to ride out the storm of those troubles which came upon them for the gospel's sake. And a christian, in judging his condition, will better discern it in the external acts than the internal; for—

(1.) The upright cannot always discern the interior acts, or the strength of them, but the exterior are more sensibly and visibly brought forth in the view of conscience. God seeth what is in our hearts, but we see it not till the effects manifest it. The sap is not seen when the apples and fruits do visibly appear. Look, as we judge of the soundness of men's repentance by the fruits thereof, otherwise men may be deceived, and think there is a change of mind when there is not. When John suspected the pharisees, Mat. iii. 8, he saith, 'Bring forth fruit meet for repentance.' Yea, to men of better temper than they, the apostle exhorted them to repent, and turn to God, and to do 'Works meet for repentance,' Acts xxvi. 20. So we judge of men's fear of God not by the internal elicit act of reverence, but by departing from evil, Prov. viii. 13. Of their love by their obedience: John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;' and 1 John v. 3, 'This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.' So of their faith, by their holy and heavenly walking. There is no faith in them that live an unsanctified life; but where men set their faces heavenward, make it their business to please God, here is true faith; they have received God's testimony, and therefore upon the encouragement of his promises continue with patience in well-doing.

(2.) Hypocrites will pretend a strong faith, be ready to challenge them of injustice and injury that shall question their belief of the

doctrine of salvation by Christ; but they deny in their practice what they assert in their words: Ps. xiv. 12, 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' Atheism is a heavy charge, but how is it made good? Partly by their sins of commission: 'They be corrupt and abominable.' Partly by sins of omission: 'There is none that understands and seeketh after God.' It is not facing it out with big and stout words, that they are no atheists, and saying they do certainly believe there is a God; what could they do more in a way of sin, or less in a way of duty, if there were no God? So Ps. xxxvi. 4, 'The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, There is no fear of God before his eyes.' The current of a man's life and actions doth best expound and interpret his heart. Every considerate man may collect from their actions they have no true sense of the being of God; for they are not watchful over their own ways, and their actions are so absolutely contrary to God's laws, threats, and promises, yea, to all that is known of God, that certainly they do not believe there is a God, or are not in earnest when they think and speak so. It may be their mouths are not let loose to that boldness openly to deny or question God's being; but their dealings are so false and detestable, that a man may certainly conclude they never expect to be accountable to God for what they do. So for the belief of christianity, many seem to believe as christians, but live as infidels; nominally they are christians, but really deny the faith: John viii. 31, 'Then said Jesus to those Jews that believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.' There are disciples in name and disciples indeed. Some take up the current opinions of the country where they live upon human credulity, but they have no force and efficacy upon them to change their hearts or lives. They talk as honourably of Christ as others do; but Christ will not take compliments for service, nor words for practice: Mat. vii. 21, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father.' Or as it is, Luke vi. 46, 'Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' Now how shall we confute men's confident presumptions and boastings but by their lives? Fornication, drunkenness, gluttony, oppression, covetousness, are not the works of faith, but of that fleshly mind that possesseth men in their apostasy from God; and therefore the surest note will be holy conversation and godliness.

II. Then may we conclude that the pleasure of God's goodness is fulfilled in us—

1. Because true grace is of an operative and vigorous nature, and if it lie idle in the soul, it is but an image and shadow of grace, something that looketh like it, but is not it. As, for instance, faith is but a dead opinion unless it break out into practice: James ii. 14, 'What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him?' Talk as much of faith as you will, yet no man will believe that you are in earnest, and indeed look for salvation by Christ, when you plainly take the way that leadeth to hell. Faith is but a cold approbation of the ways of God, or some ineffectual liking of that course, which is overborne by a contrary bias, or love to earthly things: Rom. ii. 18, 'Thou

approve the things that are excellent.' True love will constrain us to live to God: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'The love of Christ constraineth us,' &c. Hope will be seen, not by some naked cold thoughts of heaven, but by an earnest pursuit: Acts xxvi. 7, 'To which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God, hope to come.' It quickeneth to the use of all the means by which we may obtain it. Of all graces it is said, 2 Peter i. 8, 'If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall not be barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;' that is, you will behave yourselves so as becometh good christians. Where graces are lively, they can never be without works, or such fruits as will tend to God's honour; it will not let him be quiet, or have any peace in himself, till he do something considerable for God, as a thing that is ever seeking to break out.

2. Because the Spirit of God dwelleth and resideth in the heart, to keep these graces in continual work: John iv. 14, 'A well springing up into everlasting life;' and John vii. 38, *ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας*. It is springing up, it is flowing forth. A man is not to keep grace to himself, but to exercise it for the glory of God and the good of others. Therefore is the presence of the Holy Ghost necessary, that the grace which he hath wrought may not lie dead in sleepy habits, but be continually acted and drawn forth, in such lively operations as may demonstrate the cause whence they do proceed.

3. When the work of faith is accomplished, internal and external acts concur. There is a principle within, and there is the effect without. Within there is faith, which is the most noble principle to produce a holy life, without which bodily exercise profiteth little, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Faith partly doth it, as an assent to those sublime and weighty truths concerning redemption by Christ which breed love; and so faith worketh, Gal. v. 6; and also the doctrine of everlasting life and death, which have great efficacy and moving power to sway us to obedience. Again, faith doth it as a hearty consent both of subjection and dependence. We consent to obey Christ, and trust him for our assistance, acceptance, and reward; all this is within, and without there is the effect of serious holiness and doing good, whatever we suffer for it, without which all our pretence of subjection to Christ, and dependence upon him, is but talk and empty prattle. Now, when both internal and external acts concur we have these advantages:—

[1.] We have a surer rule to judge by. We judge others by external works alone, for the tree is known by its fruits, Mat. vii. 16. Charity forbids us to pry any further; but we judge ourselves according to internal and external works together. If within there be a love of God, faith in Christ, hatred of evil, a delight in holiness, a deep sense of the world to come, and all this evidenced by a holy conversation, we need no further proof. If a man would make a judgment of his own estate, he must consider the temper of his heart and course of his life both together.

[2.] Our religion is more noble and better tempered; for though the internal acts in themselves are nobler and greater than the acts of the outward man; that is, considering them abstractly and apart; it is more to love God than to do an outward act of charity or piety,

because the soul is more noble than the body ; yet outward duties are most frequently greater than internal acts only ; partly because in outward duties it is supposed that both parts concur, both soul and body, and the operations of both are more than of one alone ; partly because the nobler ends are obtained by both, more than by one only, for God is more honoured, and man benefited by them : John xv. 8, ' Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ; ' and Phil. i. 11, ' Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise and glory of God. ' Christ is not glorified by faith, but by the work of faith, as ver. 12 of this chapter. When it breaketh out in good fruits, then is Christ honoured. The reflection of the heat from the earth in ripe and pleasant fruits is more than the bare reflection of the heat alone from a dead wall. Take this rightly.

(1.) All outward duties are nothing unless they begin at the heart ; they are but as the washing of the outside of the platter ; therefore unless faith and love animate them, they are not valued by God : 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3, ' Though I give my body to be burnt, remove mountains, give all my goods to the poor, speak with the tongue of men and angels, understand all mysteries, ' *οὐδὲν εἰμι*, I am never the better for it ; for external acts, however materially good, are not valuable ; unless they come from a rectified will, faith in Christ, and love to God, they are of no respect.

(2.) Where there is a right constitution of soul, if the external act be restrained by a natural and not a sensible impediment, there the internals are accepted. The lover's mite cast into the treasury is more than ten times so much outward obedience from another man : 2 Cor. viii. 12, ' If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not. ' If a man is resolved to obey God in all things, if he do according to his ability, he shall be accepted, though in some cases he is impeded and hindered ; but now when both parts concur, the religion is well tempered ; he believeth, and doth what his belief binds him unto.

(3.) The next and last advantage is this : those outward acts which flow from an internal principle move the heart again, and do increase the habit, and thereby a man is more confirmed in his gracious estate. As the right arm is bigger than the left, and is more ready for action, because by constant exercise it is fuller of spirits ; so faith and all other graces are increased by much action ; partly of their own nature, and partly by divine reward. Do, and have more : ' To him that hath shall be given, ' Luke viii. 18. There is a circular motion between the heart and the hand ; the more men actually sin, the more prone they are to sin ; as a brand that hath been once in the fire is more apt to take fire again, so grace exercised is rewarded with grace. The acts increase the faith and love which did first produce them, and we are still provoked to do more for God, and go on in the way which we have begun. Diligence is the means, and God's blessing is the cause of all increase ; not only contrary acts, but a remission of acts doth weaken habits. God, that punisheth sin with sin, doth also reward grace with grace. Well, then, these three advantages we have by this concurrence—the note is more sure, the religion is the better tempered, and the grace is increased.

4. When the work of faith is accomplished, both objective and

subjective grace hath its proper end and use, for they both tend to put us upon work. Objective grace is the doctrine of the gospel. Subjective is the powerful impression of the soul.

[1.] For objective grace. All truths are revealed in order to a holy life, not barely to make us wiser, but better. The scriptures were not written to try the strength of men's wits, who can most accurately distinguish and conceive of these things; nor the strength of their memories, who can most firmly retain them; or the plausibleness of their discourse, who can most eloquently speak of them; but the readiness of their obedience, who will most readily set themselves to the practice of them: Mat. vii. 24, 'Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, I will liken him to a wise man, that built his house upon a rock;' that is, he that believeth and practiseth my commands, he buildeth his confidence well: Ps. cxix. 48, 'My hands will I lift up to thy commandments, which I have loved;' that is, I will make it my endeavour to practise them. Whatever love we pretend, if our hands be remiss and faint, it is not accepted with God. Getting knowledge, it is but like having tools, and tools are in order to work, otherwise they lie by and rust. Speculation is useless and idle if it tend only to curiosity, and not to practice.

[2.] Subjective grace. All that internal grace that is given to us by Christ was given to this end; life, not that we might have it, but use it for God. The new creature was not made as a statue to gaze upon, but that he may walk, and perform all the functions and offices which belong to the new creature: Eph. ii. 10, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which he hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' We are new made to this end and purpose. Christ died to restore us to this captivity¹ and ability, and hath given us his Spirit to this end. Now graces are imperfect till their end be obtained, whilst they remain as idle and useless habits; but they are perfected when they have their use. So by works faith is said to be perfected, James ii. 23, that is, hath obtained its end. So 1 John ii. 5, 'Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected;' that is, hath produced its consummate act, to which it tendeth; then the force of it is discovered, whereas before it suffered a kind of imperfection. The plant is perfect when it ariseth into stalk and flower, and begins to seed.

5. Practice giveth us experience of the comfort of that religion which we embrace by faith, so that the man is confirmed greatly in believing those supernatural revelations, which before he received without that help: 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.' But when hath he the witness within himself? When he hath a testimony in his own bosom, when he cometh to practise what he believeth. It is a ravishing thing to understand heavenly doctrine, and see the apt proportion and connection between ends and means: Prov. xxiv. 13, 14, 'My son, eat thou honey, because it is good, and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: so shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul, when thou hast found it; then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.' The delights of the mind do far exceed those of the body; there is a ravishing sweetness in the study and contemplation of truth, such as the epicure findeth

¹ Qu. 'capacity'?—ED.

not in the most exquisite entertainments of sense; especially when this contemplation is employed about divine truths, such as reconciliation with God and eternal life. But the pleasure of contemplation is nothing to the pleasure of practice, for then we find these things verified and confirmed in ourselves. Contemplation giveth us only a sight, but experience a taste, and so we are more deeply and intimately affected with them: 1 Peter ii. 3, 'If so be we have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' Besides, the delight of contemplation is more vanishing, but the taste of these things is kept up on our hearts by a serious and constant obedience; it abideth with us, and the pleasure is more durable; it is but a flash of joy that is stirred up by contemplation, but the delight of practice and fruitful obedience is constant, solid, and permanent. Every holy action is rewarded by peace of conscience, and our right to heaven is more confirmed.

6. A christian will be judged at the last day, not by what he hath believed, but by what he hath done; not by what he hath approved, but by what he hath practised. Many profess faith and love, but if it be not verified in our practice, they are not accepted with God: 1 Peter i. 17, 'If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear;' Rev. xx. 12, 'The dead were judged according to their works.' God will judge men according to their works, and what they have done in the flesh, whether it be good or evil: John v. 29, 'They that have done good shall rise to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.' So that according to the doctrine of Christ, we must be judged, not by faith, but by the work of faith; and shall be either justified or condemned at the last day, according as our faith hath been barren, or else operative and fruitful in good works; even though we be judged according to the law of grace, this must be the process.

Use 1. Information. That we should not judge of our spiritual condition by an airy religion, that consists in contemplation only, nor rest in an idle faith: James ii. 20, 'Show me thy faith by thy works;' for faith without works is dead. The practical christian is most sure to be guided right in point of opinion: John vii. 17, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' To have more solid comfort: John xv. 11, 'These things have I spoken, that my joy may remain in you.' And certain acceptance with God at the last day: Mat. xxv. 21, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' &c. It is not the sharp wit, the firm memory, the nimble tongue, but the fruitful life, the obedient practice, which then will be respected. If our work do not correspond with our faith and profession, it is a practical lie and cheat, which God will soon find out and discover.

Use 2. For caution. See that your work be the work of faith. Moralities are not kindly, unless they proceed from love to God and faith in Christ: 'For without faith it is impossible to please God,' Heb. xi. 6; and till we be married to Christ we cannot bring forth fruit to God, Rom. vii. 4. All that justice, temperance, charity, is but a mock grace and bastard holiness, as the children born before marriage are illegitimate. Good works are but wild fruit, unkindly, till they have this principle; there is no living to God that can be carried on to

any purpose till we are persuaded of his love in Christ, who hath purchased pardon and life for us. Yea, we are utterly unable to live to God without the grace of the Redeemer: Gal. ii. 20, 'The life I now live is by the faith of the Son of God.' The knowledge of him and the mysteries of his grace is our great motive, and his Spirit is our proper principle and cause of holy living.

Use 3. To press us to accomplish the work of faith.

1. This may be well afforded, if we consider what Christ is, and what he hath done for sinners, and what he will do; our obligations past, our privileges present, and our hopes to come. When we consider what Christ hath done for us, and is, and will be to us, have we the heart to refuse any of his commands? Out of what rock were we hewn, that we can stand out against all these charms of grace? Unnatural, unthankful creature, that canst deny a loving Saviour, who requireth nothing of thee but what is for thy good!

2. The divine power is engaged for thy defence: Eph. iii. 16, 'That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might;' and Eph. vi. 10, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;' 2 Peter i. 5, 'Give all diligence to add to your faith virtue.' You will meet with difficulties in carrying on the work of faith; but be not discouraged, God is on your side, and Christ will bear all your expenses to heaven. He that was perfected by sufferings will not suffer you to be destroyed by them. You conquer not in your own strength, but by the power of his Spirit. Say then, 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him unto that day.'

3. Other faith will be a snare and temptation to you, besides that which produceth its proper work, which is an invincible resolution to deny the importunities of the flesh, and to despise all terrors of sense; yea, to forsake all things rather than be unfaithful to Christ. Other faith, that consists in loose and slight apprehensions of grace, destroys thousands. Consider how many abuse the mercy of God and the merits of Christ, and turn grace into looseness or laziness.

SERMON XIV.

That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.—2 THESS. i. 12.

IN these words you have the end of the things prayed for. In the apostle's prayer you may take notice of these three things—(1.) Causes; (2.) Means; (3.) Ends.

1. Causes, which are God's free goodness and power.

2. Means, effectual calling, faith, works. The one proceeds from the other, faith from calling, and works from faith.

3. The ends. In the text, 'That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,' &c.