

SERMON UPON HEBREWS XII. 24.

And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.—HEB. xii. 24.

In the context, the privileges of our being brought into a gospel state are reckoned up. Among other things, these two are of principal regard—That we are acquainted with the true Mediator, and the true ransom which he hath paid for our souls. (1.) The true Mediator; in the former part of the verse, ‘And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.’ (2.) The true ransom; that is in the text, ‘And to the blood of sprinkling,’ &c. In which words the blood of Christ is set forth by two things—

1. By the application of it, ‘The blood of sprinkling.’
2. By the virtue and efficacy of it, ‘Which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.’

The worth and value of it is set forth by a comparison, where take notice—(1.) Of the things compared, Christ’s blood and Abel’s blood. (2.) Wherein they agree; they both speak. (3.) The preference of Christ’s blood; *κρείττονα*, the blood of Christ speaketh better things.

The doctrines are two—

1. Those who have entered into the gospel state have the blood of Christ applied to their hearts and consciences.

2. The blood of Christ applied to the penitent believer’s heart and conscience is of great value and efficacy with God.

The first point is grounded upon that term, ‘The blood of sprinkling.’ The second upon the other branch, ‘That it speaketh better things.’

For the first, we read in scripture of blood shed and blood sprinkled. (1.) Of blood shed: Heb. ix. 22, ‘Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.’ Therefore Christ’s blood was shed for the remission of sins. There can be no propitiation for sin without the expiation of it. The expiation of sin is by suffering the punishment due to it. Now the punishment was suffered when Christ was made sin for us: 2 Cor. v. 21, ‘He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’ A curse for us: Gal. iii. 13, ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.’ (2.) We are to speak of blood sprinkled, that is, actually applied, for all believers are sprinkled with it. Blood shed hath a cleansing power and virtue, but blood sprinkled doth actually cleanse and purify from sin, when this is applied to us in particular. The

‘blood of sprinkling’ is not only spoken of in the text, but in many other places: 1 Peter i. 2, ‘Through the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.’ This sprinkling relateth unto the law customs, wherein, after the shedding of the blood of the sacrifice, it was sprinkled. A threefold sprinkling I shall take notice of—

1. The first was the sprinkling of the door-posts with the blood of the paschal lamb, to save the house from the stroke of the revenging angel: Heb. xi. 28, ‘Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them;’ with Exod. xii. 22, ‘Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the bason,’ which was a type of our deliverance by Christ. Blood sprinkled was a mark of preservation; and the scripture often sets out the heart by a door, which, being opened, giveth entrance to God. Christ hath borne all that wrath which was due to the elect for their breach of the law, that so deserved wrath might pass over all his redeemed ones, to whom his blood is applied; as the destroying angel passed by all those whose door-posts were sprinkled with the blood of the paschal lamb.

2. Another solemn sprinkling that I shall take notice of was when God entered into covenant with the people of the Jews; and the blood of the sacrifice, called there ‘the blood of the covenant,’ was to be sprinkled half upon the altar and half upon the people, Exod. xxiv. 8. You have the story of it there at large. There was an altar built to represent God, the first and chief party in the covenant. The *altera pars paciscens* were the people represented by twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes, Exod. xxxiv. 4. Now the words of the law were to be read, and the people were to promise obedience, and God would promise to be their God; for the covenant between God and his Israel was to be established by mutual and willing consent. Well, then, to ratify it, blood was to be sprinkled upon the altar and upon the people, that is, upon the twelve stones which were set to represent the people, or upon the people themselves, to show that God took an obligation to bless, they to obey. Now the new administration of the covenant is also ratified by the blood of sprinkling. God accepted the blood of Christ, and is satisfied with it, and ready to give out grace; and we, by the sprinkling of the same blood, are comforted and enabled to serve him. This many think is the chief sprinkling alluded unto by the apostle, for the former part of the verse speaketh of Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and then of the blood of sprinkling, by which God is reconciled to us and we to God. We must all be sprinkled with Christ’s blood before we can be admitted into covenant with him; and being once sprinkled, it doth powerfully draw down mercy on the penitent believer. In short, Christ by his blood confirmeth the new covenant. One thing I cannot omit, that presently upon that sprinkling the nobles saw the God of Israel in his majestic appearance, and did eat and drink in his presence, Exod. xxiv. 10, 11. They saw the glory and presence of God in a clear and heavenly appearance, which is a sign of the favour of God towards them that keep his covenant; as, on the contrary, a dark or cloudy

heaven is a sign of God's displeasure. This did not hurt them nor affright them; and their eating and drinking is a token of our joyful communion with God, being reconciled to him by Christ. When the altar is sprinkled, and the people sprinkled, when the atonement is made, and the atonement is received and owned, that is matter of rejoicing: Rom. v. 11, 'We joy in God through Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.' Then it is a blessed time, a time of holy rejoicing; then we may eat before him, and he will not lay his hand upon us, neither affright nor hurt us.

3. There was another solemn sprinkling, that is spoken of by the apostle, Heb. ix. 13, 14, 'For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?' To the type of the red heifer spoken of Num. xix. There was a solemn sprinkling there for the purifying of the unclean, to which answereth the purging of our consciences by the blood of Christ; the one sanctifieth the flesh, the other the conscience; the one freed from such penalties as were by the law imposed upon souls for legal and ceremonial offences, the other from dead works, which pollute us before God; and so from spiritual evils and eternal penalties, and consequently that fit us for communion with God.

But from all these sprinklings this we find, that it noteth approbation.

Now in this first point consider—(1.) The persons; those that are entered into the gospel estate. (2.) The manner of application; how it is applied. (3.) The subject to which it is applied; their hearts and consciences. (4.) The certainty of the effect.

[1.] The persons. The apostle speaketh of such as are come to the new Jerusalem, to God the judge of all, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling; that is, such as are entered into the gospel estate. Now the way of entering into the gospel estate is by faith and repentance: Acts xx. 21, 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' That was the sum of his preaching to Jew and gentile, to bring them to enter into the gospel estate. Repentance towards God, because we had revolted from our duty to him. And then faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is necessary, that those that have benefit by Christ should own the author of their deliverance, and put their cause into his hands, that he may reconcile them unto God. Repentance that we may acknowledge our obligation to his law, bemoaning our former misery, and devoting ourselves anew to God, to do his will and walk in his ways. Well, then, repentance is our consent of returning to God, as faith is our thankful owning of our Redeemer. It is Christ's business to bring us back again to God, from whom we have fallen and strayed. Our great end in entering into the gospel estate is that we may put ourselves into a posture and capacity of pleasing and enjoying God; and this is God's end in our pardon and reconciliation, and in offering us the benefits of the gospel. And therefore there must be a relenting towards God and a serious owning of Christ, or an hearty

consent to his conduct, to be brought home to God by him, and so fully recover our lapsed condition. So Mark i. 14, 15, 'Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.' When the gospel estate, or the kingdom of the Messiah, was to be set up, this is the way of entering into it, 'Repent and believe.' Which repentance, properly and distinctly taken, looketh towards God the Father, and faith towards Christ as mediator. To God we return, from whom we were gone astray by sin; and to Christ, the means and way of our returning, without whom we cannot be reconciled to our heavenly Father, nor perform any acceptable service to him. Now surely wherever these two are, faith working by love, and repentance mortifying our sinful lusts, that in newness of life we may glorify God, there men unquestionably are entered into the gospel state, and are capable of the privileges thereof.

[2.] How is the blood of Christ sprinkled or applied to us? Many ways.

(1.) On God's part by the Spirit, as the fruit of Christ's intercession. Therefore it is said: 1 John v. 8, 'There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, these three agree in one.' The *τὸ κρινόμενον*, or thing to be proved there, is, that Jesus is the Son of God. Now the Spirit beareth witness to this, applying the blood of Christ to the conscience, and purifying and sanctifying them as with clean water. These are not one, as the three first; but these agree in one; partly as they establish the same conclusion; partly as they do concurrently establish it; not singly and apart; not water apart, nor blood apart, nor the Spirit apart; but they all concur; the Spirit by water and blood appeasing our guilty consciences, and washing away the filth of sin, either comforting, or sanctifying, or regenerating us. So again: Rom. v. 5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.' The business is what is meant there by the love of God? I take it for the great instance of his love in reconciling the world to himself by Christ; for it immediately follows, 'For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.' Surely it is not taken for our love to God, but his love to us, which was chiefly seen in that great instance; this is shed abroad in our hearts; we have the effect, the feeling, and sense of the comfort of it by the Spirit.

(2.) By faith on our part; for till we believe, the blood of Christ produceth not its effect in our souls: Rom. iii. 25, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' Faith, believing the great love of Jesus Christ in shedding his blood for us, for the expiation of our sins, doth comfort us, and excite us to live in a constant course of new obedience to him who died for us: Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' All that sincerely embrace the gospel are freely accepted with God in Christ; have their sins pardoned, live in a sweet amity with God. In short, Christ, as the means of expiation of sin and reconciliation with God, is only applicable to a man by faith. We enjoy this reconciliation by faith. God doth not actually admit any to the privileges of Christ's death till they do believe.

(3.) As a middle between both, it is sprinkled or applied by the ordinances of the gospel ; as the preaching of the word, and the sacraments.

(1st.) In the preaching of the word. As it is the great duty of the ministers of the gospel to sprinkle the hearts of the people with the blood of Christ, so to discover God's love and the virtue of his death, as to excite the hearers more earnestly to apply Christ, and take him home to themselves for their comfort and salvation. As Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, so that he ravished his heart with him, and he could no longer be held from him : Acts viii. 36, 'As they went on their way, they came unto a certain water : and the eunuch said, See, here is water ; what doth hinder me to be baptized ? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' The apostle telleth the Galatians that in the gospel Christ is evidently set forth and crucified among them, Gal. iii. 1, when he is represented with such perspicuity and plainness, and with such power and liveliness, as if painted out before their eyes ; and Col. i. 27, 'Christ in you the hope of glory, warning every man, teaching every man ;' Gal. iv. 19, 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you.' To have Christ so applied as that his virtue may be felt.

(2d.) By the sacraments. They are a means on God's part, and an help on yours, for the applying of Christ, or sprinkling his blood on your consciences. Baptism is the laver of regeneration, or a means to make way for the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord, Titus iii. 5, 6. The blood of Christ is the fountain of all the grace communicated to us by the Spirit, though the water of baptism have an immediate respect to regeneration by the Spirit. In the Lord's supper, *οὐχὶ κοινωνία*, 1 Cor. x. 16, 'The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ?' There we come to apply it. In short, all the ordinances are helps instituted by God to make way for the participation of Christ.

(3d.) The subject to which it is applied, the hearts and consciences of penitent believers. Under the law, the flesh was cleansed by the sprinklings there, but now the heart and conscience : Heb. x. 22, 'Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed as with pure water.' That is, from that inward impurity and corruption whereof every man's conscience is judge and witness. Conscience is the most quick, lively, and sensible power of a man's soul ; so that when the heart is said to be sprinkled from an evil conscience, it is meant of a conscience unquiet by reason of sin, when a poor sinner, being sensible of sin, maketh hearty application of the blood of Christ for remission and pardon, and in all the disquiets of his soul runneth to the blood of Christ, as the only fountain which God hath opened for uncleanness : 1 John i. 7, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' Once more : Heb. ix. 14, 'Purge your consciences from dead works, that you may serve the living God.' The poor soul that is conscious to its own disobedience, and sensible of having displeased God by sin, is grievously afraid of him, shy of coming into his presence, till the blood of Christ be sprinkled and applied to

it; that freeth the soul thus conscious of sin from the guilt, impurity, and other sad consequences of it, whereupon it begins to have peace with God, and fitness for communion with him.

(4.) The certainty of the effect to all that come under the gospel. It must needs be so, for they are partakers of Christ; Heb. iii. 14, with the 6th verse. How are men affected at the first receiving of christianity with great hope and confidence in Jesus Christ, that he will do their work for them: to be partakers of Christ is to have his benefits applied to us. More particularly, they are justified and sanctified in his name, and by his Spirit: 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' We are assured that, if we are capable, if we have a conscience sensible of sin, and appealing to the throne of grace, and plead this blood, God will make us feel the fruits of it: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' When with brokenness of heart, as feeling the weight and power of sin, we bemoan ourselves to God, he hath left his faithfulness and justice at pledge with us that the stormy conscience shall be quieted, the filthy soul shall be washed and prepared for communion with God. But those who, being senseless of sin, are careless of the remedy, these feel no great effects of Christ's death in their own souls.

Use. Have you been sensibly acquainted with the power and virtue of Christ's death? Hath his blood been sprinkled upon your hearts and consciences?

1. Consider it is said: 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth hath the testimony in himself.' What testimony was that? Look back to the 8th verse. The Spirit, by the blood of Christ pacifying his conscience, sanctifying his heart. Christianity is not only a matter to be believed, but felt. There is experience and spiritual sense, which serveth as a back and confirmation to faith, as a whet and incitement to love. Many hear of a mighty Christ, but feel nothing; these are without their testimony of religion, so in danger of atheism.

2. Consider how uncomfortable it will be for you if you only should be a stranger in Israel; if the price be paid by Christ, and accepted by God for the ransom of our souls, and the liberty be proclaimed to us, and we through our own default and non-performance of the conditions, should remain yet in bonds: John viii. 32, 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' If he came to heal us, and we still remain, not only weak, but sick unto death, how uncomfortable will this be? Shall we receive this grace in vain, the offers and tenders of reconciliation and peace? 2 Cor. vi. 1, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.' It is that he speaketh of there.

3. Learn that it is a disparagement to Jesus Christ that you should so long profess his name, and not feel his blood applied to your hearts and consciences; that you should rest in talk and notions, and find no more of his virtue and power, either in converting an hard heart, or in comforting a dejected spirit, or in sanctifying and cleansing a filthy soul: 'The kingdom of God standeth not in word, but in power,' 1 Cor. iv. 20. What! hath the gospel neither quieted thy conscience

nor changed thy heart? Hast thou neither effects nor sense; neither sanctification nor comfort?

4. You disparage the gospel, as if it were but a literal instruction, even as the law is to fallen man. No; there is a mighty spirit goeth along with it, to apply the truths of it to the soul: Gal. iii. 2, 'This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or the hearing of faith?' That is, by the doctrine of justification, by the works of the law, or by faith. He appealeth to their conscience and experience, that God giveth his Spirit to all that are reconciled to him. By the doctrine of the gospel saving grace is conveyed. The hearing of the law worketh conviction of sin, terror of conscience; but it doth not give you that Spirit that breedeth comfort and enableth you to holiness. It is by the hearing of faith, and from Christ, that we receive grace for grace.

5. If Christ's blood be not sprinkled upon you, it argueth some great fault in you. Either a senselessness of your spiritual condition; for till men be convinced of sin and misery there is no need of the blood of sprinkling, or careless despising of the fruits of Christ's death, and filling our hearts with the tumults of worldly business, that we cannot listen to the peace Christ's blood speaketh to our souls; or indulgence of some secret lusts, which darken all in our souls; or contenting ourselves with a literal christianity, resting in a traditionary knowledge of gospel truths, or bare rational reflections upon them, and so sucking at our own bottle, and neglecting the Spirit, who is wont by the ordinances to apply Christ to our souls.

And how shall we know that Christ's blood is sprinkled on our souls?

I answer—The immediate fruit of his purging the conscience is serving the true and living God, Heb. ix. 14; that is the end of it. Under the law, a man, if he worshipped in his uncleanness, and before he was legally purged, defiled the tabernacle and sanctuary of God, and that soul was to be cut off. We cannot have free access with confidence and boldness to the throne of grace, nor serve the Lord with any expectation to receive mercies and blessings from him, till the blood of sprinkling hath been upon them. There are degrees of cleansing, so also of serving God. When we are fully cleansed from all sin, then we shall have full communion with God, and serve him more perfectly in the temple of heaven; but so far as Christ hath washed us in his blood, so far is he acting the part of a spiritual priest: Rev. i. 5, 6, 'And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, and him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,' &c. Peace maketh way for liberty of commerce; trading is revived again.

Doct. 2. That the blood of Christ applied to the penitent believer's heart is of great value and efficacy with God.

1. I shall explain it in the notions of the text.

2. Give the reasons why.

1. The value and efficacy of Christ's blood is set forth by a comparison with Abel's blood. It will be good a little to examine it—(1.) Wherein these two bloods agree; (2.) Wherein they differ.

[1.] They agree in these things—

(1.) That as Abel's blood was shed, so Christ's. Abel's blood, being shed, speaketh; so Christ's. Of Abel's blood it is said, Gen. iv. 10, 'What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.' Christ's blood hath a voice; it was not shed in vain; it pleadeth before the throne of grace on our behalf. Christ's intercession is not vocal, but real. The presenting of his blood before the throne of grace is enough; for that speaketh to God in our behalf. As the high priest under the law appeared before the mercy-seat with the blood of the sacrifices, we do not read of anything he spake: 'So Jesus with his own blood is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before God for us,' Heb. ix. 24.

(2.) Both bloods speak; in the conscience of the sinner, and unto God. Abel's blood did speak in Cain's conscience, so that he was filled with terror and unrest; so that he went about trembling, saying, 'Mine iniquity is greater than can be forgiven,' Gen. iv. 13. Words of despair. And it spake to God; for he saith, 'Thy brother's blood crieth unto me.' And it is 'bloods' in the Hebrew, as if every drop of it had a voice to call for vengeance on Cain. So Christ's blood speaketh in the consciences of them to whom it is applied; it speaketh pardon, peace, comfort. It quieteth the soul as much as the other terrified Cain's conscience: Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' And it speaketh to God, for he is pacified, reconciled by it: Heb. xiii. 20, 'The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.' As having done his work, having pacified God for us. He was before an angry, an offended God with us, but now, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, he is propitiated and become the God of peace; by this blood our surety is enlarged, our bond cancelled, our peace is restored.

(3.) They both speak loud, and cry, so that God heareth. In Abel it is true, God is very tender of his Abels, of righteous persons; the injuries done to them he deeply resenteth: Ps. cxvi. 15, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints;' Ps. lxxii. 14, 'He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight;' that is, he so considereth it, and it is rated at so high a price by God, that he will not put it up. The cry of their blood is soon heard in heaven. Now the blood of the Son of God is far more precious; surely the cry of it will be heard in heaven: 1 Peter i. 19, 'With the precious blood of the Son of God, as of a lamb without spot and blemish.' If this blood be offered for the sin of man, it will be heard; it crieth loud in God's ears; for it is very precious, and will be esteemed there, however it is slighted in the world, counted *κοινὸν*, a common thing, Heb. x. 29. His blood *tot habet linguas pro nobis loquentes, quot pro nobis vulnera accepit*; every drop is precious.

(4.) It is a continual cry. Abel's blood did not cry once, but continually; for it is said, Heb. xi. 4, 'By it, being dead, he yet speaketh.' As he was the protomartyr, and Cain on the other side the patriarch of unbelievers: Jude 11, 'These go in the way of Cain;' but for Abel,

see Mat. xxiii. 35, 'That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of Zacharias,' &c. Abel was the first we read of that offered lamb's blood for sacrifice, professing thereby to seek his righteousness in the blood of the Messiah; and for this sacrifice he was made a martyr, the first of the order that suffered for the righteousness of faith. His blood crieth with the rest of the martyrs, to avenge his innocency. The carnal seed cannot endure such, but in all ages persecute them: Rev. vi. 9, 10, 'And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?' So Christ's blood as yet speaketh, as if it were shed afresh: Heb. xiii. 8, 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' The virtue of it is everlasting. The cry of this blood God daily heareth; it still speaketh to him, to pacify his wrath and to pardon us; and it speaks in our conscience, to cleanse it, and make it quiet within us; the efficacy and virtue of it is everlasting, to all those who are made partakers of it.

[2.] The difference: 'It speaketh better things.' The one crieth for mercy, the other for judgment. There is a difference in the end of the cry. To understand this, we must look upon Christ under a twofold notion—as a martyr and as a mediator.

(1.) As a martyr. So his blood speaketh as Abel's did, the same things: 1 Thes. ii. 14, 15, 'They killed the Lord Jesus, therefore wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.' As Cain's murder did so much offend God that it moved him to avenge it; so Christ's blood did so far offend God, that he punished them and their children, who had said, Mat. xxvii. 25, 'His blood be upon us, and upon our children.' They defied God's justice, and therein by their own mouth pronounced their own doom, and wrath is come upon them ever since. But mark, even here Christ prayed for them: Luke xxiii. 34, 'Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' That prayer fetched in many. Their nation was not destroyed till they rejected the gospel, of which they had the refusal and morning market, and had killed the Lord Jesus and persecuted the apostles, forbidding them to preach, and so filled up the measure of their sins.

(2.) As mediator. So it speaketh better things, is presented before God, not to desire vengeance on the murderous Jews, as Abel's blood against Cain, but to obtain pardon and favour for believers and penitent sinners. Abel's blood cried against Cain that shed it, but Christ's cried for men, whose sins did cause it to be shed. Though we by our sins did make the Lord to serve and die also, yet doth not his blood speak against us, but for us. Our sins call for vengeance and condemnation, but Christ's blood for pardon and reconciliation. This blood, as suffered for the sin of man, and offered unto God, is so pleasing, so precious, so highly accepted, that God for and in consideration of it is effectually moved to pardon for evermore all that humbly seek benefit by it. In short, this blood spake then when it was shed, and still speaketh effectually before the eternal judge, as it is pleaded by Christ in his intercession, by us in our prayers.

2. Why? Whence cometh the blood of Christ to have such a virtue and efficacy? I answer—

[1.] Partly from the institution of God.

[2.] From its own intrinsic worth and value, which lieth—(1.) Partly in the dignity of his person; (2.) The nature of the work. It was the highest degree of obedience that ever was performed to God. There was in it so much love to God, so much love to man, so much self-denial, humility, patience, such a resignation of himself to God, as could never be paralleled; and therefore was most powerful to move God to mercy, who is so inclined to show mercy of his own accord.

[3.] This blood was shed with the greatest pain, and willingly, out of love to man. The sufferings were most intense; he was made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13. They were attended with desertion, penal disturbance, and all that the law put upon sinners, either of loss or sense: Isa. liii. 4, 5, ‘He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But 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.’ His soul was heavy to death, Mat. xxvi. 38; he was deserted: Mat. xxvii. 46, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ So that as it sufficiently demonstrated God’s displeasure against sin, so it was very pleasing and highly accepted of God. He omitted nothing that divine justice required.

Use 1. For information.

First, To show us the nature of Christ’s intercession. On the one side it will not be enough to say that his merit and sufferings continue to deserve such things at the hand of God as we stand in need of, as if the pleading were only figurative and metaphorical; that as the blood of Abel pleaded against Cain, so the blood of Christ pleads for us to God. No; there is somewhat more in Christ’s intercession and acting the part of an advocate for us. On the other side, it cannot be thought that he intercedeth with such gestures and verbal expressions as men use with men, or as he himself did in the days of his flesh, when ‘he offered up prayers, with strong cries and tears,’ Heb. v. 7, which did become the state of his humiliation, but not glorification. He intercedeth *non voce sed miseratione*. These are the two extremes; but what is the true notion of it?

There is in it—(1.) A presenting of himself before God; (2.) A declaration of his will; (3.) An entering of his plea; (4.) A recommending of our suits.

[1.] His intercession may be conceived to consist in his appearing in heaven in our name, where the Son of God in our nature presenteth himself as ready to answer for such and such sinners. His very being there in our nature speaketh his purpose; for there he is as one that hath made satisfaction for our offences, and performed his sacrifice without the camp, now gone within the veil, to bring blood to the mercy-seat: Heb. ix. 12, ‘By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.’

[2.] It may be supposed also to include a declared willingness and desire in our behalf to have such requests granted, such sins pardoned. The declaring of his will is a part of his intercession: John xvii 24,

‘Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am.’ The like may be conceived in heaven. So Aquinas—*Interpellat pro nobis primo humanitatem quam pro nobis assumpsit representando; item animæ suæ sanctissimæ desiderium, quod de salute nostra habuit, exprimendo.* He intercedes for us partly by presenting there his human nature, which he assumed for our sakes, and also by declaring the desire of his holy soul for our welfare. But is there not more? Certain it is that a proper and formal prayer is not contrary to the human nature of Christ in that glorious estate in which now it is, neither as hypostatically united to the Godhead, nor as glorified. Not to the first, for that he had *in via*; yet he offered prayers with tears and strong cries. Not to the second, for Christ’s human nature, though glorified, is still a creature inferior to God, and therefore capable of prayer. Indeed, when he was in the form of a servant, there was more subjection than now in heaven, but still he prayeth. Therefore—

[3.] There is an holy, reverend, though inconceivable, act of adoration of the sovereign majesty of God, whereby the Mediator, now at the Father’s right hand, doth in all his appearing for us, as being the head of the body, adore the power, sovereignty, goodness, and wisdom of God, with respect to the covenant of redemption, and his having merited the benefits due to him thereby, namely, the pardon of our sins, our comfort and peace, the enlargement, safety, and success of his own kingdom: Ps. ii. 8, ‘Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance.’ By virtue of his paid ransom he may call for those blessings which are necessary for those who come to God by him. His saying to the disciples oftener than once, ‘I will pray the Father for you,’ John xiv. 16, implieth some address to God, even in respect to particular persons and particular cases; an entering of his plea, or a suing out of his own right in their behalf.

[4.] His presenting our prayers and supplications, which we make in the behalf of ourselves to God, after he hath set us a-work by his own Spirit: Rev. viii. 3, ‘Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne;’ and Heb. viii. 2, *leitourgos ἁγίων*, ‘A minister of holy things.’ By his Spirit he furnisheth us with sighs and groans, and then presenteth them to his Father perfumed by his own merit.

Secondly, To instruct us what use to make of this ‘blood of sprinkling.’

1. When we are confessing of sin, or reflecting upon sin, and arraigning ourselves, as it were, at the bar of our judge, remember, though these sins deserve ill, and speak much ill against us, yet the ‘blood of sprinkling’ speaks better things. There is hope, and comfort, and peace, and pardon there. Plead Christ’s satisfaction to God’s justice. Say, Our Lord Jesus Christ did take our sinful debts upon him, and undertake to satisfy for them; and I know he made full satisfaction. I renounce all other hope of pardon, and rest my soul upon his precious blood. If he be not able to save me, I am contented to perish; but he is able to save to the utmost all that come to God by him.

Let this be in your thoughts when God makes you feel the terrors of his justice by an involuntary impression, or you are in a broken-hearted manner moaning for sin.

2. Remember it when you hear the offers of grace in the gospel ; that God desires not the death of sinners : John v. 24, ' He that hears my word, and believes on me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' Surely this is true ; for ' the blood of Christ speaks better things than the blood of Abel.' It is exacted of you to sprinkle it on your consciences. Christ shed it that it might be sprinkled.

3. Remember it in the Lord's supper, as often as that is celebrated, and you hear it repeated, ' Behold the blood of the covenant which was shed for the remission of sins !' then say, Surely it is so ; for ' the blood of Christ speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.'

4. Remember it in your prayers, when you come to God for pardon or any blessing, that you may come with the more confidence : you have the blood of Christ to speak for you. Christ pleads it in heaven, and you must plead it on earth : Heb. x. 19, ' Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' That bespeaks welcome and audience. Present unto God his Son's blood, and sue for the benefit of it.

5. Remember it in your last agonies. When you are summoned into God's presence, when every moment you look to come immediately before him : Let me with confidence go to him, and say, I have been a sinner ; but the blood of Christ speaks better things, and I expect the full fruit of it ; that it shall indeed cleanse me from all sin : 1 John i. 7, ' The blood of his Son Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.'

Use 2. If the blood of Christ speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, it exhorteth us to many duties.

First, To enter ourselves into the gospel state, and to qualify ourselves to receive this benefit. The apostle saith, ' Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling.' Who are come ? Penitent believers. The more you exercise faith and repentance—towards God, repentance ; towards Christ, faith—or come to God by him, Heb. xi. 15, the more experience you will have of the virtue and efficacy of Christ's blood. Because these two are intermixed in the soul's return to God, and it would be too long to speak of the whole nature of them, I shall give you a few considerations.

1. Know yourselves to be sinners, condemned by the law. Till this be there is no work either for repentance or faith ; for what need of turning to God till we know that we are turned from him ? And the Redeemer hath nothing to do for stupid and senseless souls, that know not their misery, and regard not their remedy. There is a great deal of difference between our condition and our qualification. Our condition, when Christ cometh to bring us to God, is sinful and miserable ; our qualification is lively faith. The being of faith is enough, though we have not the knowledge of it ; but the being in misery is not enough ; that must be known and lamented. It is enough for our safety that we have faith, though we know it not ; but it is not enough that we are in misery, though we know it not. The covenant of God runneth thus : He that believeth shall be saved ; not, He that knoweth

he believeth shall be saved ; for many have faith though they doubt of their sincerity. Ay ! but it is not enough that I am a sinner ; but I must know myself a sinner, be deeply sensible that I am a sinner ; for the offers of the gospel are made to the sensible, the broken-hearted, the weary and heavy-laden. A man never thinketh of returning to God, doth not lie humbly at the feet of grace, cannot be thankful for a redeemer, till he knoweth his misery and bewaileth it. Many have been welcome to Christ, that knew not themselves penitent believers, but never were any welcome that knew not themselves condemned sinners. Therefore there the work beginneth. The first awakening of the soul is by a sense of our misery and lostness ; and this sense must be often renewed, for without Christ we are still in hazard to perish for ever, because of the continual failings in our duty.

2. A resolved will and purpose to devote ourselves to the Lord, to please him, and enjoy him : 1 Chron. xxii. 19, ' Now set your hearts to seek the Lord ; ' Acts xxvi. 20, ' He exhorted them that they should repent and turn to the Lord, and do works meet for repentance ; ' Heb. x. 22, ' Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. ' The heart is bent and set towards the Lord, put into a fitness and capacity of pleasing and enjoying him, which we have lost by our folly and sin. By the fall we lost the favour of God and the image of God, and so were unfit both for service and fruition. The penitent soul findeth both.

3. It is Christ only taketh away sin, reconcileth us unto his Father, puts us into a capacity to please and enjoy God. Through him we may turn to God, and perform service and obedience acceptable unto eternal life : John xiv. 6, ' I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father but by me ; ' 1 Peter iii. 18, ' For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God ; ' Heb. ix. 14, ' How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ? ' 1 Peter ii. 24, ' Who himself bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness. ' He died to weaken the love of sin in our hearts, and to advance the life and power of grace and righteousness. We usually make use of Jesus Christ for reconciliation with God, but not so often for service and obedience. No ; we do by Christ come to God, that we may walk before him in all newness of life. In short, when we turn from the creature to God, from self to Christ, from sin to holiness, we come under the gospel state ; and true gospel faith is a faith that beginneth in brokenness of heart : Mat. ix. 13, ' I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. ' And it is carried with an earnest appetite to the gospel : Heb. vi. 18, ' That we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. ' Thus are the heirs of promise described. And then it endeth in newness of life : Rom. vii. 6, ' But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held ; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter ; ' for Christ died, not only to free us from that sin and misery whereunto we had brought ourselves, Gal. iii. 13, but ' we are married to him, that we may bring forth fruit unto God, ' Rom. vii. 4.

Secondly, The next work is to sprinkle your hearts with this precious blood ; for it is the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel ; and Christ shed it that it might be sprinkled, that it may not run a-wasting. The sprinkling or applying of it to ourselves in particular is by the Spirit on God's part, and by faith on our part, and by the ordinances as a middle thing between both, as a means on God's part to convey the Spirit, and an help on our part to excite and increase faith. Therefore this sprinkling must be interpreted with respect to the Spirit, faith, and the ordinances, as the word and sacraments.

1. Our duty with respect to the Spirit in this sprinkling is when we content not ourselves with a literal and exterior christianity, with being christians in the letter rather than the spirit, Rom. ii. 29, but look after the virtue, power, and life of the truths which we do believe, when, together with the doctrine of Christ, we receive the sanctifying and comforting Spirit : christianity is a thing without us, and at a distance, till that be done. The great bane of the christian world is that they satisfy themselves with notions, and do not wait for the power ; and talk of Christ, rather than feel him, and taste that the Lord is gracious. Therefore our business is earnestly to wait for the stirring of the waters, and to seek after that life and peace which is the fruit of Christ's death ; for the gospel is ' the ministration of the Spirit unto life,' 2 Cor. iii. 8. Here we get a taste : 1 Peter ii. 3, ' If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' We feel the power, know him and the power of his resurrection, Phil. iii. 10 ; when Christ is formed in us, when we are changed into his image, have a living principle in our own souls. Therefore our duty is to beg for this Spirit, to seek and wait for this Spirit, till the Lord Jesus pour it on us.

2. With respect to faith. Our duty is to be firmly persuaded of the sufficiency of all that Christ hath done and endured for man's redemption, and to apply it to ourselves. This blood is fully expiatory of sin, and a full ransom given to divine justice for all our wrongs. The blood of bulls and goats could not satisfy divine justice, nor expiate sin, nor purge the conscience, nor remove the curse ; but when the Son of God shall come, and die an accursed death, and shed his blood for us, there is enough done to repair God in point of honour, that he may be no loser by it, to signify God's purest holiness, to express his utter hatred and detestation of sin, to declare his love of justice, and to keep up the authority of his law ; enough to teach all the world that it is a dangerous thing to transgress it. Now this must be tried, and applied to the soul, that we may be able to say, ' He is the propitiation for our sins,' 1 John ii. 2 ; that we may build upon the foundation which God hath laid in Sion. By this faith he cometh to dwell and work in our hearts : Gal. iii. 29, ' If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise ;' Eph. iii. 17, ' That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.'

3. With respect to the ordinances, the word and sacraments.

[1.] The word. When you hear the offers of grace in the gospel, that God desireth not the death of a sinner, that he is willing to save all those that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or come to God by him, and to pardon and bless them ; let all this excite you to sprinkle it on

your own conscience. These blessings are held forth to me: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' Here God calleth upon me to put in for my share: Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we then say to these things?' Job v. 27, 'Know thou it for thy good.' Bring it home to thine own heart.

[2.] Sacraments. By baptism we put on Christ, Gal. iii. 27. The Lord's supper: 1 Cor. x. 16, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' In the Lord's supper we solemnly remember the death of Christ, as the price given for the life of our souls; we come to behold him as the Lamb of God taking away sin. There we hear of the blood of the new testament, which was shed for the remission of sins. Say, Surely it is so, for 'the blood of Christ speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.' You take it and drink it for your own comfort; there it is brought nigher to you, and if you do not delude yourselves, in quieting your consciences with an outward form, you may go away with much comfort. Christ representeth it to God in his intercession, and we represent it to God in our prayers and desires, beseeching him to be reconciled to us for Christ's sake. By these means is the blood of Christ sprinkled and applied to us, and we receive more of the Spirit, and our faith is increased and strengthened.

Thirdly, Observe the fruits that accrue to you by this crying blood.

1. A comfortable sense of your pardon and discharge. When it is so, then is the redemption applied: 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,' Eph. i. 7; Rom. v. 9, 'Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him;' as the sprinkled door-posts were from the destroying angel.

2. The sanctification of his Spirit: 1 Peter i. 2, 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' The power of the Spirit goeth along with the application of Christ; where the one is the other is, and where the one is not the other is not.

3. Nearness and communion with God: Eph. ii. 13, 'Ye were afar off, but now are made near by the blood of Christ.' Two things kept us off from God. The rigour of divine justice; when we go to a God offended, and appeased by no satisfaction; and the terror of our consciences, or our own guilty fear. But God is now propitiated; the grand scruple is satisfied: Micah vi. 6-8, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'

4. Ready access in prayer, with assurance of welcome and audience. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we may present our persons and sacrifices and prayers to God: Heb. x. 19, 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' When you come for any blessing, you may come with the more confidence; you have

the blood of Christ to speak for you. Christ pleadeth it in heaven, and you must plead it on earth; present to him his Son's blood as the ground of your request.

Use 3. Of caution. Let us take heed of the slighting of the blood of Christ, and counting it a common thing, Heb. x. 29, *κοινόν*. So we count it when we think it hath no expiating or purging power, no better than the blood of bulls and goats, or the blood of an ordinary man, yea, of a malefactor. But who are so vile to think so?

1. It is done most grossly by all wicked apostates, who, for the fear and love of the world, cast off the truth. These seem formally to renounce their interest in Christ, and prefer every base thing before him: Heb. xii. 15, 'Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.'

2. It is done by those who despise the benefits purchased thereby, the favour of God, the image of God. They that slight anything purchased by Christ's blood slight the blood of Christ itself. Our respect to the blood is judged by our respect to the benefits. He that despiseth the favour of God doth not make it his business to get it and keep it, but preferreth every paltry vanity and poor corruptible thing before it; hath no esteem of Christ's merit and God's design, who sent his Son to procure it for us. So whosoever doth not esteem the image of God, which standeth in righteousness and true holiness, doth not esteem the blood of Christ: 'Knowing that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,' 1 Peter i. 18, 19. It argueth lessening thoughts of Christ's blood, as if it were shed for trifles.

3. Those who lessen the virtue, merit, and efficacy of this blood by their distrustful thoughts. We cannot think high enough of this sacred and precious blood. It is that blood by which Christ, 'entering into the holy place, obtained eternal redemption for us,' Heb. ix. 12; that 'blood which purgeth the conscience from dead works to serve the living God,' ver. 14; that blood that washeth away all stains, 1 John i. 7; that blood which is the blood of the new testament, the ground of the everlasting covenant, Heb. xii. 24, wherein God promiseth remission of sin, eternal life, and all needful grace, upon condition of repentance and faith in Christ. Upon this blood the covenant is grounded, and all the promises of it made firm, unalterable, and effectual. Let us, therefore, with strong confidence trust to the efficacy thereof, and be encouraged thereby to wait upon God for grace, mercy, reconciliation, pardon, and finally eternal salvation. It is surely a great fault to think diminishingly of Christ's love and mercy.

4. Those who converse with the seals of the new covenant without preparation: 1 Cor. xi. 29, 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body;' *μὴ διακρίνων*, not putting a difference. There is a discerning speculatively and a discerning practically. The discerning speculatively is when we are able to discourse of the meaning of these mystical rites; practically, when we are suitably affected; not discerning when we carry ourselves as if it were common meat and common food. The

impressions of reverence, delight, holy awe, discover our practical discerning. To stamp upon the king's picture or coin in contempt is a contumely to the king. The injuries done to man, or killing a man, is aggravated because man is the image of God, Gen. ix. 6, James iii. 9.

Use 4. Direction to us what to do when troubled with the terror of sin. There is a cry attributed to our sins; the cry of our sins is gone up over our heads unto heaven. Sometimes they clamour in our consciences. Oh! remember the cry of Christ's blood; that speaks aloud in heaven, let it also speak in our consciences. Inanimate things speak by our thoughts; Abel's blood by Cain's despairing fears, so Christ's blood by the joy of our faith. Remember the apostle's challenge and triumph: Rom. viii. 33, 34, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' And Paul's boast: Gal. vi. 14, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' If you have felt the virtue of it, you will remember it.