

THE MATCHLESS MERCY.

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NOTE.

'Matchless Mercy' forms No. 22 of the original 'Saint's Cordials,' 1629. It was not included in the after-editions. Its separate title-page will be found below.*

G.

* THE
MATCHLES
MERCIE.

In One SERMON.

WHEREIN IS SHEWED
the Excellency and wonder of Divine Mercy in par-
doning and subduing of sinne in us.

WITH THE REASONS WHICH
may induce the soule to beleeeve and ap-
prehend the same.

Prælucendo Pereo.

VPRIGHTNES HATH BOLDNES.

PSAL. 144. 9, 10.

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy.

The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his workes.

LONDON,

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THE MATCHLESS MERCY.

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins in the depth of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.—MICAH VII. 18-20.

THE drift and scope of this place is to shew God's infinite and constant mercies unto his children, who are tossed and tumbled in a world of miseries of this life, sometimes being altogether void of comfort and the sense of God's love; and this is two ways propounded:

1, In the benefits they receive; 2, in the reasons moving unto the same.

The benefits he promiseth are in number two:

1, Justification by the blood of Christ; 2, sanctification by his Spirit.

Now, this justification is set forth, for our better understanding, by divers arguments:

1. He shews what he will take away, viz.,

First, He says he will take away original sin, in these words, 'pardoneth iniquity.'

Secondly, He sheweth that he will take away our rebellion in these words, 'and passeth by transgression.' In sum, he sheweth that he will take away both the root and the fruits of sin.

2. He sheweth the fruits of this justification in this, what he will pass by.

'He passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage.' The sum is, he will both forgive and forget. The original, in the time present, thus reads it, 'taking away,' arguing and shewing a continual act of God, even a continual act of mercy in him; implying, that as there is a continual spring of original corruption in us, which staineth all our best actions, making us continually liable to the wrath of God, so that in him there is a continual spring of mercy flowing from him, both to pardon and wash away this iniquity (a).

And now having shewed this benefit of justification, in the next place he cometh to describe the persons who shall obtain this great favour two ways:

1, They are but a remnant; 2, they are God's heritage.

Now, before he come unto the other benefit of sanctification, he answereth two objections :

Obj. First, Whereas some poor souls may object, What ! how can this be ? Is God such a God who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the same ? I find my sins to lie heavy and sore upon me ; they accuse me day and night, and they pursue me.

Ans. To this he answers, True it is God is forced to take notice of your sins, to let them accuse you, to curb and keep you in. If we will not take notice of our sins, then God must do the same. Yet, saith he, for your comfort rejoice, he 'retaineth not his anger for ever;' be patient a while, and you shall see deliverance, it is for your good that you are thus afflicted.

Obj. Ay, but here, because the afflicted soul may again object, But I am not only troubled with outward crosses and afflictions, but also many inward tentations do assail me ; I have committed sins of knowledge and presumption since my calling ; I have trespassed against my enlightening, grieved the Spirit, I have forced God to depart from me ; this seemeth hard, to be without the favour of God.

Ans. To this he answereth, It is true : God, to your thinking, seemeth to be gone from you. Ay, but despair not, stay your mind in peace a while ; he hath but turned away his face for a little, he will turn again, he will have compassion upon you, &c. Though he correct and humble you for a while, yet you shall have a joyful issue of all. Now, having propounded this first mercy of our justification, he cometh to,

2. The second benefit, of sanctification, and it is amplified by two degrees :

1, In this life ; 2, in the life to come.

For the first he says, 'He will subdue our iniquities;' that is, though at first we were sinful, ruled and overruled by our sins, yet now, when God cometh unto us thus in justification, working sanctification, he says he will subdue them ; that is, by little and little he will master them, so that the force and power of them shall be taken away.

Secondly, He sheweth that all the sins of those whom he subdueth he will throw into the bottom of the sea. To understand which we must call to mind a history of former times, which is, that the Lord will deal with our sins as sometimes he did with the temporal enemies of his people. When Pharaoh and his army pursued them, the Lord did overthrow the chariots and horsemen of Egypt, and drowned them in the bottom of the sea ; unto which the Spirit of God alludeth here, that he will, for assurance's sake, for ever drown all our sins ; so that, as the Lord said to Moses, 'The Egyptians whom ye have now seen, ye shall not see any more,' Exod. xiv. 13 ; so here the Lord saith, that our sins, which vexed us, we shall never hereafter see any more, for he will drown all our sins from out of his sight ; they shall never any more either vex us or grieve him, they shall be all cast into the bottom of the sea.

Now, the reasons moving God are taken from his nature :

1, From his merey ; 2, from his truth, aided with four reasons thereof.

For the first he saith, for mercy pleaseth him, or, 'he delighteth in mercy.'

For the second, of God's truth, because above all things we are full of infidelity, and hardly believe this, therefore he strengtheneth and confirmeth it with divers other reasons.

First, From antiquity. It is an ancient truth, even from the days of old, so that a thing of so ancient a truth must needs be believed.

Secondly, From the often repetition thereof: 'to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' So that a truth that hath been so often repeated, must needs be true.

Thirdly, It is a truth confirmed by many witnesses, even a truth known of all our fathers; so that must needs be true which is confirmed by such a cloud of witnesses.

Fourthly, If all this will not serve, yet he says that 'God hath sworn it.' It is as true as God's truth; so that better it were that all the world should fail, than God should fail of his truth. And therefore, if we will needs keep and observe our oaths, much more must God. It stands him to defend his truth. Thus far of the opening and meaning of the words; now let us come to the instructions rising from hence.

And first, in that we see in the coherence of the text, he cometh in, as it were in a triumph, challenging all the powers in heaven and earth, angels and devils, with admiration, crying, 'Who is a God like unto thee,' &c., we learn that,

Doct. 1. There is none so merciful as God. So the Lord speaketh, Isa. xlix. 13, 'Can a woman forget her child, and not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Though they should forget, yet will not I forget thee,' &c. He sheweth here that all natural compassion is nothing to that great care God hath of us. So Ps. ciii. 13, 'As a father hath compassion on his children, so the Lord hath compassion on them that fear him.' So also we may see the same practised by examples. For at first when Adam had forfeited his estate, flying away out of God's presence, yet we see God cometh, and findeth him out, then forgives his sin, and lastly, comforts him in the promise of the blessed seed, Gen. iii. 15. And for the loss of a paradise upon earth, he bringeth him to a far more glorious and eternal paradise in heaven. So Saul, Acts ix. 3, *et seq.*, going unto Damascus in fury and rage to persecute the saints, we see Christ he comes unto him, finds him out, lovingly reasons the matter with him, and forgives him, sending him unto the means of his final conversion. Thus as of sins of nature, so of sins after regeneration, we may see the like. When David had sinned in adultery and murder, before he could half make confession of his sin, the Lord he meets him as it were half way, and pardoneth his sin, putteth it quite away from his sight, imputeth not the same unto him; so that we may justly cry out also with this prophet, 'Who is a God like unto thee?' &c. The reasons are divers.

Reason 1. First, Because mercy is God's nature. It is his name, even an attribute as infinite as himself. And he himself being infinite for measure, infinite in continuance, so his mercy must needs be as infinite as himself.

Reason 2. Secondly, Because all creatures in heaven and earth have their mercy by derivation from this mercy of God. In him it is his nature, in us derived, as a drop to the ocean, from him; so is all our mercy nothing else but a drop of his infinite mercy: so that he is merciful above all.

Reason 3. Thirdly, Because mercy in God is free, without any cause in us moving him to the same. In us mercy and love is still procured by something in the party we love. In God it is not so, for he loveth freely, without any moving cause in us: so that his mercy is over all his works.

Use. The use is, Is it so that mercy is God's nature, is an infinite essence, is free in him? Why then, in all distresses, let us come running freely

unto him, and reaching out the hand of faith, let us confidently promise unto ourselves whatsoever mercies the best child hath ever found from the most kind and tender-hearted father and mother; for it is certain, if we come unto God, and have a good conceit of his mercy, and of the infinite immensible* depth, and length, and breadth, and height thereof, that we shall return from the throne of grace filled with a great measure of this mercy.

As the prodigal son, before he resolved to go unto his father, he had first a good conceit of him by a secret comparison and unequals,—‘Oh,’ saith he, ‘how many hired servants are at my father’s, and have bread enough, and I die for hunger! therefore, I will rise, and go to my father,’ &c., Luke xv. 17,—even so we come unto God very often with small comfort. Why? Because we have not a high conceit of God’s attributes; we judge of him like unto ourselves, and so we speed for the most part, departing as we came. And I pray you, if our children should lament, weep unto us, and bemoan themselves, would not we pity them? What pride then is this in us, to think better of ourselves than of God? If we be thus merciful, is not he much more merciful unto his children, since all our mercy is but a small drop of his infinite mercy? It was a good speech uttered by Benhadad, though a heathen man, who because of a flying report he had, that the kings of Israel were merciful, did humble himself in sackcloth, and found mercy; so, I say, if Ahab, a wicked man, upon this was merciful to Benhadad, though with his own destruction, how much more, do we think, doth God exceed in mercy? So many of us want comfort, because we will not go unto him for mercy; and therefore also do we want comfort even of our dearest friends, because God would have us run unto him, call earnestly for his mercy, be so much the more desirous thereof, and be acquainted with him.

Now, in the second place, where he beginneth to reckon up what this mercy is, first he sheweth that he pardoneth iniquity, which is remission of sins; where the doctrine is,

Doct. 2. That it is the mercy of all mercies to have our sins forgiven, to have them covered, buried, and done quite away. Now there be many reasons to prove this, that it is the mercy of mercies to have our sins forgiven.

Reason 1. First, Because other mercies reprobate men may have, as an abstinence from some sins; a show of sanctification, some outward gifts of the Spirit, &c., but this mercy none can have but the elect.

Reason 2. Secondly, Because this benefit is the chiefest fountain which flowed from Christ’s blood: ‘He hath loved us, and washed away our sins with his own blood.’

Reason 3. Thirdly, Because it bringeth unto us the happiest fruits and benefits here and hence; for, first, here; by this we are at peace with God, yea, in a more perfect peace than God had with Adam before his fall. Secondly, by this we have peace of conscience. When God favours us, then our conscience favours us, and all is at peace when once we are sprinkled with the blood of Christ. Thirdly, he hath peace with all the creatures, even in league with the beasts of the field, as Job speaketh: so also for the world to come.

Reason 4. Fourthly, This brings us to an everlasting peace in heaven, making us to be able that we may stand in the great day of his appearance without fear, as also now it is no small benefit, that God with forgiveness

* That is, ‘unmeasurable.’—G.

of sins healeth the nature of his children, that sin and Satan shall never have their former dominion over them.

Use 1. Since, then, we see this is so great a benefit and mercy to have our sins forgiven, it must teach all of us earnestly to prize it, since such are so blessed who have their sins forgiven. The means is, to pray often and earnestly for the forgiveness of the same; to confess them often, and to appeal often to that payment which Christ hath already made for us; for if we come to confess our sins before God, we come but to get an acquittance of that debt which Christ hath formerly paid for us.

Use 2. Secondly, It is comfort unto such who have been sorry and grieved for their sins, who have got power against them, to be thankful for such deliverances, yea, to be thankful for all crosses in the mean time, for all such following crosses are but as wholesome medicines to cure our souls from our sins, that we may have our corruptions and the cry of sins removed. This is a great cause to rejoice, as Ps. ciii. 1, 'Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name; which forgiveth all thy sins,' &c.

Obj. But here the trembling soul may object. Oh, but I am sinful, and full of sins!

Ans. What then, if thou believe in Christ he hath paid all. Imagine two men did owe one of them a hundred thousand pounds, the other a small sum, having one surety for both, may not a man demand the hundred thousand of the party, as well as the little sum? Even so I say, it is all one to Christ thy surety, to pay thy great debts as well as thy small ones, if thou come unto him.

Obj. Ay, but here the trembling soul may object again, But I am a daily sinner, I sin again and again, how then shall I be sure to be still forgiven?

Ans. To this the Lord answereth, as it is in the original, in the present number, 'passing by iniquity,' arguing a constant, continual act in God of forgiving (*b*). He is more ready, saith he, to forgive than you to sin; as there is a continual spring of wickedness in you, so there is a greater spring of mercy in God. It is not, as many think, that God expects that after regeneration we should sin no more; no, he looks but that still we should be a-cleansing our bodies and souls, that we should still come unto him for new assurance. God he cleanseth us not like unto a cistern, which filleth* not again, but like unto a vessel that will fill* again, and so must still be emptied and filled, until it break by dissolution.

Use 3. It is for imitation. Is God thus merciful unto us, and ready to forgive? Why, then, we must labour to be like God, and merciful one to another.

Obj. Oh, but my enemy hath a spring of evils against me.

Ans. And I answer, But God hath a greater spring of mercy to forgive thee. Oh! but it is great! Oh! but God hath forgiven us much more. And yet further, as St Luke saith, It is a matter of great credit to forgive, Luke vi. 35, for thereby we are declared to be the children of our heavenly Father. It is also matter of comfort for us, for if we forgive, so shall we also be forgiven. If a poor man had a few shillings owing him, and he did owe the king many thousand pounds, were not he, think you, a mad man, that would not forgive the shillings to have the many thousand pounds forgiven him? Even so, we all owe many thousand pounds unto God; we must then forgive our shillings, that he may forgive our pounds.

* Qu. 'fouleth' and 'foul'?—Ed.

And thus we see how the poor, as well as the rich, may be merciful even to forgive wrongs, to love for hatred, and the like.

Having thus shewed you both what God doth forgive in the wonder of forgiveness of sins by a more wonderful mercy, and also how he doth forgive, none being like unto him, now he cometh to describe,

The persons who shall enjoy these great benefits; and first, he calleth them God's heritage; whence learn,

Doct. 3. That God in a wonderful and special manner respecteth his heritage, the proof whereof, I need not stand upon it, is evident enough, and known both by his working since the creation, and in our time of the gospel. I come to reasons thereof.

Reason 1. First, Because they are God's purchase; for, whereas the elect forfeited all their estates, he hath again purchased them by the blood of Christ. The rest of the world are none of his. If we then do make much of our purchases, much more will God do with his. This is the reason, because God hath paid a full and a valuable price for them all.

Reason 2. Secondly, Because of his providence, in that he keepeth a continual watch over them, as it is Isa. xxvii. 3; there the Lord saith, 'I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep my vineyard night and day.' Again, he speaketh, John xv. 2, to same purpose, 'Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.'

Reason 3. Thirdly, Because he dwelleth amongst his church, and therefore he will have a special care of his own heritage, to do them all manner of kindnesses.

Use 1. The uses are, Since, therefore, the Lord is so ready, present, and willing to defend and prune his heritage, 1. We must labour to be fruitful unto him with some proportionable obedience, as Heb. vi. 7, 8. We see good ground will be fruitful and drink in the rain, and receiveth therefore a blessing from God; but that which bringeth forth thorns and briers is rejected, being nigh unto cursing and burning. It is no strange thing to see brambles and thistles in a heath, but to see such weeds in a watered garden of good ground were more than strange. So let us look to it, and be sure, that now, when God hath bestowed much cost upon us, he looketh for some answerable fruits.

Use 2. Secondly, It is matter of comfort unto us, that since God always dwelleth with his heritage, he therefore sees all our sorrows and cares; and because of this his abode, for this cause the church shall stand, because he loveth his dwelling-place; yea, though all the power of hell should be turned loose, yet they shall not hurt the church of God; yea, though their sin draw down judgments upon them, yet they shall not rest upon them for ever.

In the second place, we see the persons are described by calling them 'a remnant,' 'a little flock,' whence the point is,

Doct. 4. That the people of God be but a remnant in regard of the wicked, even like the gleanings of the corn, a small company, which is a cause they are so despised of the world. Whereof the uses are,

Use 1. First, We must not be discouraged though we see few go with us in the way to heaven. Many are ready to object and cavil against such, but few are ready to profess and suffer with them; yet, let all such who walk forward with the multitude, remember they are but a remnant which shall be saved.

Use 2. Secondly, Is it so, that this small remnant is so opposed and

scoffed at? Why then, let us labour so much the more to love and make much one of another, and thus we shall be assured to do more good, than all the power of hell can procure hurt unto us. The devil he labours to sow sedition amongst us; but by love we shall overcome all. The church hath ever received more hurt by discord, than by open enemies.

Having thus described the parties on whom these great mercies shall be bestowed, now he proceedeth to prevent* an objection of some troubled souls, which might arise from the former doctrine.

Obj. You say that God is thus, and thus, and thus merciful, yet I feel him scourge me often and long together for my sins; I am sure he seems to be angry for the time.

Ans. To this he answereth, 'He retaineth not his anger for ever.' Whence the doctrine ariseth,

Doct. 5. That the afflictions of God's children shall have a seasonable and a speedy end. The Lord he knoweth best when it is good to begin, and when to make an end; so the Lord speaketh, Isa. liv. 7, 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee; in a little wrath I hide my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer.' So saith the psalmist, 'Heaviness may come in the morning, but joy cometh in the evening,' Ps. xxx. 5. The reasons whereof be divers.

Reason 1. The first is taken out of Lam. iii. 33, 'Because the Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.' He doth it not to hurt us, but to mend us and make us come unto him, otherwise we would not come.

Reason 2. Secondly, Because we, having such a sure friend in the court of heaven, even Christ Jesus, to make intercession for us at the right hand of the Father, it is not possible but our afflictions should have a seasonable end; for if the church, having Esther, so sure a friend in the court of Ahasuerus, found by her so speedy and true deliverance, much more shall the church now, by the intercession of Christ, obtain deliverance from the court of heaven.

Reason 3. Thirdly, We shall have speedy and seasonable deliverance from afflictions, because by afflictions we gain instruction. This leadeth us to humiliation and confession of sins, and then the Lord having bound himself by promise and oath, it is not possible but we must have deliverance. He cannot choose but be merciful. Whereof the ground is, that, look how soon God hath his end, which is our unfeigned humiliation, confession, and amendment of life, instantly we have also our end, which is deliverance.

Reason 4. Fourthly, They shall have speedy and seasonable deliverance, because he correcteth them only for their profit; lest, therefore, they should faint and mourn under the burden, he will and hath promised to hasten help, as the psalmist speaketh: 'The rod of the wicked shall not always rest upon the just, lest the wicked oppress and triumph over him.' Excellently also to this purpose doth the Lord speak, Isa. lvii. 16, 'I will not contend for ever, neither will I always be wroth: for the spirit shall fail before me, and the souls which I have made.' So, certain it is, God will not beat his children unto death; he beateth not in revenge, but to bring home and amend us. The uses are,

Use 1. *Reproof to God's own dear servants*, who, in a sharp and quick cross, where they see no issue, they begin to murmur and repine, saying,

* That is, 'anticipate.'—G,

Oh! I shall never get out of this cross. But what, tell me, wouldst thou think of thy child, that, when thou art a-chastising him for some fault, would have such a conceit of thee, that thou wouldst beat him to death? Mightest not thou think him an unnatural child? Yet much more unnatural are we unto God, who is a great deal more loving; for if he once begin, we straight imagine that he will never make an end. But we ought not thus to repine, but rather quench his anger with repentant tears, and take away the fuel of sin which kindleth the sense of this wrath, and then the fire will cease. So let us take away the proud and dead flesh, and the plaster will quickly fall away.

Use 2. Secondly, We must hereby learn to imitate and be like unto God. If we will needs be now and then angry, let it be quickly gone; let us spend our anger upon our sins, and not let the sun go down upon our wrath.

But now here ariseth another objection, worse than the former, for the troubled soul might object, Oh! but I have driven God quite away by my innumerable sins; I have lost my feeling, angered my God, grieved the Spirit, and forced God to depart from me. This is a miserable estate; but yet the prophet, in the next verse, answereth, for the comfort of such, that he is not quite gone away, 'He will turn again,' saith he, 'and have compassion,' &c. Whence I gather,

Doct. 6. *Those who have once had any saving comfort, they shall have it again.* We see David, he quenched the Spirit, made a foul house, brought all things out of frame; he kept his union with God, but he lost his communion with Christ. The graces of the Spirit were seeming dead in him, yet this man had much comfort again, and did much good to the church, and died in peace and prosperity. So we see, Cant. iii. 1, the church at first quite lost Christ, in a manner; she had no feeling, yet she sought him up and down; nay, she went through all the means of salvation, yet found not Christ. It seems a strange thing, that sometimes one should use all holy means, and yet find no comfort or feeling; yet is it most true. But what then? She went a little further, and then she found him whom her soul loved. So let us always learn this much, that when we have used all the means to find feeling and comfort in vain, yet to go a little further, which is, to wait in patience for God's good time, and to hope above hope, &c., and then we see the issue—we shall find him whom our soul loveth; yea, then he will enable us to lay surer hold upon him than ever, and also keep him surer. So Peter, he fell for a while, yet we know Christ came again unto him, and made sure work, that he was the stronger for ever. The reasons are plain.

Reason 1. First, Because all God's saving graces be given for everlasting, therefore they shall never be finally taken away from his children, as those outward graces of the Spirit, which were in Saul, was.

Reason 2. Secondly, He will turn again and have compassion, though he turn away his face, because his heart is near unto us; like unto a mother, who in seeming anger turneth away her face from her child, yet she longeth until she turn again, even so the Lord when his face is turned from his children, he longeth until he turn again and have compassion, &c.

Reason 3. Thirdly, Because of all burdens the absence of God's favour is so intolerable, which absence Christ himself at that time could not endure, but cries out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mat. xxvii. 46. And David, you know, he cries out, 'Thy loving kindness is better than life,' Ps. lxxiii. 3. Therefore, I say, God being a most loving Father unto

his children, and knowing how precious his favour is unto them, and how grievous his absence, that they cannot live without him, why then, as sure he is God, and goodness itself, no more can he be without them; he will turn again and have compassion, though not in our time, yet in a better time, even in such a time as he shall see fittest; therefore let us not be dismayed, but redouble our courage.

Use 1. The use hereof is, first, reproof unto such who say, that if their peace be once lost, oh! they shall never have it again, they shall never have comfort, favour, or feeling of God's love. But mark our error: we in this case judge God to be like unto a man, who will say, Oh! I will never again lose this man, who hath deceived me. But let us remember that God did foresee all our errors and sins that ever we should commit, before we did commit the same. Now if these our sins, before our calling, which in the course of our life we were to commit, being all before God's face, could not hinder his love unto us, what folly is it to think that now, after our effectual calling, our sins which he foresaw can stay his mercies from us. This the apostle aimeth at, Rom. v. 10, 'For if, whilst we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' So that most certain it is he will turn again and have compassion. For if a father should foresee such and such faults in his son, do you think he would punish his son for those faults which he foresaw would of necessity be in him? Certainly he would not. Though he seemed angry, yet he would love him still.

Use 2. Secondly, If we have lost our feeling, like the church, Cant. iii. 1, let us seek it again night by night, that is, constantly, diligently, and earnestly; as Isa. lxii. 7, let us give God no rest until he return; let us, with David, entreat him to 'restore unto us his Spirit again,' Ps. li. 12. Now, restoring argueth a former having, so he will return and have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies.

Having thus at length propounded and spoken of the first benefit God promiseth, of justification, now he cometh unto the second, of

Santification, 1. In this life; 2. In the life to come.

First, then, *for this life.* After he hath spoken of justification, now he cometh to santification, as a necessary, inseparable fruit thereof; and sheweth, that whensoever God cometh to have mercy upon us, then he also subdueth our sins, and bringeth them in subjection. 'He will subdue,' saith he, 'our iniquities.' Whence learn that,

Doct 7. Where God forgiveth sin, there he also subdueth sin; as unto Paul, look how soon God was merciful unto him in effectual calling, so soon did he begin to subdue sin in him. So we see of Mary Magdalene, how penitent she was after forgiveness of sins; and so Peter, weeping bitterly after the same; so of Manasseh, that great sinner, who, when his sins were once pardoned, did leave off his sins;—they were subdued also.

Reason 1. The reasons are, first, Because the virtue of Christ's death can never be separated from the merit of the same. Now the merit of his death being the purchase of our free pardon by what he hath done for us imputed for forgiveness of sins, the virtue of his death, which is to kill and wound sin by degrees, to subdue and bring it under, to mortify the affections, can never be separated from the same.

Reason 2. Secondly, Because without this subduing of sin upon forgiveness, neither should we have comfort from him, nor he glory from us; for, so long as we groan under the burden and dominion of sin, we cannot rejoice in God heartily, we cannot serve him. Now, because God would

have his servants to rejoice and serve him here fully, therefore upon acceptation of our persons, he will also loose our bands, and make us able to serve him.

Use 1. The use is, (1.) *reproof and terror* unto such who say they hope their sins are forgiven, when indeed they are not subdued; for it is certain that with forgiveness of sins God also healeth the nature in such, that the like be committed no more, at least there is a resolution, and a total, constant endeavour and striving, to leave all sin.

Use 2. Secondly, This serveth unto us for strong *consolation*, to see that this is not a death of sin here meant, but that it shall not assail so often, come so strong, act with such delight, and be so violent. No; the child of God in this life shall never have sin so subdued, as to find a death of it, only it shall be subdued. Therefore, this is a stronghold unto us, that if God have abated the force of sins in us, this is a sure sign of our justification.

Use 3. Thirdly, It is matter of *instruction* for us all, that whensoever we find our sins too strong for us, let us then fly out of ourselves unto him, who is stronger than all, and hath sworn to subdue them.

Obj. Some object, and say, Oh! I would come if I could but subdue this sin.

Ans. No, I say, because thou canst not overcome this or that sin, yet come. God, he bids thee come because thou art not able to subdue it, that he may come against it with his mighty power and subdue it; otherwise, if it were in our power to subdue our sins, we should be like unto so many gods. Now, I mean, we must go unto God in all his means, to prayer, to the word also, which is mighty to cast down holds, all strong mountains of sin. Again, we must go unto the sacraments, which, we must think, are as able to feed us to life, by eating and drinking of a little bread and wine, as the eating of a little unholy food was at first to bring upon us destruction. This is a stronghold to rest upon. Again, for subduing of our sins, let us bind them up in fetters and chains, let us bind one another by reproofs and holy admonitions. I deny not, for all this, God's children have, and may have, many vexing sins, but with humiliation let them be humbled for them. This is a death of sin, even this weakening and subduing of it.

Now followeth the second part of this santification, after this life, in these words, 'He will cast all our sins in the depth of the sea,' meaning that he will drown all our enemies, dealing with our spiritual enemies, as sometimes* he did with the temporal enemies of his church. Pharaoh and all his army he drowned in the bottom of the sea; so he says, at length he will drown and destroy all our spiritual enemies. After subduing of sins shall come drowning of them. Whence the doctrine is, that,

Doct. 8. *Those who have their sins subdued whilst they live, shall have them all drowned when they are dead.* We see, 1 Cor. xv. 26, it is said, 'The last enemy we have is death;' but this is only in regard of nature—to them it is a passage to heaven, for the others, unto hell. Rev. xiv. 13, the dead in the Lord are pronounced blessed, for then all their enemies are quite subdued. Here we labour under the burden of many crosses and afflictions, but then is deliverance; here we are troubled with many sins, but then cometh freedom from sin, then we labour no more, then all shall have an end. Wait but a little until then, and all shall appear most exceeding glorious; for then, for our comfort, all our sorrows and troubles, wherewith

* That is, = 'sometime.'—G.

we are now fined* in the furnace of affliction, shall be quite forgot, as though they had never been: former things shall be remembered no more.

Use 1. The use of all this is for us, since all our sins and sorrows shall then be subdued and forgot, to fight our battles cheerfully here, and look up unto heaven for help.

Use 2. Secondly, Again, that we should be exceedingly comforted in this, that our battle is so short, our victory so sure, and our reward so infinite and eternal; since after a little while all our sins and crosses shall be drowned, they shall be put as far from us as the east is from the west, as heaven is from hell: then, then our long tedious enemies shall all fly away.

Use 3. Thirdly, It is infinite consolation for us against the fear of death, that that death which parteth body and soul, shall also part us from all our sins, sorrows, and crosses for evermore. All those means we now do use, serve but to weaken sin, but death, this kills and vanquisheth it for evermore. So that the speech of Moses to the Israelites may as truly be said of our enemies, 'The Egyptians whom you have seen to-day, you shall never any more see,' Exodus xiv. 13. Even so, I say, though thou be vexed and troubled with many sins, crosses, and afflictions, yet stand still but a while, yet a little while, nay, a very little while, and all these crosses and sins which vex you, you shall never see any more: he will drown them all [in] the bottom of the sea.

I now come unto the reasons of these doctrines, which are in number two, wherein I must use brevity:

1, His mercy; 2, his truth.

I will only touch them, and so make an end. The first is, because he delighteth in mercy. If we will needs speedily and earnestly perform that wherein we do delight, much more will God. The point is, that,

Doct. 9. That wherein God delighteth, it is impossible but it must needs come to pass. Now he, delighting in mercy, therefore it is of necessity that he must needs pour upon us abundance of all his mercies; for he is the perfection of goodness, the perfection of love. Nothing can stay him from performing that wherein he delighteth, therefore all these excellent mercies must needs be bestowed upon his children.

The next reason, as I shewed in the opening, is taken from the truth of God, aided with many reasons: of antiquity, often repetition, many witnesses, and the oath of God confirming the same. So that the giving of these mercies, and certain assurance thereof, dependeth upon God's truth. Whence learn,

Doct. 10. God is bound, in regard of his truth, to fulfil all his former mercies unto his children; and therefore as certainly as God is true, as certainly all his benefits and mercies shall be given unto them.

Use 1. The use hereof is unto us, notwithstanding all these promises, to see our weakness, how in temptation† we are ready to rob God of his truth, neglecting the promises, because we find not present help. Behold how we deal with God! If a man promise us a thing again and again, we believe him; but if he swear and confirm the same with an oath, then we doubt no more; and yet when God he promiseth again and again unto us many precious promises, yea, and giveth us the earnest in hand, and sweareth unto us, yet, lo our wretchedness, we trust not with assured confidence in him; a mortal man would take it ill to be thus used at our hands. So every small temptation† maketh us to rob God of his truth, and to think that he will not be as good as his word.

* That is, 'refined' = purified.—G.

† That is, 'temptation.'—G.

Use 2. Secondly, It must be matter of instruction for us all, that when we come unto God we must promise ourselves to have good speed, since God is most true of his promises, and we must labour by all means to remember and apply them, and so to turn them into prayers; thus reasoning the matter, What! I am in this and this necessity, God he hath promised to help; since he is true, it must needs be that he will have a care to fulfil his truth; for howsoever I should not be heard, yet God he should be the greatest loser, to lose his truth. O beloved, it is easy for us to speak, but in the evil day to put on our armour, to fly unto prayer, to hang upon God, to fight against tentations, to give unto God the praise of his attributes, that as he is true, loving, just, merciful, all-sufficiency, infinite, omnipotent, so to expect infinite love, infinite truth, infinite mercy from him,—this is no small matter, yea, it is true Christian fortitude, in temptation and affliction thus to reason the matter, to rely upon God, and as it were to bind his help near unto us with the chains of his loving promises. If a promise bind us, much more it bindeth God; for all our truth is but a small spark of that ocean of truth in him. And therefore to conclude all with this promise, worthy to be engraven in everlasting remembrance upon the palms of our hands, God he hath promised that all the afflictions of his children they shall work for the best, Rom. viii. 28. This is as true as God's truth, I shall one day see and confess so much if I wait in patience; why, therefore, I will wait. God is infinite in wisdom and power, to bring light out of darkness; so also he is true, and he will do it. Therefore because I believe 'I will not make haste;' I will walk in the perfect way until he shew deliverance. This must be our resolution, and then it shall be unto us according to our faith; which God, for his Christ's sake, grant unto us all!

NOTES.

(a) P. 153.—'The Original, in the time present, reads "taking away;"'
And again—

(b) P. 157.—'As it is in the Original, in the present number, "passing by iniquity."' The Hebrew is עָבַר עַל-פְּשָׁע, = passing by transgression. So Dr Henderson, and all the early and recent Commentators. G.