The Method of Grace in the Gospel Redemption

By John Flavel

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The Epistle Dedicatory

To the Worshipful John Upton of Lupton, Esq. and the most

accomplished and virtuous Lady, his dear Consort, the Author wishes

Grace, Mercy, and Peace.

Honoured and worthy Friends.

It was a comfortable expression, which Ambrose used in his

funeral orations at the death of Theodosius; "what though he were

gone, yet he was not wholly gone; for he had left Honorius, with

others of his children, behind him, in whom Theodosius still lived."

Your renowned and worthy ancestors are gone, yet (blessed be God)

they are not wholly gone; whilst the prudence, piety, and publicness

of their spirits, still live and flourish in you, the top branch of

a renowned and religious Family. It is a great truth, which Philo

Jude us recommends to the observation of all posterity, "That it is

not a natural descent from the most honourable and illustrious

progenitors, nor the greatest affluence of riches and pleasures that

makes a man either honourable or happy; but the habitation of God in

his soul, as in his temple, tho' (saith he) those that never tasted

religion, nor have seen its glory, will not credit this assertion."

"The soul which is filled with God, (saith Plotinus) and brings

forth the beautiful fruits of righteousness, this is the truly noble

soul:" Our new birth makes us more honourable than our natural

birth, let our birth-right dignities be what they will. The children

of nobles are, by nature, the children of wrath, even as others:

Omnis Sanguis concolor, all blood is of one colour: it is all

tainted in Adam, and mingled together in his posterity. "There is no

king, saith Seneca, which rose not from a servant; there is no

servant which rose not from a king: these things have been blended,

and jumbled to and fro in a long issue of changes, ever directed by

an all wise Providence.

But though the privileges of natural birth signify nothing as

to eternal salvation, yet in civil and political respects and

considerations, those that by birth, education, or estate, possess

an higher station in the world, differ from the vulgar, as stars of

greater magnitude and lustre: their interest and influence are great

in these things, and the welfare of kingdoms greatly depends upon

them.

It is therefore a great design of the enemy of mankind, to

corrupt persons of eminent rank and quality both in religion and

morality; and by their influence and example, to infect and poison

the whole body politic; and his success herein deserves to be

greatly lamented and bewailed. Persons of eminency are more

especially obliged to shun base and sordid actions. Hierom professed

he saw nothing desirable in nobility, except this, that such persons

are bound by a certain kind of necessity, not to degenerate from the

probity, or stain the glory of their ancestors. But alas! how many

in our times have not only exposed Christianity to contempt, but

obscured the glory of their own families, and the kingdom in which

they had their birth and breeding; so that if you will take right

marks of your way to heaven you will have little direction from

those of your own rank. As mariners take their direction at sea, by

looking up to the heavens, so must you. In this general corruption

it is very hard to escape infection; many (as Salvian complained)

are compelled to be evil, lest they should be accounted vile, and

incur the offence of God, to avoid the slights and censures of men.

Although there is no more reason why they should be offended at the

rational and religious pleasures you and other pious gentlemen take

in the ways of godliness, than there is, that you should envy the

sinful pleasures they take in the ways of wickedness. It was an

excellent apology that Tertullian made for the Christians of his

time, against the Gentiles "Wherein (saith he) do we offend you, if

we believe there are other pleasures? if we will not partake with

you in your delights, it is only for our own injury: we reject your

pleasures, and you are not delighted with ours."

But by how much the infection spreads and prevails among those

of your order, by so much the more we have reason to value you, and

all those that remain sound and untainted, both in religion and

morality, as persons worthy of singular respect and honour: and

blessed be God there is yet a number of such left.

Sir, It was a special happiness, which Chrysostom earnestly

recommended to persons of quality, that they would so order their

conversations, that their parents might rather glory in them, than

they in their parents; "Otherwise (saith he) it is better to rise to

honour from a contemptible parent, than to be contemptible from an

honourable parent; but blessed be God, you and your worthy ancestors

reflect honour upon each other.

Had God suffered you to degenerate, as many do, it would have

been but a poor consolation to have said, My progenitors were men of

honour, the love and delight of their country. This, as one

excellently expresseth it, would be the same thing, as if one that

is blind himself, should boast what a sharp and piercing sight his

father had or one that is lame himself, should glory in those feats

of activity his grandfather performed; but God (to whose bounty

therefore you are doubly obliged) has made you the inheritor of

their virtues, as well as of their lands, and therein fulfilled many

thousand prayers, which have been poured out to God upon your

account. But I must forbear, lest I provoke others to envy, and draw

upon myself the suspicion of flattery. What has been already said

may serve far a sufficient reason of this dedication. I know the

agreeableness of such discourses to the pious dispositions of your

souls, is of itself sufficient to make it welcome to you. It is a

treatise of Christ, yea, of the Method of Grace, in the application

of Christ; than which no subject can be more necessary to study, or

sweet to experience. All goodness is attractive, how powerfully

attractive then must Jesus Christ be, who is the ocean of all

goodness, from whom all streams of goodness are derived, and into

whom they all empty themselves? If Pindarus could say of the lovely

Theoxenus, that whosoever saw that august and comely face of his,

and was not surprised with amazement, and inflamed with love, must

have an heart of adamant or brass; what then shall we resemble that

man's heart unto, that has no ferverous affections kindled in it by

the incomparable beauty of Christ! a beauty, which excels in lustre

and brightness, that visible light which so dazzles our eyes, as

that light does darkness itself; as Plato speaks of the divine light

Christ is "huperkallontos kalos", inexpressible beauty, and all

other beauties are but "eikon, kai skia", an image, nay, a shadow of

his beauty. How was holy Ignatius ravished with desires after

Christ, when he cried out, O how I long to be thrown into the jaws

of those lions, which I hear roaring for me! and if they will not

dispatch me the sooner, "kai orostiasomai" I will enforce them to it

by violence, that I may enjoy the sight of my blessed Jesus. O my

heart, (saith another, how is it thou art not drawn up by the very

root, by thy desires after Christ? The necessity, and the trial of

our union with, and interest in, this lovely LORD JESUS, the main

subject of this discourse. Without the personal application of

Christ by faith, our hopes of heaven are but deluding dreams, Heb.

3: 11. "I sware in my wrath, "ei eiseleusontai", if they shall enter

into my rest:" What then? Nay, there is all: but it is a dreadful

Aposiopesis (as one calls it) such a pause as may justly shake every

vein of the unbeliever's heart: If they shall enter: as if he had

said, If ever they come into my glory, then say, I am no God, for I

have sworn the contrary.

I will not be tiresome, but conclude all in a few requests to

you and to God for you both. That which I request of you is,

(1.) That you will search and try your own hearts by these

truths, especially now, when so great trials are like to be made of

every man's root and foundation in religion. Account that your first

work, which Bellarmine calls "the first error of Protestants", to

make sure your interest in Christ; every thing is as its foundation

is: a true diamond will endure the smartest stroke of the hammer,

but a false one will fly.

(2.) That you be humble under all that dignity and honour,

which God has put upon you; be ye clothed with humility. It was the

glory of the primitive Christians, that they did not speak but live

great things: humility will be the lustre of your other

excellencies: estates and honours are but appendants and fine

trappings, which add not any real worth, yet how are some vain minds

puffed up with these things! But ye have not so learned Christ.

(3.) That you steadily persevere in those good ways of God, in

which you have walked, and beware of heart, or life-apostasy. You

expect happiness whilst God is in heaven, and God expects holiness

from you whilst you are on earth. It was an excellent truth which

Tossanus recommended to his posterity in his last will and

testament, from his own experience: "I beseech you, (smith he) my

dear children and kindred, that you never be ashamed of the truths

of the gospel, either by reason of scandals in the church, or

persecutions upon it: truth may labour for a time, but cannot be

conquered, and I have often found God to be wonderfully present with

them that walk before him in truth, though for a time they may be

oppressed with troubles and calumnies."

(4.) Lastly, that you keep a strict and constant watch over

your own hearts, lest they be ensnared by the tempting, charming,

and dangerous snares attending a full and easy condition in the

world. There are temptations suited to all conditions. Those that

are poor and low in estate and reputation, are tempted to cozen,

cheat, lie, and flatter, and all to get up to the mount of riches

and honours; but those that were born upon that mount, though they

be more free from those temptations, yet lie exposed to others no

less dangerous, and therefore we find, "Not many mighty, not many

noble are called," 1 Cor. 1: 26. Many great and stately ships, which

spread much sail, and draw much water, perish in the storms, when

small barks creep along the shore under the wind, and get safe into

their port. Never aim at an higher station in this world than that

you are in: Some have wished in their dying hour, they had been

lower, but no wise man ever wished himself at the top at honour, at

the brink of eternity.

I will conclude all with this hearty wish for you, that as God

has set you in a capacity of much service for him in your

generation, so your hearts may be enlarged for God accordingly, and

that you may be very instrumental for his glory on earth, and may go

safe, but late to heaven. That the blessings of heaven may be

multiplied upon you both, and your hopeful springing branches: and

that you may live to see your children's children, and peace upon

Israel. In a word, that God will follow these truths in your hands

with the blessing of his Spirit; and that the manifold infirmities

of him that ministers them, may be no prejudice or bar to their

success with you, or any into whose hands they shall come; which is

the hearty desire of

Your Most Faithful Friend,

and Servant in Christ,

JOHN FLAVEL.

The Epistle To The Reader

Every creature, by the instinct of nature, or by the light of

reason, strives to avoid danger, and get out of harm's way. The

cattle in the fields presaging a storm at hand, fly to the hedges

and thickets for shelter. The fowls of heaven, by the same natural

instinct, perceiving the approach of winter, take their timely

flight to a warmer climate. This naturalists have observed of them,

and their observation is confirmed by scripture testimony. Of the

cattle it is said, Job 37: 6, 7, 8. "He saith to the snow, Be thou

on the earth, likewise the small rain, and the great rain of his

strength; then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places."

And of the fowls of the air it is said, Jer. 8: 7. "The stork in the

heavens knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane,

and the swallow, observe the time of their coming."

But man being a prudent and prospecting creature has the

advantage of all other creatures in his foreseeing faculty: "For God

has taught him more than the beasts of the earth, and made him wiser

than the fowls of heaven," Job 35: 11. "And a wise man's heart

discerneth both time and judgement," Eccl. 8: 5. For as there are

natural signs of the change of the weather, Matt. 16: 3, so there

are moral signs of the changes of times and providence, yet such is

the supineness and inexcusable regardlessness of most men, that they

will not fear till they feel, nor think any danger very

considerable, till it become inevitable.

We of this nation have long enjoyed the light of the glorious

gospel among us; it has shone in much clearness upon this sinful

island, for more than a whole century of happy years: but the

longest day has an end, and we have cause to fear our bright sun is

going down upon us; for the shadows in England are grown greater

than the substance, which is one sign of approaching night, Jer. 6:

4. "The beasts of prey creep out of their dens and coverts," which

is another sign of night at hand, Psal. 104: 20. "And the workmen

come home apace from their labours, and go to rest," which is as sad

a sign as any of the rest, Job 7: 1, 2. Isa. 57: 1, 2. Happy were

it, if, in such a juncture as this, every man would make it his work

and business to secure himself in Christ from the storm of God's

indignation, which is ready to fall upon these sinful nations. It is

said of the Egyptians, when the storm of hail was coming upon the

land, Exod. 9: 20. "He that feared the word of the Lord made his

servants and cattle flee into the houses." It is but an odd sight to

see the prudence of an Egyptian out-vying the wisdom and

circumspection of a Christian.

God, who provides natural shelter and refuge for all creatures,

has not left his people unprovided with, and destitute of defence

and security, in the most tempestuous times of national judgements.

It is said, Mic. 5: 5. "This man (meaning the man Christ Jesus)

shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and

when he shall tread in our palaces." And Isa. 26: 20. "Come, my

people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee;

hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation

be overpast."

My friends, let me speak as freely, as I am sure I speak

seasonably. A sound of judgement is in our ears; "The Lord's voice

crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear

ye the rod, and who has appointed it," Mic. 6: 9. All things round

about us seem to posture themselves for trouble and distress. Where

is the man of wisdom that does not foresee a shower of wrath and

indignation coming? "We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear,

and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man does travail

with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his

loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into

paleness? Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it; it

is even the day of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be delivered out of

it," Jer. 30: 5, 6, 7.

Many eyes are now opened to see the common danger, but some

foresaw it long ago; when they saw the general decay of godliness

every where, the notorious profanity and atheism that overspread the

nations; the spirit of enmity and bitterness against the power of

godliness wherever it appeared: and though there seemed to be a

present calm, and general quietness, yet those that were wise in

heart could not but discern the distress of nations, with great

perplexity, in these seeds of judgement and calamity: but as the

ephah fills more and more, so the determined wrath grows more and

more visible to every eye; and it is a fond thing to dream of

tranquillity in the midst of so much iniquity. Indeed, if these

nations were once swept with the besom of reformation, we might hope

God would not sweep them with the besom of destruction; but what

peace can be expected, whilst the highest provocations are

continued?

It is therefore the great and present concernment of all to

provide themselves of a refuge before the storm overtakes them; for,

as Augustin well observes, None facile inveniuntur praefidia in

adversitate, quae non fuerint in pace quaesita. O take up your

lodgings in the attributes and promises of God before the night

overtake you; view them often by faith, and clear up your interest

in them, that you may be able to go to them in the dark, when the

ministers and ordinances of Christ have taken their leave of you,

and bid you good night.

Whilst many are hastening on the wrath of God by profaneness,

and many by smiting their fellow servants; and multitudes resolve,

if trouble come, to fish in the troubled waters for safety and

preferment, not doubting, (whensoever the overflowing flood comes)

but they shall stand dry. O that you would be mourning for their

sins, and providing better for your own safety.

Reader, it is thy one thing necessary to get a cleared interest

in Jesus Christ; which being once obtained, thou mayest face the

storm with boldness, and say, come troubles and distresses, losses

and trials, prisons and death, I am provided for you; do your worst,

you can do me no harm: let the winds roar, the lightnings flash, the

rains and hail fall never so furiously, I have a good roof over my

head, a comfortable lodging provided for me; "My place of defence is

the munition of rocks, where bread shall be given me, and my waters

shall be sure," Isa. 33: 16.

The design of the ensuing treatise is to assist thee in this

great work; and though it was promised to the world many years past,

yet providence has reserved it for the fittest season, and brought

it to thy hand in a time of need.

It contains the method of grace in the application of the great

redemption to the souls of men, as the former part contains the

method of grace in the interpretation thereof by Jesus Christ. The

acceptation God has given the former part, signified by the desires

of many, for the publication of this, has at last prevailed with me

(notwithstanding the secret consciousness of my inequality to so

great an undertaking) to adventure this second part also upon the

ingenuity and candour of the reader.

And I consent the more willingly to the publication of this,

because the design I first aimed at, could not be entire and

complete without it; but especially, the quality of the subject

matter, which (through the blessing and concurrence of the Spirit)

may be useful both to rouse the drowsy consciences of this sleepy

generation, and to assist the upright in clearing the work of the

Spirit upon their own souls. These considerations have prevailed

with me against all discouragements.

And now, reader, it is impossible for me to speak particularly

and distinctly to the case of thy soul, which I am ignorant of,

except the Lord shall direct my discourse to it in some of the

following suppositions.

If thou be one that hast sincerely applied, and received Jesus

Christ by faith, this discourse (through the blessing of the Spirit)

may be useful to thee, to clear and confirm thy evidences, to melt

thy heart in the sense of thy mercies, and to engage and quicken

thee in the way of thy duties. Here thou wilt see what great things

the Lord has done for thy soul, and how these dignities, as thou art

his son or daughter, by the double title of regeneration and

adoption, do oblige thee to yield up thyself to God entirely, and to

say from thy heart, Lord, whatever I am, I am for thee, whatever I

can do, I will do for thee; and whatever I can suffer, I will suffer

for thee; and all that I am, or have, all that I can do or suffer,

is nothing to what thou hast done for my soul.

If thou be a stranger to regeneration and faith; a person that

makes a powerless profession of Christ; that has a name to live, but

are dead; here it is possible thou mayest meet with something that

will convince thee how dangerous a thing it is to be an old creature

in the new creature's dress and habit; and what is it that blinds

thy judgement, and is likeliest to prove thy ruin; a seasonable and

full conviction whereof will be the greatest mercy that can befall

thee in this world, if thereby at last God may help thee to put on

Christ, as well as the name of Christ.

If thou be in darkness about the state of thy own soul, and

willing to have it faithfully and impartially tried by the rule of

the word, which will not warp to any man's humour or interest, here

thou wilt find some weak assistance offered thee, to clear and

disentangle thy doubting thoughts, which, through thy prayer, and

the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, may lead thee to a

comfortable settlement and inward peace.

If thou be a proud, conceited, presumptuous soul, who has too

little knowledge, and too much pride and self-love, to admit any

doubts or scruples of thy state towards God, there are many things

in this treatise proper for thy conviction and better information;

for woe to thee, if thou shouldst not fear, till thou begin to feel

thy misery, if thy troubles do not come on till all thy hopes are

one off.

I know all these things are performed by me with much

infirmity; and that the whole management is quite below the dignity

of the subject. But when I consider that the success of sermons and

books in the world has but little relation to the elegancy of

language, and accuracy at method, and that many may be useful, who

cannot be excellent, I am willing, in all humility and sincerity to

commit it to the direction of Providence, and the blessing of the

Spirit.

One thing I shall earnestly request of all the people of God,

into whose hands this shall fall, that now at last they will be

persuaded to end all their unbrotherly quarrels and strifes among

themselves, which have wasted so much precious time, and decayed the

vital spirits of religion, hindered the conversion of multitudes,

and increased and confirmed the atheism of the times, and now at

last opened a breach, at which the common enemy is ready to enter

and end the quarrel to our cost. O put on, as the elect of God,

bowels of mercy, and a spirit of charity and forbearance, if not for

your own sakes, yet for the church's sake: Si non vis tibi parcere,

parce Carthagini.

I remember it is noted in our English history as a very

remarkable thing, that when the Severn overflowed part of

Somersetshire, it was observed that dogs and hares, cats and rats,

to avoid the common destruction, would swim to the next rising

ground, and abide quietly together in that common danger, without

the least discovery of their natural antipathy.

The story applies itself, and O that Christians would

everywhere depose their animosities, that the hearts of the fathers

might be turned to the children, and the children to the fathers,

lest God come and smite the earth with a curse.

O that you would dwell more in your closets, and be more

frequently and fervently upon your knees. O that you would search

your hearts more narrowly, and sift them more thoroughly than ever,

before the day pass as the chaff; and the Lord's fierce anger come

upon you: look into your Bibles, then into your hearts, and then to

heavens for a true discovery of your conditions; and if this poor

mite may contribute any thing to that end, it will be a great reward

of the unworthy labours of

Thy Servant in Christ,

John Flavel

Sermon 1.

The general Nature of effectual Application stated

1 Cor. 1: 30

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us

wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

He that enquires what is the just value and worth of Christ,

asks a question which puts all the men on earth, and angels in

heaven, to an everlasting non-plus.

The highest attainment of our knowledge in this life, is to

know, that himself and his love do pass knowledge, Eph. 3: 19.

But how excellent soever Christ is in himself, what treasures

of righteousness soever lie in his blood, and whatever joy, peace,

and ravishing comforts, spring up to men out of his incarnation,

humiliation, and exaltation, they all give down their distinct

benefits and comforts to them, in the way of effectual application.

For never was any wound healed by a prepared, but unapplied

plaister. Never any body warmed by the most costly garment made, but

not put on: Never any heart refreshed and comforted by the richest

cordial compounded, but not received: Nor from the beginning of the

world was it ever known, that a poor deceived, condemned, polluted,

miserable sinner, was actually delivered out of that woeful state,

until of God, Christ was made unto him, wisdom and righteousness,

sanctification and redemption.

For look as the condemnation of the first Adam passeth not to

us, except (as by generation) we are his; so grace and remission

pass not from the second Adam to us, except (as by regeneration) we

are his. Adam's sin hurts none but those that are in him: and

Christ's blood profits none but those that are in him: How great a

weight therefore does there hang upon the effectual application of

Christ to the souls of men! And what is there in the whole world so

awfully solemn, so greatly important, as this is! Such is the strong

consolation resulting from it, that the apostle, in this context,

offers it to the believing Corinthians, as a superabundant

recompence for the despicable meanness, and baseness of their

outward condition in this world, of which he had just before spoken

in ver. 27, 28. telling them, though the world condemned them as

vile, foolish, and weak, yet "of God Christ is made unto them wisdom

and righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

In which words we have an enumeration of the chief privileges

of believers, and an account of the method whereby they come to be

invested with them.

First, Their privileges are enumerated, namely, wisdom,

righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, mercies of

inestimable value in themselves, and such as respect a fourfold

misery lying upon sinful man, viz. ignorance, guilt, pollution, and

the whole train of miserable consequences and effects, let in upon

the nature of men, yea, the best and holiest of men, by sin.

Lapsed man is not only deep in misery, but grossly ignorant,

both that he is so, and how to recover himself from it: Sin has left

him at once senseless of his state, and at a perfect loss about the

true remedy.

To cure this, Christ is made to him wisdom, not only by

improvement of those treasures of wisdom that are in himself; for

the benefit of such souls as are united to him, as an head,

consulting the good of his own members; but also, by imparting his

wisdom to them by the Spirit of illumination, whereby they come to

discern both their sin and danger; as also the true way of their

recovery from both, through the application of Christ to their souls

by faith.

But alas! simple illumination does but increase our burden, and

exasperate our misery as long as sin in the guilt of it is either

imputed to our persons unto condemnation, or reflected by our

consciences in a way of accusation.

With design therefore to remedy and heal this sore evil, Christ

is made of God unto us righteousness, complete and perfect

righteousness, whereby our obligation to punishment is dissolved,

and thereby a solid foundation for a well-settled peace of

conscience firmly established.

Yea, but although the removing of guilt from our persons and

consciences be an inestimable mercy, yet alone it cannot make us

completely happy: For though a man should never be damned for sin,

yet what is it less than hell upon earth, to be under the dominion

and pollution of every base lust? It is misery enough to be daily

defiled by sin, though a man should never be damned for it.

To complete therefore the happiness of the redeemed; Christ is

not only made of God unto them wisdom and righteousness, the one

curing our ignorance, the other our guilt; but he is made

sanctification also, to relieve us against the dominion and

pollutions of our corruptions: "He comes both by water and by blood,

not by blood only, but by water also," 1 John 5: 6. purging as well

as pardoning: How complete and perfect a cure is Christ!

But yet something is required beyond all this to make our

happiness perfect and entire wanting nothing; and that is the

removal of those doleful effects and consequences of sin, which (not

withstanding all the fore-mentioned privileges and mercies) still

lie upon the souls and bodies of illuminated, justified, and

sanctified persons. For even with the best and holiest of men, what

swarms of vanity, loads of deadness, and fits of unbelief, do daily

appear in, and oppress their souls! to the embittering of all the

comforts of life to them? And how many diseases, deformities, and

pains oppress their bodies, which daily boulder away by them, till

they fall into the grave by death, even as the bodies of other men

do, who never received such privileges from Christ as they do? For

if "Christ be in us (as the apostle speaks, Rom. 8: 10.) the body is

dead, because of sin:" Sanctification exempts us not from mortality.

But from all these, and whatsoever else, the fruits and

consequences of sin, Christ is redemption to his people also: This

seals up the sum of mercies: This so completes the happiness of the

saints, that it leaves nothing to desire.

These four, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and

redemption, take in all that is necessary or desirable, to make a

soul truly and perfectly blessed.

Secondly, We have here the method and way, by which the elect

come to be invested with these excellent privileges: the account

whereof the apostle gives us in these words, "Who of God is made

unto us," in which expression, four things are remarkable.

First, That Christ and his benefits go inseparably and

undividedly together: it is Christ himself who is made all this unto

us: we can have no saving benefit separate and apart from the person

of Christ: many would willingly receive his privileges, who will not

receive his person; but it cannot be; if we will have one, we must

take the other too: Yea, we must accept his person first, and then

his benefits: as it is in the marriage covenant, so it is here.

Secondly, that Christ with his benefits must be personally and

particularly applied to us, before we can receive any actual, saving

privilege by him; he must be [made unto us] i.e. particularly ap

lied to us: as a sum of money becomes, or is made the ransom and

liberty of a captive, when it is not only promised, but paid down in

his name, and legally applied for that use and end. When Christ

died, the ransom was prepared, the sum laid down; but yet the elect

continue still in sin and misery, notwithstanding, till by effectual

calling it be actually applied to their persons, and then they are

made free, Rom. 5: 10-11. reconciled by Christ's death, by whom "we

have now received the atonement".

Thirdly, That this application of Christ is the work of God,

and not of man: "Of God he is made unto us:" The same hand that

prepared it, must also apply it, or else we perish, notwithstanding

all that the Father has done in contriving, and appointing, and all

that the Son has done in executing, and accomplishing the design

thus far. And this actual application is the work of the Spirit, by

a singular appropriation.

Fourthly and lastly, This expression imports the suitableness

of Christ, to the necessities of sinners; what they want, he is made

to them; and indeed, as money answers all things, and is convertible

into meat, drink, raiment, physic, or what else our bodily

necessities do require; so Christ is virtually, and eminently all

that the necessities of our souls require; bread to the hungry, and

clothing to the naked soul. In a word, God prepared and furnished

him on purpose to answer all our wants, which fully suits the

apostle's sense, when he saith, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom

and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." The sum of all

is,

Doct. That the lord Jesus Christ, with all his precious

benefits, becomes ours, by God's special and effectual

application.

There is a twofold application of our redemption, one primary.

the other secondary: The former is the act of God the Father,

applying it to Christ our surety, and virtually to us in him: the

latter is the act of the Holy Spirit, personally and actually

applying it to us in the world of conversion: The former has the

respect and relation of an example, model, or pattern to this; and

this is produced and wrought by the virtue of that. What was done

upon the person of Christ, was not only virtually done upon us,

considered in him as a common public representative person, in which

sense, we are said to die with him, and live with him, to be

crucified with him, and buried with him, but it was also intended

for a platform, or idea, of what is to be done by the Spirit,

actually upon our souls and bodies, in our single persons. As he

died for sin, so the Spirit applying his death to us in the work of

mortification, causes us to die to sin, by the virtue of his death:

And as he was quickened by the Spirit, and raised unto life, so the

Spirit applying unto us the life of Christ, causeth us to live, by

spiritual vivification. Now this personal, secondary, and actual

application of redemption to us by the Spirit, in his sanctifying

work, is that which I am engaged here to discuss and open; which I

shall do in these following propositions.

Prop. 1. The application of Christ to us, is not only

comprehensive of our justification, but of all these works of the

Spirit which are known to us in scripture by the names of

regeneration, vocation, sanctification, and conversion.

Though all these terms have some small respective differences

among themselves, yet they are all included in this general, the

applying and putting on of Christ, Rom. 13: 14. "Put ye on the Lord

Jesus Christ."

Regeneration expresses those supernatural, divine, new

qualities, infused by the Spirit into the soul, which are the

principles of all holy actions.

Vocation expresses the terms from which, and to which, the soul

moves, when the Spirit works savingly upon it, under the gospel

call.

Sanctification notes an holy dedication of heart and life to

God: our becoming the temples of the living, God, separate from all

profane sinful practices, to the Lord's only use and service.

Conversions denotes the great change itself, which the Spirit

causeth upon the soul, turning it by a sweet irresistible efficacy

from the power of sin and Satan, to God in Christ.

Now all these are imported in, and done by the application of

Christ to our souls: for when once the efficacy of Christ's death,

and the virtue of his resurrection, come to take place upon the

heart of any man, he cannot but turn from sin to God, and become a

new creature, living and acting by new principles and rules. So the

apostle observes, 1 Thess. 1: 5, 6. speaking of the effect of this

work of the Spirit upon that people, "Our gospel (saith he) came not

to you in word only, but in power; and in the Holy Ghost:" There was

the effectual application of Christ to them. "And you became

followers of us, and of the Lord," ver. 6. there was their effectual

call. "And ye turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true

God, ver. 9. there was their conversion. "So that ye were ensamples

to all that believe," ver. 9. there was their life of sanctification

or dedication to God. So that all these are comprehended in

effectual application.

Prop. 2. The application of Christ to the souls of men is that

great project and design of God in this world, for the

accomplishment whereof all the ordinances and all the officers of

the gospel are appointed and continued in the world.

this the gospel expressly declared to be its direct end, and

the great business of all its officers, Eph. 4: 11, 12. "And he gave

some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some

pastors and teachers; till we all come in the unity of the faith,

and the knowledge of the Son of God; to a perfect man, unto the

measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," i.e. the great aim

and scope at all Christ's ordinances and officers, are to bring men

into union with Christ, and so build them up to perfection in him;

or to unite them to, and confirm them in Christ: and when it shall

have finished this design, then shall the whole frame of

gospel-ordinances be taken down, and all its officers disbanded.

"The kingdom (i.e. this present oeconomy, manner, and form of

government) shall be delivered up," 1 Cor. 15: 24. What are

ministers, but the bridegroom's friends, ambassadors for God, to

beseech men to be reconciled? When therefore all the elect are

brought home in a reconciled state in Christ, when the marriage of

the Lamb is come, our work and office expire together.

Prop. 3. Such is the importance and great concernment of the

personal application of Christ to us by the Spirit, that whatsoever

the Father has done in the contrivance, or the Son has done in the

accomplishment of our redemption, is all unavailable and ineffectual

to our salvation without this.

It is confessedly true, that God's good pleasure appointing us

from eternity to salvation, is, in its kind, a most full and

sufficient impulsive cause of our salvation, and every way able (for

so much as it is concerned) to produce its effect. And Christ's

humiliation and sufferings are a most complete and sufficient

meritorious cause of our salvation, to which nothing can be addled

to make it more apt, and able to procure our salvation, than it

already is: yet neither the one nor the other can actually save any

soul, without the Spirit's application of Christ to it; for where

there are divers social causes, or concauses, necessary to produce

one effect, there the effect cannot be produced until the last cause

has wrought. Thus it is here, the Father has elected, and the Son

has redeemed; but until the Spirit (who is the last cause) has

wrought his part also, we cannot be saved. For he comes in the

Father's and n the Son's name and authority, to put the last hand to

the work of our salvation, by bringing all the fruits of election

and redemption home to our souls in this work at effectual vocation.

Hence the apostle, 1 Pet. 1: 2. noting the order of causes in their

operations, for the bringing about of our salvation, thus states it,

"elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through

sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the

blood of Jesus Christ." Here you find God's election and Christ's

blood, the two great causes of salvation, and yet neither of these

alone, nor both together can save us: there must be added the

sanctification of the Spirit, by which God's decree is executed; and

the sprinkling (i. e. the personal application of Christ's blood) as

well as the shedding of it, before we can have the saving benefit of

either of the former causes.

Prop. 4. The application of Christ, with his saving benefits,

is exactly of the same extent and latitude with the Father's

election, and the Son's intention in dying, and cannot possibly be

extended to one soul farther.

"Whom he did predestinate, them he also called," Rom. 8: 30.

and Acts 13: 48. "As many as were ordained to eternal life,

believed;" 2 Tim. 1: 9. "Who has saved and called us with an holy

calling, not according to our works, but according to his own

purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ, before the

foundation of the world."

The Father, Son, and Spirit, (betwixt whom was the council of

peace) work out their design in a perfect harmony and consent: as

there was no jar in their council, so there can be none in the

execution of it: those whom the Father, before all time, did chose;

they, and they only, are the persons, whom the Son, when the fulness

of time for the execution of that decree was come, died for, John

17: 6. "I have manifested thy name unto the men, which thou gavest

me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me;" and

ver. 19. "For their sakes I sanctify myself;" i.e. consecrate,

devote, or set myself apart for a sacrifice for them. And those for

whom Christ died, are the persons to whom the Spirit effectually

applies the benefits and purchases of his blood: he comes in the

name of the Father and Son. "But the world cannot receive him, for

it neither sees, nor knows him," John 14: 17. "They that are not of

Christ's sheep, believe not," John 10: 26.

Christ has indeed a fulness of saving power, but the

dispensation thereof is limited by the Father's will; therefore he

tells us, Mat. 20: 23. " It is not mine to give, but it shall be

given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." In which words

he no ways denies his authority, to give glory as well as grace; he

only shows that in the dispensation proper to him, as Mediator, he

was limited by his Father's will and counsel.

And thus also are the dispensations of grace by the Spirit, in

like manner, limited, both by the counsel and will of the Father and

Son. For as he proceeds from them, so he acts in the administration

proper to him, by commission from both. John 14: 26. "The Holy Ghost

whom the Father will send in my name:" and as he comes forth into

the world by this joint commission, so his dispensations are limited

in his commission; for it is said, Johns 16: 13. "He shall not speak

of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak?" i.e.

He shall in all things act according to his commission, which the

Father and I have given him.

The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father

do, John 5: 19. And the Spirit can do nothing of himself; but what

he hears from the Father and Son; and it is impossible it should be

otherwise, considering not only the unity of their nature, but also

of their will and design. So that you see the application of Christ,

and benefits by the Spirit, are commensurable with the Father's

secret counsel, and the Son's design in dying, which are the rule,

model, and pattern of the Spirit's working.

Prop. 5. The application of Christ to souls, by the

regenerating work of the Spirit, is that which makes the first

internal difference and distinction among men.

It is very true, that in respect of God's fore-knowledge and

purpose, there was a distinction betwixt one man and another, before

any man had a being, one was taken, another left: and with respect

to the death of Christ, there is a great difference betwixt one and

another; he laid down his life for the sheep, he prayed for them,

and not for the world; but all this while, as to any relative change

of state, or real change of temper, they are upon a level with the

rest of the miserable world. The elect themselves are "by nature the

children of wrath, even as others," Eph. 2: 3. And to the same

purpose the apostle tells the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 6: 11. (when he

had given in that black bill, describing the most lewd, profligate,

abominable wretches in the world, men whose practices did stink in

the very nostrils of nature, and were able to make the more sober

Heathens blush; after this he tells the Corinthians) "And such were

some of you, but ye are washed," &c. q. d. look, these were your

companions once: as they are, you lately were.

The work of the Spirit does not only evidence and manifest that

difference which God's election has made between man and man, as the

apostle speaks, 1 Thes. 1: 4, 5. But it also makes a twofold

difference itself; namely in state and temper? whereby they visibly

differ, not only from other men, but also from themselves; after

this work, though a man be the "who", yet not the "what" he was.

This work of the spirit makes us new creatures, namely; for quality

and temper, 2 Cor. 5: 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new

creature; old things are past away, behold, all things are become

new."

Prop. 6. The application of Christ, by the work of

regeneration, is that which yield unto men all the sensible

sweetness and refreshing comforts that they have in Christ, and in

all that he has done, suffered, or purchased for sinners.

An unsanctified person may relish the natural sweetness of the

creature, as well as he that is sanctified; he may also seem to

relish and taste some sweetness in the delicious promises and

discoveries of the gospel, by a misapplication of them to himself.

But this is like the joy of a beggar, dreaming he is a king; but he

awakes and finds himself a beggar still: but for the rational,

solid, and genuine delights and comforts of religion, no man tastes

them, till this work of the Spirit has first passed upon his soul:

it is an enclosed pleasure, a stranger intermeddles not with it.

"The white stone, and the new name," (denoting the pleasant results

and fruits of justification and adoption) "no man knows but he that

receives it," Rev. 2: 7. There are all those things wanton, in the

unsanctified (though elect) soul, that should capacitate and enable

it to relish the sweetness of Christ and religion, namely,

propriety, evidence, and suitableness of spirit.

Propriety is the sweetest part of any excellency; therefore

Luther was wont to say, that the sweetness of the gospel lay mostly

in pronouns, as me, any, thy, &c. who loved [me] and gave himself

for me, Gal. 2: 20. Christ Jesus [my] Lord, Phil. 3: 18. So Matt. 9:

2. Son, be of good cheer, [thy] sins are forgiven. Take away

propriety, and you deflower the very gospel of its beauty and

deliciousness: and as propriety, so

Evidence is requisite to joy and comfort; yea, so necessary,

that even interest and propriety afford no sensible sweetness

without it. For as to comfort, it is all one not to appear, and not

to be. If I am registered in the book of life, and know it not, what

comfort can my name there afford me? Besides, to capacitate a soul

for the sweetness and comfort of Christ there is also an agreeable

temper of spirit required; for how can Christ be sweet to that man's

soul, whose thoughts reluctate, decline, or nauseate so holy and

pure an object? Now, all these requisites being the proper effects

and fruits of the Spirit's sanctifying operations upon us, it is

beyond controversy, that the consolations of Christ cannot be

tasted, until the application of Christ be first made.

Prop. 7. The application of Christ to the soul effectually,

though it be so far wrought in the first saving work of the Spirit,

as truly to unite the soul to Christ, and save it from the danger of

perishing; yet it is a work gradually advancing in the believer's

soul, whilst it abides on this side heaven and glory.

It is true, indeed, that Christ is perfectly and completely

applied to the soul in the first act for righteousness.

"Justification being a relative change, properly admits no degrees,

but is perfected together, and at once, in one only act; though as

to its manifestation, sense, and effects, it has various degrees."

But the application of Christ to us, for wisdom and sanctification,

is not perfected in one single act, but rises by many, and slow

degrees to its just perfection.

And thought we are truly said to be come to Christ when we

first believe, John 6: 35. yet the soul after that is still coming

to him by farther acts of faith, 1 Pet. 2: 4. "To whom [coming] as

unto a living stone;" the participle notes a continued motion, by

which the soul gains ground, and still gets nearer and nearer to

Christ; growing still more inwardly acquainted with him. The

knowledge of Christ grows upon the soul as the morning light, from

its first spring to the perfect day, Prov. 4: 18. Every grace of the

Spirit grows, if not sensibly, yet really: for it is in discerning

the growth of sanctification, as it is in discerning the growth of

plants, which we perceive rather crevisse, quam crescere; to have

grown, rather than grow. And as it thrives in the soul, by deeper

radications of the habits, and more promptitude and spirituality in

the acting; so Christ, and the soul proportionally, close more and

more inwardly and efficaciously, till at last it is wholly swallowed

up in Christ's full and perfect enjoyment.

Prop. 8. Lastly, Although the several privileges and benefits

before mentioned are all true and really bestowed with Christ upon

believers, yet they are not communicated to them in one and the same

day and manner; but differently and divers, as their respective

natures do require.

These four illustrious benefits are conveyed from Christ to us

in three different ways and methods; his righteousness is made ours

by imputation: his wisdom and sanctification by renovation: his

redemption by our glorification.

I know the communication of Christ's righteousness to us by

imputations is not only denied, but scoffed at by Papists; who own

no righteousness, but what is (at least) confounded with that which

is inherent in us; and for imputative (blasphemously stiled by them

putative righteousness, they flatly deny it, and look upon it as a

most absurd doctrine, every where endeavouring to load it with these

and such like absurdities, That if God imputes Christ's

righteousness to the believer, and accepts what Christ has performed

for him, as if he had performed it himself; then we may be accounted

as righteous as Christ. Then we may be the redeemers of the world.

False and groundless consequences; as if a man should say, my debt

is paid by my surety, therefore I am as rich as he. "When we say the

righteousness of Christ is made ours by imputation, we think not

that it is made ours according in its universal value, but according

to our particular necessity: not to make others righteous, but to

make us so: not that we have the formal intrinsical righteousness of

Christ in us, as it is in him, but a relative righteousness, which

makes us righteous, even as he is righteous; not as to the quantity,

but as to the truth of it: nor is it imputed to us, as though Christ

designed to make us the causes of salvation to others, but the

subjects of salvation, ourselves," it is inhesively in him,

communicatively it becomes ours, by imputation, the sin of the first

Adam becomes ours, and the same way the righteousness of the second

Adam becomes ours, Rom. 5: 17. This way the Redeemer became sin for

us, and this way we are made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor.

5: 21. This way Abraham the father of believers was justified,

therefore this way all believers, the children of Abraham, must be

justified also, Rom. 4: 22, 23. And thus is Christ's righteousness

made ours.

But in conveying, and communicating his wisdom and

sanctification, he takes another method, for this is not imputed,

but really imparted to us by the illuminating and regenerating work

of the Spirit: these are graces really inherent in us: our

righteousness comes from Christ as a surety but our holiness comes

from him as a quickening head, sending vital influences unto all his

members.

Now these gracious habits being subjected and seated in the

souls of poor imperfect creatures, whose corruptions abide and work

in the very same faculties where grace has its residence; it cannot

be, that our sanctification should be so perfect and complete, as

our justification is, which inheres only in Christ. See Gal. 5: 17.

Thus are righteousness and sanctification communicated and made

ours: but then,

For redemption, that is to say, absolute and plenary

deliverance from all the sad remains, effects, and consequences of

sin, both upon soul and body; this is made ours, (or, to keep to the

terms) Christ is made redemption to us by glorification; then, and

not before, are these miserable effects removed; we put off these

together with the body. So that look, as justification cures the

guilt of sin, and sanctification the dominion of sin, so

glorification removes, together with its existence and being, all

those miseries which it let in (as at a flood-gate) upon our whole

man, Eph. 5: 26, 27.

And thus of God, Christ is made unto us wisdom and

righteousness, sanctification and redemption; namely, by imputation,

regeneration, and glorification.

I shall next improve the point in some useful inferences.

Inference 1. Learn from hence, what a naked, destitute, and

empty thing, a poor sinner is, in his natural unregenerate state.

He is one that naturally and inherently has neither wisdom, nor

righteousness, sanctification nor redemption; all these must come

from without himself, even from Christ, who is made all this to a

sinner, or else he must eternally perish.

As no creature (in respect of external abilities) comes under

more natural weakness into the world than man, naked, empty, and

more shiftless and helpless than any other creature; so it is with

his soul, yea, much more than so: all our excellencies are borrowed

excellencies, no reason therefore to be proud of any of them, 1 Cor.

4: 7. "What hast thou that thou hast not received? Now, if thou

didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received

it?" q. d. that intolerable insolence and vanity would it be for a

man that wears the rich and costly robe of Christ's righteousness,

in which there is not one thread of his own spinning, but all made

by free-grace, and not by free-will, to jet proudly up and down the

world in it, as if himself had made it, and he were beholden to none

for it? O man! thine excellencies, whatever they are, are borrowed

from Christ, they oblige thee to him, but he can be no more obliged

to thee, who wearest them, than the sun is obliged to him that

borrows its light, or the fountain to him that draws its water for

his use and benefit.

And it has ever been the care of holy men, when they have

viewed their own gracious principles, or best performances, still to

disclaim themselves, and own free-grace as the sole author of all.

Thus holy Paul, viewing the principles of divine life in himself,

(the richest gift bestowed upon man in this world by Jesus Christ)

how does he renounce himself, and deny the least part of the praise

and glory as belonging to him, Gal. 2: 20. "Now I live, yet not I;

but Christ liveth in me": and so for the best duties that ever he

performed for God: (and what mere man ever did more for God?) Yet

when, in a just and necessary defence, he was constrained to mention

them, 1 Cor. 15: 10. how carefully is the like [Yet not I] presently

added? "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the

grace of God which was with me."

Well then, let the sense of your own emptiness by nature humble

and oblige you the more to Christ, from whom you receive all you

have.

Infer. 2. Hence we are informed, that none can claim benefit by

imputed righteousness, but those only that live in the power of

inherent holiness; to whomsoever Christ was made righteousness, to

him he also was made sanctification.

The gospel has not the least favour for licentiousness. It is

every way as careful to press men to their duties as to instruct

them in their privileges, Tit. 3: 8. "This is a faithful saying; and

these things I will that ye affirm constantly; that they which have

believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works." It is a

loose principle, divulged by libertines, to the reproach of Christ

and his gospel, that sanctification is not the evidence of our

justification. And Christ is as much wronged by them who separate

holiness from righteousness (as if a sensual vile life were

consistent with a justified state) as he is in the contrary extreme,

by those who confound Christ's righteousness with man's holiness, in

the point of justification; or that own no other righteousness, but

what is inherent in themselves. The former opinion makes him a cloak

for sin, the latter a needless sacrifice for sin.

It is true, our sanctification cannot justify us before God;

but what then, can it not evidence our justification before men? Is

there no necessity, or use for holiness, because it has no hand in

our justification? Is the preparation of the soul for heaven, by

altering its frame and temper, nothing? Is the glorifying of our

Redeemer, by the exercises of grace in the world, nothing? Does the

work of Christ render the work of the Spirit needless? God forbid:

"He came not by blood only, but by water also," 1 John 5: 6. And

when the apostle saith, in Rom. 4: 5. "But unto him that worketh

not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is

counted for righteousness", the scope of it is neither to

characterise and describe the justified person, as one that is lazy

and slothful, and has no mind to work, nor the rebellious and

refractory, refusing obedience to the commands of God; but to

represent him as an humbled sinner, who is convinced of his

inability to work out his own righteousness by the law, and sees all

his endeavours to obey the law fall short of righteousness, and

therefore is said, in a law-sense, not to work, because he does not

work so as to answer the purpose and end of the law, which accepts

of nothing beneath perfect obedience.

And when (in the same text) the ungodly are said to be

justified, that character describes not the temper and frame of

their hearts and lives, after their justification, but what it was

before; not as it leaves, but as it found them.

Infer. 3. How unreasonable, and worse than brutish, is the sin

of infidelity, by which the sinner rejects Christ, and with him all

those mercies, and benefits, which alone can relieve and cure his

misery!

He is by nature blind and ignorant, and yet refuses Christ, who

comes to him with heavenly light and wisdom, he is condemned by the

terrible sentence of the law to eternal wrath, and yet rejects

Christ, who renders to him complete and perfect righteousness: he is

wholly polluted and plunged into original and actual pollution of

nature and practice, yet will have none of Christ, who would become

sanctification to him. He is oppressed in soul and body, with the

deplorable effects and miseries sin has brought upon him, and yet is

so in love with his bondage, that he will neither accept Christ, nor

the redemption he brings with him to sinners.

O! what monsters, what beasts has sin turned its subjects into!

"You will not come to me that ye may have life," John 5: 40. Sin has

stabbed the sinner to the heart, the wounds are all mortal, eternal

death is in his face; Christ has prepared the only plaister that can

cure his wounds, but he will not suffer him to apply it. He acts

like one in love with death, and that judges it sweet to perish. So

Christ tells us, Prov. 8: 36 "All they that hate me, love death:"

not in itself but in its causes, with which it is inseparably

connected. They are loth to burn, yet willing to sin; though sin

kindle those everlasting flames. So that in two things the

unbeliever shows himself worse than brutish, he cannot think of

damnation, the effect of sin, without horror; and cannot yet think

of sin, the cause of damnation, without pleasure; he is loth to

perish to all eternity without a remedy, and yet refuses and

declines Christ as if he were an enemy, who only can and would

deliver him from that eternal perdition.

How do men act therefore, as if they were in love with their

own ruin! Many poor wretches now in the way to hell, what an hard

shift do they make to cast themselves away! Christ meets them many

times in the ordinances, where they studiously shun him: many times

checks them in their way by convictions, which they make an hard

shift to overcome and conquer. Oh how willing are they to accept a

cure, a benefit, a remedy, for any thing but their souls! You see

then that sinners cannot, (should they study all their days to do

themselves a mischief), take a readier course to undo themselves,

than by rejecting Christ in his gracious offers.

Surely the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is less shall this sin.

Mercy itself is exasperated by it, and the damnation of such as

reject Christ, (so prepared for them, with whatever they need, and

so seriously and frequently offered to them upon the knee of gospel

entreaty), is just, inevitable, and will be more intolerable the to

any in the world beside them. It is just, for the sinner has but his

own option, or choice: he is but come to the end which he was often

told his way would bring him to. It is inevitable, for there is no

other way to salvation, but that which is rejected. And it will be

more intolerable than the damnation of others, because neither

heathens nor devils ever aggravated their sins by such an horrid

circumstance, as the wilful refusing of such an apt, offered, and

only remedy.

Infer. 4. What a tremendous symptom of wrath, and sad character

of death, appears upon that mans' soul, to which no effectual

application of Christ can be made by the gospel.

Christ, with his benefits, is frequently tendered to them in

the gospel; they have been beseeched once and again, upon the knee

of importunity, to accept him; those entreaties and persuasions have

been urged by the greatest arguments, the command of God, the love

of Christ, the inconceivable happiness or misery which unavoidably

follow the accepting or rejecting of those offers, and yet nothing

will affect them: all their pleas for infidelity have been over and

over confuted, their reasons and consciences have stood convinced,

they have been speechless, as well as Christless: not one sound

argument is found with them to defend their infidelity: they confess

in general, that such courses as theirs are, lead to destruction.

They will yield them to be happy souls that are in Christ; and yet,

when it comes to the point, their own closing with him, nothing will

do; all arguments, all entreaties, return to us without success.

Lord! what is the reason of this unaccountable obstinacy? In

other things it is not so: If they be sick, they are so far from

rejecting a physician that offers himself, that they will send, and

pray, and pay him too. If they be arrested for debt, and anyone will

be a surety, and pay their debts for them, words can hardly express

the sense they have of such a kindness: but though Christ would be

both a physician and surety, and whatever else their needs require,

they will rather perish to eternity, than accept him. What may we

fear to be the reason of this, but because they are not of Christ's

sheep, John 10: 26. The Lord open the eyes of poor sinners, to

apprehend not only how great a sin, but how dreadful a sign this is.

Infer. 5 If Christ, with all his benefits, be made ours, by

God's special application, what a day of mercies then is the day of

conversion! What multitudes of choice blessings visit the converted

soul in that day!

"This day (saith Christ to Zaccheus, Luke 19: 9) is salvation

come to this house." In this day, Christ comes into the soul, and he

comes not empty, but brings with him all his treasures of wisdom and

righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Troops of mercies,

yea, of the best of mercies, come with him. It is a day of singular

gladness and joy to the heart of Christ, when he is espoused to, and

received by the believing soul: it is a coronation day to a king. So

you read, Cant. 3: 11. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Sion, and behold

king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the

day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

Where, under the type of Solomon in his greatest magnificence

and glory, when the royal diadem was set upon his head, and the

people shouted for joy, so that the earth did ring again, is

shadowed out the joy of Christ's heart, when poor souls, by their

high estimation of him, and consent to his government, do, as it

were, crown him with glory and honour, and make his heart glad.

Now, if the day of our espousals to Christ be the day of the

gladness of his heart, and he reckons himself thus honoured and

glorified by us, what a day of joy and gladness should it be to our

hearts, and how should we be transported with joy, to see a King

from heaven, with all his treasures of grace and glory, bestowing

himself freely, and everlastingly upon us, as our portion! No wonder

Zaccheus came down joyfully, Luke 19: 6; that the eunuch went home

rejoicing, Acts 8: 39. that the gaoler rejoiced, believing in God

with all his household, Acts 16: 34. that they that were converted,

did eat their meat with gladness, praising God, Acts 2: 41, 46. that

there was great joy among them at Samaria, when Christ came among

them in the preaching of the gospel, Acts 8: 5, 8. I say, it is no

wonder we read of such joy accompanying Christ into the soul, when

we consider, that in one day, so many blessings meet together in it,

the least of which is not to be exchanged for all the kingdoms of

this world, and the glory of them. Eternity itself will but suffice

to bless God for the mercies of this one day.

Infer. 6. If Christ be made all this to every soul, unto whom

he is effectually applied, what cause then have those souls, that

are under the preparatory work of the Spirit, and are come nigh to

Christ and all his benefits, to stretch out their hands, with

vehement desire to Christ, and give him the most important

invitation into their souls!

The whole world is distinguishable into three classes, or sorts

of persons; such as are far from Christ; such as are not far from

Christ; and such as are in Christ. They that are in Christ have

heartily received him. Such as are far from Christ, will not open to

him; their hearts are fast barred by ignorance, prejudice, and

unbelief against him: But those that are come under the preparatory

workings of the Spirit, nigh to Christ, who see their own

indispensable necessity of him, and his suitableness to their

necessities, in whom also encouraging hopes begins to dawn, and

their souls are waiting at the foot of God for power to receive him,

for an heart to close sincerely and universally with him; O what

vehement desires! what strong pleas! what moving arguments should

such persons urge, and plead to win Christ, and get possession of

him! they are in sight of their only remedy; Christ and salvation

are come to their very doors; there wants but a few things to make

them blessed for ever. This is the day in which their souls are

exercised between hopes and fears: Now they are much alone, and deep

in thoughtfulness, they weep and make supplication for a heart to

believe, and that against the great discouragements with which they

encounter.

Reader, if this be the case of thy soul, it will not be the

least piece of service I can do for thee, to suggest such pleas as

in this case are proper to be urged for the attainment of thy

desires, and the closing of the match between Christ and thee.

First, Plead the absolute necessity which now drives thee to

Christ: Tell him thy hope is utterly perished in all other refuges.

Thou art come like a starving beggar to the last door of hope. Tell

him thou now beginnest to see the absolute necessity of Christ. Thy

body has not so much need of bread, water, or air, as thy soul has

of Christ, and that wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and

redemption, that are in him.

Secondly, Plead the Father's gracious design in furnishing and

sending him into the world, and his own design in accepting the

Father's call. Lord Jesus, was thou not "anointed to preach good

tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, and to proclaim

liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that

are bound?" Isa. 61: 1, 3. Behold an object suitable to thine

office: whilst I was ignorant of my condition, I have a proud

rebellious heart, but conviction and self-acquaintance have now

melted it: my heart was harder than the nether millstone, and it was

as easy to dissolve the obdurate rocks, as to thaw and melt my heart

for sin; but now God has made my heart soft, I sensibly feel the

misery of my condition. I once thought myself at perfect liberty,

but now I see what I conceited to be perfect liberty, is perfect

bondage; and never did a poor prisoner sigh for deliverance more

than I. Since then thou hast given me a soul thus qualified, though

still unworthy, for the exercise of thine office, and execution of

thy commission; Lord Jesus, be, according to thy name, a Jesus unto

me.

Thirdly, Plead the unlimited and general invitation made to

such souls as you are, to come to Christ freely. Lord, thou hast

made open proclamations; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to

the waters, Is. 55: 1. And Rev. 22: 17. "Him that is a-thirst come".

In obedience to thy call, lo, I come; had I not been invited, my

coming to thee, dear Lord Jesus, had been an act of presumption, but

this makes it an act of duty and obedience.

Fourthly, Plea the unprofitableness of thy blood to God; Lord,

there is no profit in my blood, it will turn to no more advantage to

thee to destroy, than it will to save me: if thou send me to hell,

(as the merit of my sin calls upon thy justice ot do,) I shall be

there dishonouring thee to all eternity, and the debt I owe thee

never paid. But, if thou apply thy Christ to me for righteousness,

satisfaction for all that I have done will be laid down in one full,

complete sum; indeed, if the honour of thy justice lay as a bar to

my pardon, it would stop my mouth: but when thy justice, as well as

thy mercy, shall both rejoice together, and be glorified and pleased

in the same act, what hinders but that Christ be applied to my soul,

since, in so doing, God can be no loser by it?

Fifthly, and lastly, Plead thy compliance with the terms of the

gospel: tell him, Lord, my will complies fully and heartily to all

thy gracious terms, I can now subscribe a blank: let God offer his

Christ on what terms he will, my heart is ready to comply; I have no

exception against any article of the gospel. And now, Lord, I wholly

refer myself to thy pleasure; do with me what seems good in thine

eyes, only give me an interest in Jesus Christ; as to all other

concerns I lie at thy feet, in full resignation of all to thy

pleasure. Never did any perish in that posture and frame; and I hope

I shall not be made the first instance and example.

Inf. 7. Lastly, If Christ, with all his benefits, be made ours,

by a special application; how contented, thankful, comfortable, and

hopeful, should believers be, in every condition which God casts

them into in this world!

After such a mercy as this, let them never open their mouths

any more to repine and grudge at the outward inconveniences of their

condition in this world. What are the things you want, compared with

the things you enjoy? What is a little money, health, or liberty, to

wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? All the

crowns and sceptres in the world, sold to their full value, are no

price for the least of these mercies. But I will not insist here,

your duty lies much higher than contentment.

Be thankful, as well as content, in every state. "Blessed be

God, (saith the apostle) the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

has blessed us with all [spiritual blessings] in heavenly places in

Christ:" O think what are men to angels, that Christ should pass by

them to become a Saviour to men? And what art thou among men, that

thou shouldst be taken, and others left! And among all the mercies

of God, what mercies are comparable to these conferred upon thee? O

bless God in the lowest ebb of outward comforts, for such privileges

as these.

And yet you will not come up to your duty in all this, except

you be joyful in the Lord, and rejoice evermore after the receipt of

such mercies as these, Phil. 4: 4. "Rejoice in the Lord ye

righteous, and again I say rejoice." For has not the poor captive

reason to rejoice, when he has recovered his liberty? The debtor to

rejoice when all scores are cleared, and he owes nothing? The weary

traveller to rejoice, though he be not owner of a shilling, when he

is come almost home, where all his wants shall be supplied? Why this

is our case, when Christ once becomes yours: you are the Lord's

freemen, your debts to justice are all satisfied by Christ; and you

are within a little of complete redemption from all the troubles and

inconveniences of your present state.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

Sermon 2.

Wherein the Union of the Believer with Christ, as a principal Part

of effectual Application, is stated and practically improved.

John 17: 23.

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.

The design and end of the application of Christ to sinners is

the communication of his benefits to them; but seeing all

communications of benefits necessarily imply communion, and all

communion as necessarily presupposes union with his person: I shall

therefore, in this place, and from this scripture, treat of the

mystical union betwixt Christ and believers; this union being the

principal act, wherein the Spirit's application of Christ consists,

of which I spake (as to its general nature) in the former sermon.

In this verse (omitting the context) we find a threefold union,

one betwixt the Father and Christ, a second betwixt Christ and

believers, a third betwixt believers themselves.

First, Thou in me: This is a glorious ineffable union, and is

fundamental to the other two. The Father is not only in Christ, in

respect of dear affections, as one dear friend is in another, who is

as his own soul; nor only essentially, in respect of the identity

and sameness of nature and attributes, in which respect Christ is

the express image of his person, Heb. 1: 8. But he is in Christ also

as Mediator, by communicating the fulness of the Godhead, which

dwells in him as God-man, in a transcendent and singular manner, so

as it never dwelt, nor call dwell in any other, Col. 2:9.

Secondly, I in them. There is the mystical union betwixt Christ

and the saints, q. d. Thou and I are one essentially, they and I are

one mystically: and thou and I are one by communication at the

Godhead, and singular fulness of the Spirit to me as Mediator; and

they and I are one, by my communication of the Spirit to them in

measure.

Thirdly, From hence results a third union betwixt believers

themselves; that they may be made perfect in one; the same Spirit

dwelling in them all, and equally uniting them all to me, as living

members to their Head of influence, there must needs be a dear and

intimate union betwixt themselves, as fellow-members of the same

body.

Now my business, at this time, lying in the second branch,

namely the union betwixt Christ and believers, I shall gather up the

substance of it into this doctrinal proposition, to which I shall

apply this discourse.

Doct. That there is a strict and dear union betwixt Christ and

all true believers.

The scriptures have borrowed from the book at nature four

elegant and lively metaphors, to help the nature of this mystical

union with Christ into our understandings; namely, that of pieces of

timber united by glue, that of a graff taking hold of its stock, and

making one tree; that of the husband and wife, by the

marriage-covenant, becoming one flesh; and that of the members and

head animated by one soul, and so becoming one natural body. Every

one of these is more lively and full than the other: and what is

defective in one, is supplied in the other; but yet neither any of

these singly, or all at them jointly, can give us a full and

complete account of this mystery.

Not that of two pieces united by glue, 1 Cor 5: 17 "He that is

joined to the Lord is one spirit," "kollamenos", glued to the Lord

For though this cements, and strongly joins them in one, yet this is

but a faint and imperfect shadow of our union with Christ; for

though this union by glue be intimate, yet not vital, but so is that

of the soul with Christ.

Nor that of the graft and stock, mentioned Rom. 6: 5. for

though it be there said, that believers are "sumfutoi", implanted,

or ingrafted by way of incision, and this union betwixt it and the

stock be vital, for it partakes of the vital sap and juice of it;

yet here also is a remarkable defect, for the graft is of a more

excellent kind and nature them the stock, and, upon that account,

the tree receives its denomination from it, as from the more noble

and excellent part, but Christ, into whom believers are ingrafted,

is infinitely more excellent than they, and they are denominated

from him.

Nor yet that conjugal union, by marriage-covenant, betwixt a

man and his wife; for though this be exceeding dear and intimate, so

that a man leaves father and mother, and cleaves to his wife, and

they two become one flesh; yet this union is not indissolvable, but

may and must be broken by death; and then the relict lives alone

without any communion with, or relation to, the person that was once

so dear; but this betwixt Christ and the soul can never be dissolved

by death, it abides to eternity.

Nor, lastly, that of the head and members united by one vital

spirit, and so making one physical body, mentioned Eph. 4: 15, 16.

for though one soul actuates every member, yet it does not knit

every member alike near to the head, but some are nearer, and others

removed farther from it; but here every member is alike nearly

united with Christ the Head; the weak are as near to him as the

strong.

Two things are necessary to be opened in the doctrinal part of

this point. 1. The reality. 2. The quality of this union.

First, For the reality of it, I shall make it appear, that

there is such a union betwixt Christ and believers; it is no Ens

rationis, empty notion, or cunningly devised fable, but a most

certain demonstrable truth, which appears,

First, From the communion which is betwixt Christ and

believers, in this the apostle is express, 1 John 1: 3 "Truly our

fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;"

"koinonia". It signifies such fellowship or copartnership, as

persons have by a joint interest in one and the same enjoyment,

which is in common betwixt them. So Heb. 3: 14. we are "metochoi",

partakers of Christ. And Psal. 45: 7, "mechaverecha", here the

saints are called the companions, consorts or fellows of Christ;

"and that not only in respect of his assumption of our mortality,

and investing us with his immortality, but it has a special

reference and respect to the unction of the Holy Ghost, or graces of

the Spirit, of which believers are partakers with him and through

him." Now this communion of the saints with Christ is entirely and

necessarily dependent upon their union with him, even as much as the

branch's participation of the sap and juice depends upon its union

and coalition with the stock: take away union, and there can be no

communion, or communications, which is clear from 1 Cor. 3: 22, 23.

"All is yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." When you

see how all our participation of Christ's benefits is built upon our

union with Christ's person.

Secondly, The reality of the believer's union with Christ, is

evident from the imputation of Christ's righteousness to him for his

justification. That a believer is justified before God by a

righteousness without himself; is undeniable from Rom. 3: 24. "Being

justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in

Christ Jesus." And that Christ's righteousness becomes ours by

imputation is as clear from Rom. 4: 23, 24. but it can never be

imputed to us, except we be united to him, and become one with him:

which is also plainly asserted in 1 Cor. 1: 30. "But of him are ye

(in Christ Jesus) who of God is made unto us wisdom and

righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He communicates his

merits unto none but those that are in him. Hence all those vain

cavils of the Papists, disputing against our justification by the

righteousness of Christ, and asserting it to be by inherent

righteousness, are solidly answered.

When they demand, How can we be justified by the righteousness

of another? Can I be rich with another man's money, or preferred by

another man's honours? Our answer is, yes, if that other be my

surety or husband. Indeed Peter can not be justified by the

righteousness of Paul; but both may be justified by the

righteousness of Christ imputed to them; they being members, jointly

knit to one common Head. Principal and surety are one in obligations

and constructions of law. Head and members are one body, branch and

stock are one tree; and it is no strange things to see a graff live

by the sap of another stock, when once it is ingrafted into it.

Thirdly, The sympathy that is betwixt Christ and believers,

proves a union betwixt them; Christ and the saints smile and sigh

together. St. Paul in Col. 1: 24. tells us, that he did "fill up

that which was behind, 'ta ustermata' - the remainders of the

sufferings of Christ in his flesh:" or not as if Christ's sufferings

were imperfect, ("for by one offering he has perfected for ever them

that are sanctified," Heb. 10: 14.) but in these two scriptures,

Christ is considered in a twofold capacity; he suffered once in

corpore proprio, in his own person, as Mediator; these sufferings

are complete and full, and in that sense he suffers no more: he

suffers also in corpore mystico, in his church and members, thus he

still suffers in the sufferings of every saint for his sake, and

though these sufferings in his mystical body are not equal to the

other, either pondere et mensuria, in their weight and value, not

yet designed ex officio, for the same use and purpose, to satisfy by

their proper merit, offended justice; nevertheless they are truly

reckoned the sufferings of Christ, because the head suffers when the

members do; and without this supposition, that place, Acts 9:. 5. is

never to be understood, when Christ, the Head in heaven, cries out,

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" when the foot was trod upon

earth: How does Christ sensibly feel our sufferings, or we his, if

there be not a mystical union betwixt him and us?

Fourthly, and lastly, The way and manner in which the saints

shall be raised at the last day, proves this mystical union betwixt

Christ and them; for they are not to be raised as others, by the

naked power of God without them, but by the virtue of Christ's

resurrection as their Head, sending forth vital, quickening

influences into their dead bodies, which are united to him as well

as their souls. For so we find it, Rom. 8: 11. "But if the Spirit of

him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised

up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by

his Spirit that dwelleth in you;" even as it is in our awaking, out

of natural sleep, first the animal-spirits in the head begin to

rouse and play there, and then the senses and members are loosed

throughout the whole body.

Now it is impossible the saints should be raised in the last

resurrection, by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, if that

Spirit did not knit and unite them to him, as members to their head.

So then by all this, it is proved, that there is a real union of the

saints with Christ.

Next, I shall endeavour to open the quality and nature of this

union, and show you what it is, according to the weak apprehensions

we have of so sublime a mystery; and this I shall do in a general

and particular account of it.

First, More generally, it is an intimate conjunction of

believers to Christ, by the imparting of his Spirit to them, whereby

they are enabled to believe and live in him.

All divine and spiritual life is originally in the Father, and

comes not to us, but by and through the Son, John 5: 26. to him has

the Father given to have an "autodzoe", - a quickening enlivening

power in himself; but the Son communicates this life which is in him

to none but by and through the Spirit, Rom. 8:2. So. "The Spirit of

life which is in Christ Jesus, has made me free from the law of sin

and death."

The Spirit must therefore first take hold of us, before we can

live in Christ; and when he does so, then we are enabled to exert

that vital act of faith, whereby we receive Christ; all this lies

plain in that one scripture, John 6: 57. "As the living Father has

sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, (that is by

faith applies me) even he shall live by me." So that these two,

namely, the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith, his work on our

part, are the two ligaments by which we are knit to Christ.

So that the Spirit's work in uniting or ingrafting a soul in

Christ, is like the cutting off the graff from its native stock

(which he does by his illuminations and convictions) and closing it

with the living, when it is thus prepared, and so enabling it (by

the infusion of faith) to such and draw the vital sap, and thus it

becomes one with him. Or as the many members in the natural body,

being all quickened and animated by the same vital spirit, become

one body with the head, which is the principal member, Eph. 4: 4.

"There is one body and one spirit."

More particularly, we shall consider the properties of this

union, that so we may the better understand the nature of it. And

here I shall open the nature of it both negatively and

affirmatively.

First, Negatively, by removing all false notions and

misapprehensions of it. And we say,

First, The saints union with Christ is not a mere mental union

only in conceit or notion, but really exists extra mentem, whether

we conceit it or not. I know the atheistical world censures all

these things as fancies and idle imaginations, but believers know

the reality of them, Johns 14: 20. "At that day you shall know that

I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." This doctrine is

not fantastical, but scientifical.

Secondly, The saints union with Christ is not a physical union,

such as is between the members of a natural body and the head; our

nature indeed is assumed into union with the person of Christ, but

it is the singular honour of that blessed and holy flesh of Christ,

to be so united as to make one person with him; that union is

hypostatical, this only mystical.

Thirdly, Nor is it an essential union, or unions with the

divine nature, so as our beings are thereby swallowed up and lost in

the Divine being.

Some there be indeed that talk at that wild rate, of being

godded into God, and christed into Christ; and those unwary

expressions of Greg. Naz. "Theopoiein", and "Chrisopoiein". but do

much countenance those daring spirits; but oh, there is an infinite

distance betwixt us and Christ, in respect of nature and excellency,

notwithstanding this union.

Fourthly, The union I here speak of, is not a foederal union,

or an union by covenant only: such an union indeed there is betwixt

Christ and believers, but that is consequential to and wholly

dependant upon this.

Fifthly, and lastly, It is not a mere moral union by love and

affection; thus we say, one soul is in two bodies, a friend is

another self; the lover is in the person beloved; such an union of

hearts and affections there is also betwixt Christ and the saints,

but this is of another nature; that we call a moral, this is a

mystical union; that only knits our affections, but this our persons

to Christ.

Secondly, Positively. And, First, Though this union neither

makes us one person nor essence with Christ, yet it knits our

persons most intimately and nearly to the person of Christ. The

church is Christ's body, Col. 1: 24. not his natural, but his

mystical body; that is to say, his body is a mystery, because it is

to him as his natural body. The saints stand to Christ in the same

relation that the natural members of the body stand to the head, and

he stands in the same relation to them, that the head stands in to

the natural members; and consequently they stand related to one

another, as the members of a natural body do to each other.

Christ and the saints are not one, as the oak and the ivy that

clasps it are one, but as the graff and stock are one; it is not an

union by adhesion, but incorporation. Husband and wife are not so

dear, soul and body are not so near, as Christ and the believing

soul are near to each other.

Secondly, The mystical union is wholly supernatural, wrought

the alone power of God. So it is said, 1 Cor. 1: 30. But of him are

ye in Christ Jesus." We can no more unite ourselves to Christ, than

a branch can incorporate itself into another stock; it is of him,

i.e. of God, his proper and alone work.

There are only two ligaments, or bands of union betwixt Christ

and the soul, viz. the Spirit on his part, and faith on ours. But

when we say faith is the band of union on our part, the meaning is

not, that it is so our own act, as that it springs naturally from

us, or is educed from the power of our own wills; no, for the

apostle expressly contradicts it, Eph. 2: 8. "It is not of

yourselves, it is the gift of God." But we are the subjects of it,

and though the act on that account be ours, yet the power enabling

us to believe is God's, Eph. 1: 19, 20.

Thirdly, The mystical union is an immediate union; immediate I

say, not as excluding means and instruments, for several means and

many instruments are employed for the effecting of it; but

immediate, as excluding degrees of nearness among the members of

Christ's mystical body.

Every member in the natural body stands not as near to the head

as another, but so do all the mystical members of Christ's body to

him: every member, the smallest as well as the greatest, has an

immediate coalition with Christ, 1 Cor. 1: 2. "To the church of God,

which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus,

called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name

of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."

Among the factions in this church at Corinth, those that said,

I am of Christ, as arrogating Christ to themselves, were as much a

faction, as those that said I am of Paul, 1 Cor. 1: 30. To cure this

he tells them, he is both theirs and ours. Such enclosures are

against law.

Fourthly, The saints mystical union with Christ is a

fundamental union; it is fundamental by way of sustentation; all our

fruits of obedience depend upon it, John 15: 4. "As the branch

cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can ye,

except ye abide in me." It is fundamental to all our privileges and

comfortable claims, 1 Cor. 3: 23. All is yours, for ye are

Christ's." And it is fundamental to all our hopes and expectations

of glory; for it is "Christ in you the hope of glory," Col. 1: 27.

So then, destroy this union, and with it you destroy all our fruits,

privileges, and eternal hopes, at one stroke.

Fifthly, The mystical union is a most efficacious union, for

through this union the divine power flows into our outs, both to

quicken us with the life of Christ, and to conserve and secure that

life in us after it is so infused.

Without the union of the soul to Christ, which is to be

conceived efficiently as the Spirit's act, there can be no union

formally considered; and, without these, no communications of life

from Christ to us, Eph. 4: 16. And as there is that "energeia", or

effectual working of the spirit of life in every part, which he

there speaks of, (as though you should say, the first appearances of

a new life, a spiritual vitality diffused through the soul, which

ere while was dead in sin) yet still this union with Christ is as

necessary to the maintaining, as before it was to the producing of

it.

For why is it that this life is not again extinguished, and

wholly suffocated in us, by so many deadly wounds as are given it by

temptations and corruptions? Surely no reason can be assigned more

satisfying than that which Christ himself gives us, in John 14: 19.

"because I live, ye shall live also:" q d. whilst there is vital sap

in me the root, you that are branches in me cannot wither and die.

Sixthly, The mystical union is an indissoluble union: there is

an everlasting tye betwixt Christ and the believer; and herein also

it is beyond all other unions in the world; death dissolves the dear

union betwixt the husband and wife, friend and friend, yea, betwixt

soul and body, but not betwixt Christ and the soul, the bands of

this union rot not in the grave. "What shall separate us from the

love of Christ?" saith the apostle, Rom. 8: 35, 38, 39. He bids

defiance to all his enemies, and triumphs in the firmness of his

union over all hazards that seem to threaten it. It is with Christ

and us, in respect of the mystical union, as it is with Christ

himself, in respect of the hypostatical union; that was not

dissolved by his death, when the natural union betwixt his soul and

body was, nor can this mystical union of our souls and bodies with

Christ be dissolved, when the union betwixt us and our dearest

relations, yea, betwixt the soul and body, is dissolved by death.

God calls himself the God of Abraham, long after his body was turned

into dust.

Seventhly, It is an honourable union, yea, the highest honour

that can be done unto men; the greatest honour that was ever done to

our common nature, was by its assumption into union with the second

person hypostatically, and the highest honour that was ever done to

our single persons, was their union with Christ hypostatically. To

be a servant of Christ is a dignity transcendent to the highest

advancement among men; but to be a member of Christ, how matchless

and singular is the glory thereof! And yet, such honour have all the

saints, Eph. 5: 30. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and

of his bones."

Eighthly, It is a most comfortable union: yea, the ground of

all solid comfort, both in life and death. Whatever troubles, wants,

or distresses befal such, in this is abundant relief and support,

Christ is mine, and I am his; what may not a good soul make out of

that! If I am Christ's, then let him take care for me, and, indeed,

in so doing, he does but take care for his own. He is my head, and

to him it belongs to consult the safety and welfare of his own

members, Eph 1: 22, 23. He is not only an head to his owns by way of

influence, but to all things else, by way of dominion, for their

good. How comfortably may we repose ourselves, under that cheering

consideration, upon him at all times and in all difficult cases!

Ninthly, It is a fruitful union; the immediate end of it is

fruit, Rom. 7: 4. "We are married to Christ, that we should bring

forth fruit to God." All the fruit we bear before our ingrafture

into Christ is worse than none; till the person be in Christ, the

work cannot be evangelically good and acceptable to God: "We are

made accepted in the beloved," Eph. 1: 6. Christ is a fruitful root,

and makes all the branches that live in him so too, John 15: 8.

Tenth1y, and lastly, It is an enriching union; for, by our

union with his person, we are immediately interested in all his

riches, 1 Cor. 1: 30. How rich and great a person do the little arms

of faith clasp and embrace! "All is yours," 1 Cor; 3: 22. All that

Christ has becomes ours, either by communication to us, or

improvement for us: His Father, John 20: 17. His promises, ,2 Cor.

1: 20. His providence, Rom. 8: 28. His glory, John 17: 24. It is all

ours by virtue of our union with him.

Thus you see briefly what the mystical union is. Next we shall

improve it.

Inference 1. If there be such, a union betwixt Christ and

believers, Oh then what transcendent dignity has God put upon

believers.

Well might Constantine prefer the honour of being a member of

the church, before that of being head of the empire; for it is not

only above all earthly dignities and honours, but, in some respect,

above that honour which God has put upon the angels of glory.

Great is the dignity of the angelical nature: the angels are

the highest and most honourable species of creatures; they also have

the honour continually to behold the face of God in heaven, and yet,

in this one respect the saints are preferred to them, they have a

mystical union with Christ, as their head of influence, by whom they

are quickened with spiritual life, which the angels have not.

It is true, there is an "anakefalaiosis", or gathering together

of all in heaven and earth under Christ as a common head, Eph. 1:

10. He is the Head of angels as well as saints, but in different

respects. To angels he is an head of dominion and government, but to

saints he is both an head of dominion, and of vital influence too;

they are his chief and most honourable subjects, but not his

mystical members: they are as the Barons and Nobles in his kingdom,

but the saints as the dear Spouse and Wife of his bosom. This

dignifies the believer above the greatest angel. And as the nobles

of the kingdom think it a preferment and honour to serve the Queen,

so the glorious angels think it no degradation or dishonour to them

to serve the saints; for to this honourable office they are

appointed, Heb. 1: 14. to be ministering or serviceable spirits, for

the good of them that shall be heirs of salvation. The chiefest

servant disdains not to honour and serve the heir.

Some imperious grandees would frown, should some of these

persons but presume to approach their presence; but God sets them

before his face with delight, and angels delight to serve them.

Infer. 2. If there be such a strict and inseparable union

betwixt Christ and believers, then the grace of believers can never

totally fail; Immortality is the privilege of grace, because

sanctified persons are inseparably united to Christ the Fountain of

life: "Your life is hid with Christ in God," Col. 3: 3. Whilst the

sap of life is in the root, the branches live by it. Thus it is

betwixt Christ and believers, John 14: 19. "Because I live, ye shall

live also." See how Christ binds up their life in one bundle with

his own, plainly intimating, that it is as impossible for them to

die, as it is for himself; he cannot live without them.

True it is, the spiritual life of believers is encountered by

many strong and fierce oppositions: It is also brought to a low ebb

in some, but we are always to remember, that there are some things

which pertain to the essence of that life, in which the very being

of it lies, and some things that pertain only to its well-being. All

those things which belong to the well being of the new-creature, as

manifestations, joys, spiritual comforts, &c. may, for a time, fail,

yea, and grace itself may suffer great losses and remissions in its

degrees, notwithstanding our union with Christ; but still the

essence of it is immortal, which is no small relief to gracious

souls. When the means of grace fail, as it is threatened, Amos 8:

11. when temporary formal professors drop away from Christ like

withered leaves from the trees in a windy day, 2 Tim. 2: 18. and

when the natural union of their souls and bodies is suffering, a

dissolution from each other by death, when that silver cord is

loosed, this golden chain holds firm, 1 Cor. 3: 23.

Inf. 3. Is the union so intimate betwixt Christ and believers?

How great and powerful a motive then is this, to make us open-handed

and liberal in relieving the necessities and wants of every gracious

person! For in relieving them, we relieve Christ himself:

Christ personal is not the object of our pity and charity, he

is as the fountain-head of all the riches in glory, Eph. 4: 10. but

Christ mystical is exposed to necessities and wants, he feels hunger

and thirst, cold and pains, in his body the church; and he is

refreshed, relieved, and comforted, in their refreshments and

comforts. Christ the Lord of heaven and earth, in this consideration

is sometimes in need of a penny; he tells us his wants and poverty,

and how he is relieved, Matt. 25: 35, 40. A text believed and

understood by very few, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I

was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me

in. Then shall the righteous answer, Lord, when saw we thee an

hungered, &c. And the King shall answer, and say unto them, verily I

say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of

these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

It was the saying of a great divine, that he thought scarce any

man on earth did fully understand and believe this truth, and he

conceives so much hinted in the very text, where the righteous

themselves reply, "Lord, when saw we thee sick," &c. intimating in

the question, that they did not thoroughly understand the nearness,

yea, oneness of those persons with Christ, for whom they did these

things. And, indeed, it is incredible that a Christian can be

hard-hearted and close-handed to that necessitous Christian, in

refreshing and relieving of whom, he verily believes, that he

ministers refreshment to Christ himself.

O think again and again upon this scripture; consider what

forcible and mighty arguments are here laid together, to engage

relief to the wants of Christians.

Here you see their near relation to Christ; they are mystically

one person; what you did to them, you did to me. Here you see also

how kindly Christ takes it at our hands, acknowledging all those

kindnesses that were bestowed upon him, even to a bit of bread: He

is, you see, content to take it as a courtesy, who might demand it

by authority, and bereave you of all immediately upon refusal.

Yea, here you see one single branch or act of obedience, (our

charity to the saints) is singled out from among all the duties of

obedience, and made the test and evidence of our sincerity in that

great day, and men blessed or cursed according to the love they have

manifested this way to the saints.

O then, let none that understand the relation the saints have

to Christ, as the members to the head, or the relation they have to

each other thereby, as fellow-members of the same body, from hence

forth suffer Christ to hunger, if they have bread to relieve him, or

Christ to be thirsty, if they have wherewith to refresh him: this

union betwixt Christ and the saints affords an argument beyond all

other arguments in the world to prevail with us. Methinks, a little

rhetoric might persuade a Christian to part with any thing he has

for Christ, who parted with the glory of heaven, yea, and his own

blood for his sake.

Inf. 4. Do Christ and believers make but one mystical person?

How unnatural and absurd then are all those acts of unkindness,

whereby believers wound and grieve Jesus Christ! This is as if the

hand should wound its own head, from which it receives life, sense,

motion, and strength.

When satan smites Christ by a wicked man, he then wounds him

with the hand of an enemy; but when his temptations prevail upon the

saints to sin, he wounds him as it were with his own hand: As the

eagle and tree in the fable complained, the one that he was wounded

by an arrow winged with his own feathers; the other, that it was

cleaved asunder by a wedge hewn out of its own limbs.

Now the evil and disingenuity of such sins are to be measured

not only by the near relation Christ sustains to believers as their

Head, but more particularly from the several benefits they receive

from him as such; for in wounding Christ by their sins,

First, They wound their Head of influence, through whom they

live, and without whom they had still remained in the state of sin

and death, Eph. 4: 16. Shall Christ send life to us, and we return

that which is death to him! O how absurd, how disingenuous is this!

Secondly, They wound their Head of government. Christ is a

guiding, as well as a quickening Head, Col. 1: 18. He is your

wisdom, he guides you by his counsels to glory: but must he be thus

requited for all his faithful conduct! What do you, when you sin,

but rebel against his government, refusing to follow his counsels,

and obeying, in the mean time, a deceiver, rather than him.

Thirdly, They wound their consulting Head, who cares, provides,

and projects, for the welfare and safety of the body. Christians,

you know your affairs below have not been steered and managed by

your own wisdom, but that orders have been given from heaven for

your security and supply from day to day. "I know, O Lord, (saith

the prophet) that the way of man is not in himself, neither is it in

him that walks to direct his own steps," Jer. 10: 23.

It is true, Christ is out of your sight, and you see him not:

but he sees you, and orders every thing that concerns you. And is

this a due requital of all that care he has taken for you? Do you

thus requite the Lord for all his benefits? What recompense evil for

good! O let shame cover you.

Fourthly, and lastly, They wound their Head of honour. Christ

your Head is the fountain of honour to you: This is your glory that

you are related to him as your head: You are, on this account, (as

before was noted) exalted above angels.

Now then consider, how vile a thing it is to reflect the least

dishonour upon him, from whom you derive all your glory. O consider

and bewail it.

Inf. 5. Is there so strict and intimate a relation and union

betwixt Christ and the saints? Then surely they can never want what

is good for their souls or bodies.

Every one naturally cares and provides for his own, especially

for his own body: yet we can more easily violate the law of nature,

and be cruel to our own flesh, than Christ can be so to his mystical

body. I know it is hard to rest upon, and rejoice in a promise, when

necessities pinch, and we see not from whence relief should arise;

but O! what sweet satisfaction and comfort might a necessitous

believer find in these considerations, would he but keep them upon

his heart in such a day of straits.

First, Whatever my distresses are for quality, number, or

degree, they are all known even to the least circumstance, by Christ

my Head: He looks down from heaven upon all my afflictions, and

understands them more fully than I that feel them, Psal. 38: 9.

"Lord all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from

thee."

Secondly, He not only knows them, but feels them as well as

knows them; "We have not an High-priest that cannot be touched with

the feeling of our infirmities," Heb. 4: 15. In all your afflictions

he is afflicted; tender sympathy cannot but flow from such intimate

union; therefore in Matt. 25: 35. he saith, I was an hungered, and I

was athirst, and I was naked. For indeed his sympathy and tender

compassion gave him as quick a resentment, and as tender a sense of

their wants, as if they had been his own. Yea,

Thirdly, He not only knows and feels my wants, but has enough

in his hand, and much more than enough to supply them all; for all

things are delivered to him by the Father, Luke 10: 22. All the

storehouses in heaven and earth are his, Phil. 4: 19.

Fourthly, He bestows all earthly good things, even to

superfluity and redundance upon his very enemies, "They have more

than heart can wish," Psal. 73: 7. He is bountiful to strangers; he

loads very enemies with these things, and can it be supposed he will

in the mean time starve his own, and neglect those whom he loves as

his own flesh? It cannot be. Moreover,

Fifthly, Hitherto he has not suffered me to perish in any

former straits; when, and where was it that he forsook me? This is

not the first plunge of trouble I have been in; have I not found him

a God at hand! How oft have I seen him in the mount of difficulties!

Sixthly, and lastly, I have his promise and engagement that he

will never leave me nor forsake me, Heb. 13: 5. and John 14: 18. a

promise which has never failed since the hour it was first made. If

then the Lord Jesus knows and feels all my wants, has enough, and

more than enough to supply them, if he gives even to redundance unto

his enemies, has not hitherto forsaken me, and has promised he never

will? Why then is my soul thus disquieted in me! Surely there is no

cause it should be so.

Inf. 6. If the saints be so nearly united to Christ, as the

members to the head: 0 then, how great a sin, and full of danger is

it for any to wrong and persecute the saints! For in so doing, they

must needs persecute Christ himself.

"Saul, Saul, (saith Christ) why persecutes thou me?" Acts 9: 4.

The righteous God holds himself obliged to vindicate oppressed

innocency, though it be in the persons of wicked men; how much more

when it is in a member of Christ? "He that toucheth you toucheth the

apple of mine eye," Zech. 2: 8. And is it to be imagined that Christ

will sit still, and suffer his enemies to hurt or injure the very

apples of his eyes? No, "He has ordained his arrows against the

persecutors," Psalm 7: 13.

O it were better thine hand should wither, and thine arm fall

from thy shoulder, than ever it should be lifted up against Christ,

in the poorest of his members. Believe it, sirs, not only your

violent actions, but your hard speeches are all set down upon your

doom's day book; and you shall be brought to an account for them in

the great day, Jude 15. Beware what arrows you shoot, and be sure of

your mark before you shoot them.

Inf. 7. If there be such an union betwixt Christ and the

saints, as has been described, upon what comfortable terms then may

believers part with their bodies at death?

Christ your Head is risen, therefore you cannot be lost: nay,

he is not only risen from the dead himself, but is also "become the

first-fruits of them that slept," 1 Cor. 15: 20. Believers are his

members, his fulness, he cannot therefore be complete without you: a

part of Christ cannot perish in the grave, much less burn in hell.

Remember, when you feel the natural union dissolving, that this

mystical union can never be dissolved: the pangs of death cannot

break this tye. And as there is a peculiar excellency in the

believer's life, so there is a singular support, and peculiar

comfort in his death; "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,"

Phil 1: 21.

Inf. 8. If there be such an union betwixt Christ and believers,

how does it concern every man to try and examine his state, whether

he is really united with Christ or not, by the natural and proper

effects which always flow from this union?, As,

First, The real communication of Christs holiness to the soul.

We cannot be united with this root, and not partake of the vital sap

of sanctification from him; all that are planted into him, are

planted into the likeness of his death, and of his resurrection,

Rom. 6: 5, 6. viz. by mortification and vivification.

Secondly, They that are so neatly united to him, as members to

the head, cannot but love him and value him above their own lives;

as we see in nature, the hand and arm will interpose to save the

head. The nearer the union, the stronger always is the affection.

Thirdly, The members are subject to the head. Dominion in the

head must needs infer subjection in the members, Eph. 5: 24. In vain

do we claim union with Christ as our head, whilst we are governed by

our own sins, and our lusts give us law.

Fourthly, All that are united to Christ do bear fruit to God,

Rom. 7: 4. Fruitfulness is the next end of our union; there are no

barren branches growing upon this fruitful root.

Inf. 9. Lastly, How much are believers engaged to walk as the

members of Christ, in the visible exercises of all those graces and

duties, which the consideration of their near relation to him exacts

from them. As,

First, How contented and well pleased should we be with our

outward lot, however providence has cast it for us in this world? O

do not repine, God has dealt bountifully with you; upon others he

has bestowed the good things of this world; upon you, himself in

Christ.

Secondly, How humble and lowly in spirit should you be under

your great advancement! It is true, God has magnified you greatly by

this union, but yet do not swell. "You bear not the root, but the

root you," Rom. 11: 18. You shine, but it is as the stars, with a

borrowed light.

Thirdly, How zealous should you be to honour Christ, who has

put so much honour up you! Be willing to give glory to Christ,

though his glory should rise out of your shame. Never reckon that

glory that goes to Christ, to be lost to you: when you lie at his

feet, in the most particular heart breaking confessions of sin, yet

let this please you, that therein you have given him glory.

Fourthly, How exact and circumspect should you be in all your

ways, remembering whose you are, and whom you represent! Shall it be

said, that a member of Christ was convicted of unrighteousness and

unholy actions! God forbid. "If we say, we have fellowship with him,

and walk in darkness, we lie", 1 John 1: 6. "And he that saith he

abideth in him, ought also himself to walk even as he also walked,"

1 John 2: 6.

Fifthly, How studious should you be of peace among yourselves,

who are so nearly united to such a Head, and thereby are made

fellow-members of the same body! The Heathen world was never

acquainted with such an argument as the apostle urges for unity, in

Eph. 4: 3, 4.

Sixthly, and lastly, How joyful and comfortable should you be,

to whom Christ, with all his treasures and benefits, is effectually

applied in this blessed union of your souls with him! This brings

him into your possession: O how great! how glorious a person do

these little weak arms of your faith embrace!

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ

Sermon 3.

Of the Nature and Use of the Gospel-ministry, as an external Mean of

applying Christ.

2 Cor. 5: 20.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech

you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

The effectual application of Christ principally consists in our

union with him; but, ordinarily, there can be no union without a

gospel-tender, and an overture of him to our souls; for, "How shall

they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they

hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be

sent?" Rom. 10: 14.

If God be upon a design of espousing poor sinners to his Son,

there must be a treaty in order to it; that treaty requires

interlocution betwixt both the parties concerned in it; but such is

our frailty, that, should God speak immediately to us himself, it

would confound and overwhelm us: God therefore graciously

condescends and accommodates himself to our infirmity, in treating

with us in order to our union with Christ, by his ambassadors, and

these not angels, whose converses we cannot bear, but men like

ourselves, who are commissionated for the effecting of this great

business betwixt Christ and us. "Now then, we are ambassadors for

God" &c. In which words you have,

First, Christ's ambassadors commissioned.

Secondly, Their commission opened.

First, Christ's ambassadors commissioned "Now then, we are

ambassadors for Christ." The Lord Jesus thought it not sufficient to

print the law of grace and the blessed terms of our union with him

in the scriptures, where men may read his willingness to receive

them, and see the just and gracious terms and conditions upon which

he offers to become theirs, but has also set up and established a

standing office in the church, to expound that law, inculcate the

precepts, and urge the promises thereof; to woo and espouse souls to

Christ, "I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you

as a chaste virgin to Christ," 2 Cor 11: 20. and this not simply

from their own actions and compassions to miserable sinners, but

also by virtue of their office and commissions, whereby they are

authorised and appointed to that work "We then are ambassadors for

Christ."

Secondly, Their commission opened: Wherein use find,

1. Their sock appointed,

2. Their capacity described,

3. And the manner of their acting in that capacity prescribed.

First, The work whereunto the ministers of the gospel are

appointed, is to reconcile the world to God; to work these sinful,

vain, rebellious hearts, which have a strong aversion from God

naturally in them, to close with him according to the articles of

peace contained in the gospel, that thereby they may be capable to

receive the mercies and benefits purchased by the death of Christ,

which they cannot receive in the state of enmity and alienation.

Secondly, Their capacity described: They act in Christ's stead,

as his vicegerents. He is no more in this world to treat personally

with sinners, as he once did in the days of his flesh; but yet he

still continues the treaty with this lower world, by his officers,

requiring men to look upon them, and obey them as they would

himself, it he were corporally present, Luke 10: 16 "He that heareth

you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."

Thirdly, The manner of their acting in that capacity

prescribed; and that is, by humble, sweet, and condescending

entreaties and beseechings. This best suits the meek and lamb-like

Saviour whom they represent: thus he dealt with poor sinners

himself; when he conversed among them; he "would not break a bruised

reed, nor quench the smoking flax," Isa. 42: 3. This is the way to

allure and win the souls of sinners to Christ.

From hence the note is,

Doct. That the preaching of the gospel by Christ's ambassadors,

is the mean appointed for the reconciling and bringing home of

sinners to Christ.

This is clear from Rom. 10: 14. 1 Cor. 1: 21. and many other

scriptures.

Here we shall take into consideration these three things.

First, What is implied in Christ's treating with simmers by his

ambassadors or ministers.

Secondly, What is the great concernment they are to treat with

sinners about.

Thirdly, What, and when is the efficacy of preaching, to bring

sinners to Christ.

First, We will open what is implied and imported in Christ's

treaty with sinners, by his ambassadors or ministers.

And here we find these six things implied.

1. It necessarily implies the defection and fall of man, from

his estate of favour and friendship with God: If no war with heaven,

what need of ambassadors of peace? The very office of the ministry

is an argument of the fall. Gospel ordinances and officers came in

upon the fall, and expire with the Mediator's dispensatory-kingdom,

1 Cor. 15: 24, 25. "Then shall he deliver up the kingdom to God,

even the Father:" Thenceforth no more ordinances, no more ministers;

What use can there be of them, when the treaty is ended? They have

done and accomplished all they were ever intended and designed for,

when they shall have reconciled to God all the number of his elect,

that are dispersed among the lost and miserable posterity of Adam,

and have brought them home to Christ in a perfect state, Eph. 4: 12,

&c.

2. It implies the singular grace and admirable condescension of

God to sinful man. That God will admit any treaty with him at all,

is wonderful mercy, it is more than he would do for the angels that

fell, Jude, ver. 6. "They are reserved in everlasting chains, under

darkness, unto the judgement of the great day." Christ took not on

him their nature, but suffered myriads of them to perish, and fills

up their vacant places in glory, with a number of sinful men and

women, to whom the law awarded the same punishment.

But that God will not only treat, but entreat and beseech

sinful men to be reconciled, is yet more wonderful. Barely to

propound the terms of peace had been an astonishing mercy; but to

woo and beseech stubborn enemies to be at peace, and accept their

pardon, oh, how unparalleled was this condescension.

3. It implies the great dignity and honour of the gospel

ministry. We are ambassadors of Christ. Ambassadors represent and

personate the prince that sends them; and the honours or contempts

done to them, reflect upon, and are reckoned to the person of their

master, Luke 10: 16. "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that

despiseth you, despiseth me".

Neither their persons, nor parts, are the proper ground and

reason of our respects to them; but their office and commission from

Jesus Christ.

We are fallen into the dregs of time, wherein a vile contempt

is poured, not only upon the persons, but the very office of the

ministry; and I could heartily with that scripture, Mal. 2: 7, 8, 9.

were thoroughly considered by us; possibly it might inform us of the

true cause and reason of this sore judgement: but surely Christ's

faithful ministers deserve a better entertainment than they

ordinarily find in the world, and if we did but seriously rethink

ourselves, in whose name they come, and in whose stead they stand,

we should receive them as the Galatians did Paul, Gal. 4: 14. as

angels of God, even as Christ Jesus.

4. Christ's treating with sinners by his ministers, who are his

ambassadors, implies the strict obligation they are under to be

faithful in their ministerial employment. Christ counts upon their

faithfulness whom he puts into the ministry, 1 Tim. 1: 12. They are

accountable to him for all acts of their office, Heb. 13: 17. If

they be silent, they cannot be innocent: "Necessity is laid upon

them, and woe to them, if they preach not the gospel," 1 Cor. 9: 16.

Yea, necessity is not only laid upon them to preach, but to

keep close to their commission in preaching the gospel, 1 Thess. 2:

3, 4, "Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in

guile, but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the

gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who trieth

our hearts:" the word is not to be corrupted to please men, 2 Cor.

2: 17. their business is not to make them their disciples, but

Christ's; not to seek theirs, but them, 2 Cor. 12: 14. to keep close

to their instructions, both in the matter, manner, and end of their

ministry. So did Christ himself, the treasure of wisdom and

knowledge; yet, being sent by God, he saith, John 7: 16. "My

doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." And so he expects and

requires that his ambassadors keep close to the commissions he has

given them, and be (according to their measure) faithful to their

trust, as he was to his. Paul is to deliver to the people, that

which he also received from the Lord, 1 Cor. 11. And Timothy must

keep that which was committed to him, 2 Tim. 1: 14.

5. It implies the removal of the gospel-ministry to be a very

great judgement to the people. The remanding of ambassadors presages

an ensuing war. If the reconciling of souls to God be the greatest

work, then the removal of the means and instruments thereof, must be

the sorest judgement. Some account "the falling of the salt upon the

table," ominous; but surely the falling of them whom Christ calls

the salt of the earth, is so indeed.

What now are those once famous and renowned places, from whence

Christ, (as he threatened has removed the candlestick, but magna

latrocinia, dens of robbers, and mountains of prey!

6. And lastly, It implies both the wisdom and condescension of

God to sinful men, in carrying on a treaty of peace with them by

such ambassadors, negotiating betwixt him and them. Without a

treaty, there would be no reconciliation; and no method to carry on

such a treaty like this; for had the Lord treated with sinners

personally, and immediately, they had been overwhelmed with his

awful Majesty. The appearances of God confound the creature, "Let me

not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, (said Israel) neither

let me see this great fire any more, that I die not: Yea, so

terrible was that sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and

quake," Deut. 18: 16. Heb. 12: 21.

Or, had he commissioned angels for this employment, though they

stand not at such an infinite distance from us as God does, yet such

is the excellence of their glory (being the highest species and

order of creatures) that their appearances would be more apt to

astonish than persuade us; besides, they being creatures of another

rank and kind, and not partaking with us, either in the misery of

the fall, or benefit of the recovery by Christ, it is not to be

supposed they should speak to us so feelingly and experimentally, as

these his ministers do; they can open to you the mysteries of sin,

feeling the workings thereof daily in their own hearts; they can

discover to you the conflicts of the flesh and Spirit, as being

laity exercised in that warfare; and then, being men of the same

mould and temper, they can say to you as Elihu did to Job, chap. 33:

6, 7. "Behold, I am according to thy wish, in God's stead, I also am

formed out of the clay, behold, my terror shall not make thee

afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee."

So that, in this appointment, much of the Divine wisdom and

condescension to sinners is manifested: "We have this treasure in

earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and

not of us," 2 Cor. 4: 7. God's glory and man's advantage are both

promoted by this dispensation.

Secondly, Next we are to consider that great concernment about

which these ambassadors of Christ are to treat with sinners; and

that (as the text informs us) is their reconciliation to God.

Now reconciliation with God, is the restoring of men to that

former friendship they had with God, which was broken by the fall,

and is still continued by our enmity and aversation whilst we

continue in our natural and unregenerate state. Now this is that

greatest and most blessed design that ever God had in the world; an

astonishing and invaluable mercy to men, as will clearly appear, by

considering these particulars following.

First, That God should be reconciled after such a dreadful

breach as the fall of man made, is wonderful; no sin, all things

considered, was ever like to this sin: other sins, like a single

bullet, kill particular persons, but this, like a chain-shot, cuts

off multitudes as the sand upon the sea-shore, which no man can

number.

If all the posterity of Adam in their several generations,

should do nothing else but bewail and lament this sin of his, whilst

this world continues, yet would it not be enough lamented; for a man

so newly created out of nothing, and admitted the first moment into

the highest order, crowned a king over the works of God's hands,

Psal. 8: 5. a man perfect and upright, without the least inordinate

motions, or sinful inclination: a man whose mind was most clear,

bright, and apprehensive of the will of God, whose will was free,

and able to have easily put by the strongest temptation: a man in a

paradise of delights, where nothing was left to desire for advancing

the happiness of soul or body: a man understanding himself to be a

public, complexive person, carrying not only his own, but the

happiness of the whole world in his hand: so soon, upon so slight a

temptation, to violate the law of his God, and involve himself and

all his posterity with him, in such a gulf of guilt and misery; all

which he might so easily have prevented! O wonderful amazing mercy,

that ever God should think of being reconciled, or have any purposes

of peace towards so vile an apostate creature as man.

Secondly, That God should be reconciled to men, and not to

angels, a more high and excellent order of creatures, is yet more

astonishing; when the angels fell they were lost irrecoverably; no

hand of mercy was stretched out to save one of those myriads of

excellent beings, but chains of darkness were immediately clapped on

them, to reserve them to the judgement of the great day, Jude 6.

That the milder attribute should be exercised to the inferior,

and the severer attribute to the more excellent creature, is just

matter for eternal admiration. Who would cast away vessels of gold,

and save earthen potsherds! Some indeed undertake to show us the

reasons, why the wisdom of God made no provisions for the recovery

of angels by a Mediator of reconciliation; partly from the high

degree of the malignity of their sin, who sinned in the light of

heaven; partly because it was decent, it at the first breach of the

Divine law should be punished, to secure obedience for the future.

And besides, the angelical nature was not entirely lost, myriads of

angels still continuing in their innocency and glory; when as all

mankind was lost in Adam.

But we must remember still the law made no distinction, but

awarded the same punishment, and therefore it was mercy alone that

made the difference, and mercy for ever is to be admired by men; how

astonishing is the grace of God, that moves in a way of

reconciliation to us, out of design to fill up the vacant places in

heaven, from which angels fell, with such poor worms as we are!

Angels excluded, and men received. O stupendous mercy!

Thirdly, That God should be wholly and thoroughly reconciled to

man, so that no fury remains in him against us; according to that

scripture, Isa. 27: 4. is still matter of further wonder.

The design he sends his ambassadors to you about, is not the

allaying and mitigating of his wrath, (which yet would be matter of

great joy to the damned) but thoroughly to quench all his wrath, so

that no degree thereof shall ever be felt by you. O blessed embassy?

"Beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring such

tidings." God offers you a full reconciliation, a plenary remission.

Fourthly, That God should be wholly reconciled to sinners, and

discharge them without any, the least satisfaction to his justice

from them is, and for ever will be, marvellous in their eyes.

O what mercy would the damned account it, if after a thousand

years torment in hell, God would at last be reconciled to them, and

put an end to their misery! But believers are discharged without

bearing any part of the curse, not one earthing of that debt is

levied upon them.

Object. If you say, how can this be, when God stands upon full

satisfaction to his justice before any soul be discharged and

restored to favour? freely reconciled, and yet fully satisfied, how

can this be?

Solut. Very well, for this mercy comes freely to your hands,

how costly soever it proved to Christ; and that free remission, and

full satisfaction, are not contradictory and inconsistent things, is

plain enough from that scripture, Rom. 3: 24. Being justified freely

by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

freely, and yet in the way of redemption.

For though Christ, your Surety, has made satisfaction in your

name and stead, yet it was his life, his blood, and not yours, that

went for it, and this Surety was of Gods own appointment, and

providing, without your thoughts or contrivance. O blessed

reconciliation! happy is the people that hear the joyful sound of

it.

Fifthly, and lastly, that God should be finally reconciled to

sinners, so that never any new breach shall happen betwixt him and

them any more, so as to dissolve the league of friendship, is a most

ravishing and transporting message.

Two things give confirmation and full security to reconciled

ones, viz. the terms of the covenant, and the intercession of the

Mediator.

The covenant of grace gives great security to believers,

against new breaches betwixt God and them. It is said, Jer. 32: 40.

"And I will snake an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not

turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their

hearts, that they shall not depart from me." The fear of the Lord is

a choice preservative against second revolts, and therefore taken

into the covenant. It is no hindrance, but a special guard to

assurance.

There is no doubt of God's faithfulness: that part of the

promise is easily believed, that he will not turn away from us to do

us good: all the doubt is of the inconstancy of our hearts with God,

and against that danger, this promise makes provision.

Moreover, the intercession of Christ in heaven secures the

saints in their reconciled state, 1 John 2: 1, 2. "If any man sin,

we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and

he is the Propitiation." He continually appears in heaven before the

Father, as a lamb that had been slain," Rev. 5: 6. And at the bow in

the clouds, Rev. 4: 3. So that as long as Christ thus appears in the

presence of God for us, it is not possible our state of

justification and reconciliation can be again dissolved.

And this is that blessed embassy gospel-ministers are employed

about; he has committed to them the word of this reconciliation.

In the last place, we are to enquire what, and whence is this

efficacy of preaching, to reconcile and bring home sinners to

Christ.

That its efficacy is great in convincing, humbling, and

changing the hearts of men, is past all debate and question. "The

weapons of our warfare (saith the apostle) are not carnal, but

mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down

imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the

knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the

obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. 10: 4, 5. No heart so hard, no

conscience so stupid, but this sword can pierce and wound; in an

instant it can cast down all those vain reasonings; and fond

imaginations, which the carnal heart has been building all its life

long, and open a fair passage for convictions of sin, and the fears

and terrors of wrath to come, into that heart that never was afraid

of these things before. So Acts 2: 37. "When they heard this, they

were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of

the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

What shall we do? is the doleful cry of men at their wits end;

the voice of one in deepest distress and such outcries have been no

rarities under the preaching of the word; its power has been felt by

persons of all orders and conditions; the great and honourable of

the earth, as well as the poor and despicable. The learned and the

ignorant, the civil and profane, the young and the old, all have

felt the heart-piercing efficacy of the gospel.

If you ask, whence has the word preached this mighty power? The

answer must be, neither from itself nor him that preaches it, but

from the Spirit of God whose instrument it is, by whose blessing and

concurrence with it, it produceth its blessed effects upon the

hearts of men.

First, This efficacy and wonderful power is not from the word

itself; take it in an abstract notion, separated from the Spirit, it

can do nothing: it is called "the foolishness of preaching," 1 Cor

1: 21. Foolishness, not only because the world so accounts it, but

because in itself it is a weak and unsuitable, and therefore a very

improbable way to reconcile the world to God; that the stony heart

of one man should be broken by the words of another man; that one

poor sinful creature should be used to breathe spiritual life into

another; this could never be, if this sword were not managed by an

omnipotent hand.

And besides, we know what works naturally, works necessarily;

if this efficacy were inherent in the word, so that we should

suppose it to word as other natural objects do, then it must needs

convert all to whom it is at any time preached, except its effect

were miraculously hindered, as the fire which it could not burn the

three children; but alas, thousands hear it, that never feel the

saving power of it, Isa 53: 1 and 2 Cor 4: 3, 4

Secondly, It derives not this efficacy from the instrument by

which it is ministered: let their gifts and abilities be what they

will, it is impossible that ever such effects should be produced

from the strength of their natural or gracious abilities, 2 Cor 4: 7

"We have this treasure (saith the apostle) in earthen vessels, that

the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

The treasure of the gospel-light is carried "en osrakinois

skeuesin", in earthen vessels, as Gideon and his men had their lamps

in earths pitchers, or in oyster-shells, for so the word also

signifies; the oyster-shell is a base and worthless thing in itself;

however, there lies the rich and precious pearl of so great value.

And why is this precious treasure lodged in such weak, worthless

vessels? Surely it is upon no other design but to convince us of the

truth I am here to prove, that the excellency of the power is of

God, and not of us, as it follows in the next words. To the same

purpose speaks the same apostle, 1 Cor. 3: 7 "So then, neither is he

that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that

giveth the increase."

Not any thing! What can be more diminutively spoken of the

gospel-preachers? But we must not understand these words in a simple

and absolute, but in a comparative and relative sense not as if they

were not necessary and useful in their place, but that how necessary

soever they be, and what excellent gifts soever God has furnished

them with; yet it is neither in their power nor choice to make the

word they preach effectual to men; if it were, then the damnation of

all that hear us must needs lie at our door; then also, many

thousands would have been reconciled to God, which are yet in the

state of enmity, but the effect of the gospel is not in our power.

Thirdly, But whatever efficacy it has to reconcile men to God,

it derives from the Spirit of God, whose co-operation and blessing

(which is arbitrarily dispensed) gives it all the fruit it has.

Ministers, saith one, are like trumpets which make no sound, if

breath is hot breathed into them. Or like Ezekiel's wheels, which

move not unless the Spirit move them; or Elisha's servant, whose

presence does no good except Elisha's spirit be there also. For want

of the Spirit of God how many thousands of souls do find the

ministry to be nothing to them? If it be something to the purpose to

any soul, it is the Lord that makes it so. This Spirit is not

limited by men's gifts or parts; he concurs not only with their

labours who have excellent gifts, but oftentimes blesses mean,

despicable gifts with far greater success.

Suppose, saith Austin, there be two conduits in a town, one

very plain and homely, the other built of polished marble, and

adorned with excellent images, as eagles, lions, angels; the water

refreshes as its water, and not as it comes from such or such a

conduit. It is the Spirit that gives the word all that virtue it

has: he is the Lord of all saving influences: he has dominion over

the word, over our souls, over the times and seasons of conversion;

and if any poor creature attend the ministry without benefit, if he

go away as he came, without fruit, surely we may say in this case,

as Martha said to Christ, in reference to her brother Lazarus, Lord,

if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died; so, Lord, if thou

hadst been in this prayer, in this sermon, this poor soul had not

gone dead and carnal from under it. And what now remains, but that

we apply this truth in those uses that it gives us.

First use of information.

Is the preaching of the gospel by Christ's ambassadors, the way

which God takes to reconcile sinners to himself? Then how

inexcusable are all those that continue in their state of enmity,

though the ambassadors of peace have been with them all their lives

long, wooing and beseeching them to be reconciled to God.

O invincible, obstinate, incurable disease, which is aggravated

by the only proper remedy! Has God been wooing and beseeching you by

his ambassadors so many years to be reconciled to him, and will you

not yield to any entreaties? Must he be made to speak in vain, to

charm the deaf adder? Well, when the milder attribute has done with

you, the severer attribute will take you in hand.

The Lord has kept an account of every year and day of his

patience towards you, Luke 13: 7. "These three years I came seeking

fruit on this fig-tree, and find none;" and Jer. 25: 3 "These three

and twenty years have I spoken unto your rising early and speaking,

but you have not hearkened."

Well, be thou assured, that God has both the glass of your

time, and the vials of his wrath, by him? and so much of his abused

patience as runs out of one, so much of his incensed wrath runs into

the other. There is a time when this treaty of peace will end, when

the Master of the house will rise up, and the doors be shut, Luke

13: 25. Then will you be left without hope, and without apology.

We read, indeed, of some poor and ineffectual pleas that will

be made by some at the last day; so Matt. 7: 22. "We have prophesied

in thy name," &c. These pleas will not avail; but as for you, what

will you plead? Possibly many thousand idiots, or poor weak-headed

persons, may perish; many young ones that had little or no thing in

the world to acquaint themselves with matters of religion, or

understand the way of salvation. Many millions of heathens that

never heard the name of Christ, nor came within the sound of

salvation, who will yet perish, and that justly.

Now whatsoever apologies any of these will make for themselves

in the last day, to be sure you can make none. God has given you a

capacity and competent understanding; many of you are wise and

subtle in all your other concernments, and only show your folly in

the great concernments of your salvation. You cannot plead want of

time, some of you are grown grey headed under the gospel; you cannot

plead want of means and opportunities; the ordinances and ministers

of Christ have been with you all your life long to this day; sure if

you be Christless now, you must also be speechless then.

Inf. 2 Hence it also follows, That the world owes better

entertainment than it gives to the ministers of Christ: Christ's

ambassadors deserve a better welcome than they find among men.

Your respects to them is founded upon their office and

employment for you, Heb 13: 17 and 1 Thess 5: 12. They watch for

your souls, dare any of you watch for their ruin? They bring glad

tidings, shall they return with sad tidings to him that sent them?

They publish peace, shall they be rewarded with trouble? O

ungrateful world! We read in Eph 6: 20. of an ambassador in bonds,

and he no ordinary one neither. We read also of a strange challenge,

made by another at his own death, Acts 7: 52. "Which of all the

prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them

which shewed before the coming of the just One." Some that brake the

bread of life to you, might want bread to eat, for any regard you

have to them. The office of the ministry speaks the abundant love of

God to you; your contempt and abuse of it, speaks the abundant

stupidity and malignity of your hearts towards God. What a sad

protestation does Jeremiah make against his ungrateful people, Jer.

28: 20 "Shall evil (saith he) be recompensed for good? for they have

digged a pit for my soul; remember that I stood before thee to speak

good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them "

God's mercy is eminently discovered in the institution of, and

Satan's malice is eminently discovered in the opposition to, the

ministerial office. Satan is a great and jealous prince, and it is

no wonder he should raise all the forces he can to oppose the

ambassadors of Christ; when, saith one, the gospel comes into his

dominions, it does, as it were, by sound of trumpet and beat of

drum, proclaim liberty to all his slaves and vassals, if they will

quit that tyrant that has so long held their souls in bondage, and

come under the sweet and easy government of Christ. And can the

devil endure this, think you? If Christ sends forth ambassadors, no

wonder if Satan sends forth opposers; he certainly owes them a

spite, that undermine his government in the world.

Infer. 3. Hence it follows, That it nearly concerns all

Christ's ambassadors, to see that they be in a state of

reconciliation with God themselves.

Shall we stand in Christ's stead by office, and yet not be in

Christ by union? Shall we entreat men to be reconciled to God, and

yet be at enmity with him ourselves? O let us take heed, "Lest after

we have preached to others, we ourselves should be cast-a-ways," 1

Cor. 9: 27. Of all men living we are the most miserable, if we be

Christless and graceless: our consciences will make more terrible

applications of our doctrine to us in hell, than ever we made to the

vilest of sinners on earth. O, it is far easier to study and press a

thousand truths upon others, than to feel the power of one truth

upon our own hearts; to teach others facienda quam faciendo: duties

to be done, than duties by doing them.

They are sad dilemma's with which a learned writer poses such

graceless ministers, If sin be evil, why do you live in it? If it be

not, why do you dissuade men from it? If it be dangerous, how dare

you venture on it? If it be not, why do you tell men so? If God's

threatenings be true, why do you not fear them? If they be false,

why do you trouble men needless]y with them, and put them into such

frights without a cause?

Take heed to yourselves, lest you should cry down sin and not

overcome it; lest while you seek to bring it down in others, you bow

to it, and become its slaves yourselves: it is easier to chide at

sin than to overcome it. That is a smart question, Rom. 2: 21. "Thou

that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? A profane minister

was converted by reading that text once, but how many have read it

as well as he, who never trembled at the consideration of it as he

did!

2. Use for conviction.

Is this the method God uses to reconcile men to himself; O,

then examine yourselves, whether yet the preaching of the gospel has

reconciled you to God. It is too manifest that many among us are in

a state of enmity unto this day. We may say with the prophet, Isa.

53: 1. "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the

Lord revealed?" We offer you peace upon gospel terms and articles,

but our peace returns to us again; enemies you were to God, and

enemies you still continue. The evidence is undeniable: for,

1. Evidence. Many of you were never convinced to this day of

your state of enmity against God; and without conviction of this,

reconciliation is impossible; without repentance there can be no

reconciliation, and without conviction there can be no repentance.

When we repent, we lay down our weapons, Isa. 27: 4, 5. But how few

have been brought to this? Alas! if a few poor, cold, heartless,

ineffectual confessions of sin, may pass for a due conviction, and

serious repentance, then have we been convinced, then have we

repented; but you will find, if ever the Lord intend to reconcile

you to himself, your convictions and humiliations for sin, will be

other manner of things, and will cost you more than a few cheap

words against sin, 2 Cor. 7: 11. "In that ye sorrowed after a godly

sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of

yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what

vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge?"

2. Evidence. Many of us never treated seriously with the Lord

about peace, and how then are we reconciled to him? What, a peace

without a treaty? Reconciliation without any consideration about it?

It can never be. When was the time, and where was the place, that

you were found in secret upon your knees, mourning over the sin of

your nature, and the evils of your ways? Certainly you must be

brought to this; you must with a broken heart bewail your sin and

misery.

Friend, that stony heart of thine must feel remorse and anguish

for sin, it will cost thee some sad days and sorrowful nights, or

ever thou canst have peace with God: it will cost thee many a groan,

many a tear, many a hearty cry to heaven. If ever peace be made

betwixt God and thee, thou must "take with thee words, and turn to

the Lord, saying, Take away all iniquity and receive me graciously."

O for one smile, one token of love, one hint of favour! The child of

peace is not born without pangs and agonies of soul.

3. Evidence. Many of us are not reconciled to the duties of

religion, and ways of holiness, and how then is it possible we

should be reconciled to God? What, reconciled to God, and

unreconciled to the ways of God? By reconciliation we are made nigh:

in duties of communion we draw nigh; and can we be made nigh to God,

and have no heart to draw nigh to God? It can never be.

Examine your hearts, and say, Is not the way of strictness a

bondage to you? Had you not rather be at liberty to fulfil the

desires of the flesh, and of the mind? Could you not wish that the

scriptures had not made some things else your sins, and other things

your duties: do you delight in the law of God after the inner man,

and esteem his judgements, concerning all things to be right? Do you

love secret prayer, and delight in duties of communion with God: or

rather, are they not an ungrateful burden, and irksome imposition?

Give conscience leave to speak plain.

4. Evidence. Many of us are not enemies to sin, and how then

are we reconciled to God? What, friends with God, and our lusts too?

It cannot be. Psal. 97: 10. "Ye that love the Lord hate evil." The

same hour our reconciliation is made with God, there is an

everlasting breach made with sin: this is one of the articles or

conditions of our peace with God, Isa. 55: 7. "Let the wicked

forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him

turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, and

he will abundantly pardon."

But it is manifest in many of us, that we are no enemies to

sin; we secretly indulge it, what bad names soever we call it. We

will commit ten sins to cover one: we cannot endure the most

serious, faithful, seasonable, private tender, and necessary

reproofs for sin, but our hearts swell and rise at it; sure we are

not reconciled to God, whilst we embrace his enemy in our bosoms.

5. Evidence. We love not the children of God, nor are we

reconciled to them that bear his image, and how then can we be

reconciled to God? 1 John 5: 1. "He that loveth him that begat,

loveth them also that are begotten." What, at peace with the Father,

and at war with the children? It cannot be. Do not some that hope

they have made their peace with God, hate, revile, and persecute the

children of God? Surely, in that day we are reconciled to the Lord,

we are reconciled to all his people: we all then love a Christian as

a Christian, and by this we may know that we are passed from death

to life.

6. Evidence. Lastly, How can any man think himself to be

reconciled to God, who never closed heartily with Jesus Christ by

faith, who is the only days-man, and peace maker: the alone Mediator

of reconciliation betwixt God and man.

This is a sure truth, that all whom God accepts into favour,

are "made accepted in the beloved," Eph. 1: 6. If any man will make

peace with God, he must take hold of his strength, accept and close

with Christ who is the power of God, or he can never make peace,

Isa. 27. He must be made "nigh by the blood of Christ," Eph. 2: 13.

But alas! both Christ and faith are strangers to many souls, who yet

persuade themselves they are at peace with God: O fatal mistake!

III. Use of Exhortation.

Lastly, This point deserves a close, vigorous application in a

threefold exhortation.

First, To Christ's ambassadors, who treat with souls in order

to their reconciliation with God.

Secondly, To those that are yet in their empty and unreconciled

state.

Thirdly, To those that have embraced the terms of peace, and

submitted to the gospel overtures.

First, To the ambassadors of reconciliation. God has put a

great deal of honour upon you in this high and noble employment;

Great is the dignity of your office; to some you are "the savour of

death unto death, and to others a savour of life unto life; and who

is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. 2: 16. But yet the duty is

no less than the dignity. O what manner of men should we be for

judgement, seriousness, affections, patience, and exemplary

holiness, to whom the management of so great a concern betwixt God

and man is committed.

First, For judgement and prudence, how necessary are these in

so weighty and difficult a business as this! He had need be a man of

wisdom that is to inform the ignorant of the nature and necessity of

this great work, and win over their hearts to consent to the

articles of peace propounded in the gospel; that has so many subtle

temptations to answer, and so many intricate causes of conscience to

resolve: there are many strongholds of Satan to be battered, and

many stout and obstinate resistances made by the hearts of sinners,

which must be overcome; and he has need be no novice in religion, to

whom so difficult a province is committed.

Secondly, Let us be serious in our work as well as judicious.

Remember, O ye ambassadors of Christ, you bring a message from the

God of heaven, of everlasting consequence to the souls of men. The

eternal decrees are executed upon them in your ministry: to some you

are "the savour of life unto life, and to some the savour of death

unto death," 2 Cor. 2: 16. Heaven and hell are matters of most awful

and solemn consideration. O, what an account have we also shortly to

give unto him that sent us!

These are matters of such deep concernment, as should swallow

up our very spirits; the least they can do, is to compose our hearts

unto seriousness in the management of them.

Thirdly, Be filled with tender affections toward the souls of

men, with whom you treat for reconciliation: you had need be men of

bowels, as well as men of brains: you see a multitude of poor souls

upon the brink of eternal misery, and they know it not, but promise

themselves peace, and fill themselves with vain hopes of heaven: and

is there a more moving, melting spectacle in the world than this! O

think with what bowels of commiseration Moses and Paul were filled,

when the one desired rather to be blotted out of God's book, and the

other to be accursed from Christ, than that Israel should not be

saved, Exod. 32: 33. and Rom. 9: 3. Think how the bowels of Christ

yearned over Jerusalem, Mat. 23: 37. And over the multitude, Mat. 9:

36. "Let the same mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus."

Fourthly, Be patient and longsuffering towards sinners: such is

the value of one soul, that it is worth waiting all our days to save

it at last: "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle

unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing them

that oppose themselves, if God per adventure will give then

repentance," 2 Tim. 2: 24, 25. The Lord waits with patience upon

sinners, and well may you. Consider yourselves, how long was God

treating with you, see you were won to him? Be not discouraged, if

your success presently answer not your expectations.

Fifthly, and lastly, Be sure to back your exhortations with

drawing examples; else you may preach out your last breath before

you gain one soul to God. The devil, and the carnal hearts of your

hearers, will put hindrances enough in the way of your labours; do

not you put the greatest of all yourselves. O study not only to

preach exactly, but to live exactly; let the misplacing of one

action in your lives, trouble you more than the misplacing of words

in your discourses; this is the way to succeed in your embassy, and

give up your account with joy.

Secondly, The exhortation speaks to all those that are yet in a

state of enmity and unreconciled to God unto this day. O that my

words might prevail, and that you would now be entreated to be

reconciled to God! The ambassadors of peace are yet with you, the

treaty is not yet ended, the Master of the house is not yet risen

up, nor the door of mercy and hope finally shut: hitherto God has

waited to be gracious; O that the long suffering of God might be

your salvation: a day is hasting when God will treat with you no

more, when a gulph shall be fixed betwixt him and you for ever, Luke

16: 26. O what will you do when the season of mercy, and all hopes

of mercy shall end together! When God shall be come inaccessible,

inexorable, and irreconcilable to you for evermore.

O, what wilt thou do, when thou shalt find thyself shut up

under eternal wrath! when thou shalt feel that misery thou art

warned of! Is this the place where I must be! Are these the torments

I must endure! What, for ever! yea, for ever: Will not God be

satisfied with the sufferings of a thousand years? no, nor millions

of years? Ah, sinners, did you but clearly see the present and

future misery of unreconciled ones, and what that wrath of the great

and terrible God is, which is coming as fast as the wings of time

can bring it upon you, it would certainly drive you to Christ, or

drive you out of your wits. O it is a dreadful thing to have God for

your eternal enemy: to have the great and terrible God causing his

infinite power to avenge the abuse of his grace and mercy.

Believe it, friends, it is a fearful thing to fall into the

hands of the living God: knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade

men: an eternal weight hangs upon an inch of time. O that you did

but know the time of your visitation! that you would not dare to

adventure, and run the hazard of one day more in an unreconciled

state.

Thirdly, and lastly, This point speaks to those who have

believed our report, who have taken hold of God's strength, and made

peace with him: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained

mercy: who once were afar off, but now are made nigh by the blood of

Christ: with you I would leave a few words of exhortation, and I

have done.

First, Admire and stand amazed at this mercy. "I will praise

thee, O Lord, (saith the church, Isa. 12: 1.) Though thou wast angry

with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." O how

overwhelming a mercy is here before you! God is at peace, at peace

with you that were "enemies in your minds by wicked works," Col. 1:

21. At peace with you, and at enmity with millions as good by nature

as you; at peace with you that sought it not: at peace for ever; no

dissolving this friendship for evermore. O let this consideration

melt your hearts before the Lord, and make you cry, What am I, Lord,

that mercy should take in me, and shut out fallen angels, and

millions of men and women as capable of mercy as myself! O the

riches! O the depths of the mercy and goodness of God!

Secondly, Beware of breaches with God: God will speak peace to

his people and to his saints, but let them not turn again to folly,

Psal. 85: 8. What though this state of friendship can never be

dissolved, yet it is a dreadful thing to have it clouded: You may

lose the sense of peace, and with it all the joy of your hearts, and

the comforts of your lives in this world.

Thirdly, Labour to reconcile others to God: especially those

that are endeared to you by the bonds of natural religion: When Paul

was reconciled to God himself, his heart was full of heaviness for

others that were not reconciled; for his "brethren and kinsmen

according to the flesh," Rom. 9: 2, 3. When Abraham was become God's

friend himself, then, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Gen.

17: 18.

Fourthly, and lastly, "Let your reconciliation with God relieve

you under all burdens of affliction you shall meet with in your way

to heaven:" Let them that are at enmity with God droop under crosses

and afflictions; but do not you do so. Tranquillus Deus tranquillat

omnia, Rom. 5: 1, 2, 3. Let the peace of God keep your hearts and

minds. As nothing can comfort a man that must go to hell at last; so

nothing should deject a man that shall, through many troubles, at

last reach heaven.

Sermon 4.

Concerning the Work of the Spirit, as the internal, and most

effectual Mean of the Application of Christ.

John 6: 44.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw

him.

Our last discourse informed you of the usefulness and influence

of the preaching of the gospel, in order to the application of

Christ to the souls of men. There must be (in God's ordinary way)

the external ministerial offer of Christ, before men can have union

with him.

But yet, all the preaching in the world can never effect this

union with Christ in itself, and in its oven virtue, except a

supernatural and mighty power go forth with it for that end and

purpose. Let Boanerges and Barnabas try their strength, let the

angels of heaven be the preachers; till God draw, the soul cannot

come to Christ.

No saving benefit is to be had by Christ, without union with

his person, no union with his person without faith, no faith

ordinarily wrought without the preaching of the gospel by Christ's

ambassadors, their preaching has no saving efficacy without Gods

drawings, as will evidently appear by considering these words and

the occasion of them.

The occasion of these words is found (as learned Cameron well

observes) in the 42d verse, "And they said, is not this Jesus the

son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" Christ had been

pressing upon them in his ministry, the great and necessary duty of

faith; but notwithstanding the authority of the preacher; the

holiness of his life; the miracles by which he confirmed his

doctrine; they still objected against him, "is not this the

carpenter's son?" From whence Christ takes occasion for these words;

"No man can come unto me, except my Father which has sent me, draw

him," q. d. In vain is the authority of my person urged; in vain are

all the miracles wrought in your sight, to confirm the doctrine

preached to you; till that secret, almighty power of the Spirit be

put forth upon your hearts, you will not, you cannot, come unto me.

The words are a negative proposition,

In which the author, and powerful manner of divine operation in

working faith, are contained: these must be drawing before

believing, and that drawing must be the drawing of God: every word

has its weight: we will consider them in the order they lie in the

text.

"Oudeis", - No Man] not one, let his natural qualifications be

what they will, let his external advantages, in respect of means and

helps, be never so great: it is not in the power of any man; all

persons, in all ages, need the same power of God, one at well as

another; every man is alike dead, impotent, and averse to faith in

his natural capacity. No man, or - not one, among all the sons of

men.

"Dunatai" - Can] or is able: he speaks of impotency to special

and saving actions, such as believing in Christ is: no act that is

saving can be done without the concurrence of special grace. Other

acts that have a remote tendency to it, are performed by a more

general concourse and common assistance; so men may come to the

word, and attend to what is spoken, remember and consider what the

word tells them; but as to believing or coming to Christ, that no

man can do of himself, or by a general and common assistance. No man

can.

"Echtein pros me", - Cone unto me,] i.e. believe in me unto

salvation. Coming to Christ, and believing in him, are terms

aequipollent, and are indifferently used to express the nature of

saving faith, as is plain, ver. 35. "He that comes to me shall never

hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst:" it notes

the terms from which and to which the soul moves, and the

voluntariness of the motion, notwithstanding that divine power by

which the will is drawn to Christ.

"Ean me ho Pater", Except my Father] not excluding the other

two Persons; for every word of God relating to the creatures is

common to all the three Persons; nor only to note that the Father is

the first in order of working: but the reason is hinted in the next

words.

"Ho pempsas me", - Who has sent me,] God has entered into

covenant with the Son, and sent him, stands obliged thereby, to

bring the promised seed to him, and that he does by drawing them to

Christ by faith: so the next words tell us the Father does,

"Elkuse auton". - Draw him.] That is, powerfully and

effectually incline his will to come to Christ: "Not by a violent

co-action, but by a benevolent bending of the will which was

averse;" and as it is not in the way of force and compulsion, so

neither is it by a simple moral suasion, by the bare proposal of an

object to the will, and so leaving the sinner to his own election;

but it is such a persuasion, as has a mighty overcoming efficacy

accompanying which more anon.

The words thus opened, the observation will be this:

Doct. That it is utterly impossible for any man to come to

Jesus Christ, unless he be drawn unto him by the special and

mighty power of God.

No man is compelled to come to Christ against his will, he that

comes, comes willingly, but even that will and desire to come is the

effect of grace, Phil. 2: 13. "It is God that worketh in you, both

to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

"If we desire the help and assistance of grace, (saith

Fulgentius) even the desire is of grace; grace must first be shed

forth upon us, before we can begin to desire it." "By grace are we

saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of

God," Eph. 2: 8. Suppose the utmost degree of natural ability; let a

man be as much disposed and prepared as nature can dispose or

prepare him, and to all this, add the proposal of the greatest

arguments and motives to induce him to come; let all these have the

advantage of the fittest season to work upon his heart; yet no man

can come till God draw him: we move as we are moved: as Christ's

coming to us, so our coming to him are the pure effects of grace.

Three things require explication in this point before us.

First, What the drawing of the Father imports.

Secondly, In what manner he draws men to Christ.

Thirdly, How it appears that none can come till they be so

drawn.

First, What the drawing of the Father imports.

To open this, let it be considered, that drawing is usually

distinguished into physical and moral. The former is either by co-

action, force, and compulsion; or, by a sweet congruous efficacy

upon the will. As to violence and compulsion, it is none of God's

way and method, it being both against the nature of the will of man,

which cannot be forced, and against the will of Jesus Christ, who

loves to reign over a free and willing people, Psal. 110: 5. "Thy

people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Or, as that word

may be rendered, they shall be voluntarinesses, as willing as

willingness itself. It is not then by a forcible co-action, but in a

moral way of persuasion, that God the Father draws men to Jesus

Christ: He draws with the bands of a man, as they are called, Hos.

11: 14. i.e. in a way of rational conviction of the mind and

conscience, and effectual persuasion of the will.

But yet by moral persuasion, we must not understand a simple

and bare proposal or tender of Christ and grace, leaving it still at

the sinners choice, whether he will comply with it or no. For though

God does not force the will contrary to its nature, yet there is a

real internal efficacy implied in this drawing, or an immediate

operation of the Spirit upon the heart and will, which, in a way

congruous and suitable to its nature, takes away the rebellion and

reluctance of it, and of unwilling, makes it willing to come to

Christ. And, in this respect, we own a physical, as well as a moral

influence of the Spirit in this work; and so scripture expresses its

Eph. 1: 19, 20. "That we may know what is the exceeding greatness of

his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his

mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from

the dead." Here is much more than a naked proposal made to the will;

there is a power as well as a tender; greatness of power; and yet

more, the exceeding greatness of his power; and this power has an

actual efficacy ascribed to it, he works upon our hearts and wills

according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in

Christ, when he raised him from the dead. Thus he fulfils in us all

the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power, 2

Thess. 1: 11.

And this is that which the schools call gratia efficax,

effectual grace; and others victrix delectatio, an overcoming,

conquering delight: thus the work is carried on with a most

efficacious sweetness. So that the liberty of the will is not

infringed, whilst the obstinacy of the will is effectually subdued

and overruled. For want of this, there are so many almost Christians

in the world; hence are all those vanishing and imperfect works

which come to nothing, called in scripture, a morning cloud, an

early dew. Had this mighty power gone forth with the word, they had

never vanished or perished like embryos as they do. So then, God

draws not only in a moral way, by proposing a suitable object to the

will, but also in a physical way, or by immediate powerful influence

upon the will; not infringing the liberty of it, but yet infallibly

and effectually persuading it to come to Christ.

Secondly, Next let us consider the marvellous way and manner in

which the Lord draws the souls of poor sinners to Jesus Christ, and

you will find he does it,

1. Gradually,

2. Congruously,

3. Powerfully,

4. Effectually, and

5. Finally.

First, This blessed work is carried on by the Spirit gradually;

bringing the soul step by step in the due method and order of the

gospel to Christ; illumination, conviction, compunction, prepare the

way to Christ; and then faith unites the soul to him: without

humiliation there can be no faith, Matt. 21: 32. "Ye repented not,

that ye might believe." It is the burdensome sense of sin, that

brings the soul to Christ for rest, Matt. 11: 28. "Come unto me all

ye that are weary and heavy laden." But without conviction there can

be no compunction, no humiliation; he that is not convinced of his

sin and misery, never bewails it, nor mourns for it. Never was there

one tear of true repentance seen to drop from the eye of an

unconvinced sinner.

And without illumination there can be no conviction; for what

is conviction, but the application of the light which is in the

understanding, or mind of a man, to his heart and conscience? Acts

2: 57. In this order, therefore, the Spirit (ordinarily) draws souls

to Christ, he shines into their minds by illumination; applies that

light to their consciences by effectual conviction; breaks and

wounds their hearts for sin in compunction; and then moves the will

to embrace and close with Christ in the way of faith for life and

salvation.

These several steps are more distinctly discerned in some

Christians than in others; they are more clearly to be seen in the

adult convert, than in those that were drawn to Christ in their

youth; in such as were drawn to him out of a state of profaneness,

than in those that had the advantage of a pious education; but in

this order the work is carried on ordinarily in all, however it

differ in point of clearness in the one and in the other.

Secondly, He draws sinners to Christ congruously, and very

agreeably to the nature and way of man, so he speaks, Hos. 11: 4. "I

drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love," Not as

beasts are drawn; but as men are inclined and wrought to compliance,

by rational conviction of their judgements, and powerful persuasion

of their wills: the minds of sinners are naturally blinded by

ignorance, 2 Cor. 4: 3, 4. and their affections bewitched to their

lusts, Gal. 3: 4. and whilst it is thus, no arguments or entreaties

can possibly prevail to bring them off from the ways of sin to

Christ.

The way therefore which the Lord takes to win and draw them to

Christ, is by rectifying their false apprehensions, and shewing them

infinitely more good in Christ than in the creature and in their

lusts; yea, by satisfying their understandings, that there is

goodness enough in Jesus Christ, to whom he is drawing them.

First, Enough to out-bid all temporal good, which is to be

denied for his sake.

Secondly, Enough to preponderate all temporal evils, which are

to be suffered for his sake.

First, That there is more good in Christ than in all temporal

good things, which we are to deny or forsake upon his account. This

being once clearly and convincingly discovered to the understanding,

the will is thereby prepared to quit all that which entangles and

withholds it from coming to Christ. There is no man that loves money

so much, but he will willingly part with it, for that which is more

worth to him than the sum he parts with to purchase it, Matth. 13:

45, 46. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant man, seeking

goodly pearls, who when he has found one pearl of great price, goes

and selleth all that he has buyeth it.

Such an invaluable pearl is Jesus Christ; infinitely more worth

than all that a poor sinner has to part with for him; and is a more

real good than the creature. These are but vain shadows; Prov. 23:

5. Christ is a solid, substantial good: yea, he is, and by

conviction appears to be a more suitable good than the creature: The

world cannot justify and save, but Christ can. Christ is a more

necessary good than the creature, which is only for our temporal

convenience, but he is of eternal necessity. He is a more durable

good than any creature comfort is, or can be: "The fashion of this

world passeth away," 1 Cor. 7: 13. But durable riches and

righteousness are in him, Prov. 8: 17. Thus Christ appears in the

day of conviction, infinitely more excellent than the world; he

out-bids all the offers that the world can make; and this greatly

forwards the work of drawing a soul to Jesus Christ.

Secondly, And (then to remove every thing out of the way to

Christ) God discovers to the soul enough in him to preponderate, and

much more than will recompense all the evils and sufferings it can

endure for his sake.

It is true, they that close with Christ close with his cross

also: they must expect to save no more but their souls by him. He

tells us what we must trust to, Luke 14: 26, 27. "If any man come to

me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and

brethren and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my

disciple." And whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me,

cannot be my disciple.

To read such a text as this, with such a comment upon it, as

Satan and our flesh can make, is enough to fright a man from Christ

for ever. Nor is it possible by all the arguments in the world to

draw any soul to Christ upon such terms as these, till the Lord

convince it, that there is enough, and much more than enough in

Jesus Christ to recompense all these sufferings and losses we endure

for him.

But when the soul is satisfied that those sufferings are but

external upon the vile body, but that the benefit which comes by

Christ is internal in a man's own soul; these afflictions are but

temporal, Rom. 8: 18. But Christ and his benefits are eternal: This

must needs prevail with the will to come over to Christ,

notwithstanding all the evils of suffering that accompany him, when

the reality of this is discovered by the Lord, and the power of God

goes along with these discoveries. Thus the Lord draws us in our own

way, by rational convictions of the understanding, and allurements

of the will.

And it is possible this may be the reason why some poor souls

misjudge the working of the Spirit of God upon themselves, thinking

they never had that wonderful and mighty power of God in conversion,

acting upon their hearts, because they find all that is done upon

their hearts that way is done in the ordinary course and method of

nature; They consider, compare, are convinced, and then resolved to

choose Christ and his ways; whereas they expect to feel some strange

operations, that shall have the visible characters of the immediate

power of God upon them, and such a power they might discern, if they

would consider it as working, in this way and method: but they

cannot distinguish God's acts from their own, and that puzzles them.

Thirdly, The drawings of the Father are very powerful. "The arm

of the Lord is revealed in this work," Isa. 53: 1. It was a powerful

word indeed that made the light at first shine out of darkness, and

no less power is required to make it shine into our hearts, 2 Cor.

5: 14. That day in which the soul is made willing to come to Christ,

is called, "the day of his power," Psal. 110: 3. The scripture

expresseth the work of conversion by a threefold metaphor, viz.

That of a resurrection from the dead, Rom. 4: 4.

That of creation Eph. 2: 10. And

That of victory or conquest, 2 Cor. 10: 4, 5. All these set

forth the infinite power of God in this work; for no less than

Almighty Power is required to each of them, and if you strictly

examine the distinct notions, you shall find the power of God more

and more illustriously displayed in each of them.

To raise the dead, is the effect of Almighty Power; but then

the resurrection supposeth pre-existent matter. In the work of

creation, there is no pre-existent matter; but then there is no

opposition: That which is not, rebels not against the power which

gives it being. But victory and conquest suppose opposition, all the

power of corrupt nature arming itself, and fighting against God: but

yet not able to frustrate his design.

Let the soul whom the Father draws, struggle and reluctate as

much as it can, it shall come, yea, and come willingly too, when the

drawing power of God is upon it. O the self-conflicts, the contrary

resolves, with which the soul finds itself distracted, and rent

asunder! The hopes and fears; the encouragements and

discouragements; they will, and they will not: but victorious grace

conquers all opposition at last. We find an excellent example of

this in blessed Augustin, who speaks of this very work;, the drawing

of his soul to Christ, and how he felt in that day two wills in

himself, "one old, the other new; one carnal, the other spiritual;

and how in these their contrary motions and conflicts, he was torn

asunder in his own thoughts and resolutions, suffering that

unwillingly which he did willingly." And certainly, if we consider

how deep the soul is rooted by natural inclination, and long

continued custom in sin, how extremely averse it is to the ways of

strict godliness and mortification; how Satan, that invidious enemy,

that strong man armed, fortifies the soul to defend his possession

against Christ, and entrenches himself in the understanding, will,

and affections, by deep-rooted prejudices against Christ and

holiness, it is a wonder of wonders to see a soul quitting all its

beloved lusts, and fleshly interests and endearments, and coming

willingly under Christ's yoke.

Fourthly, the drawings of God are very effectual: There is

indeed a common and ineffectual work upon hypocrites and apostates,

called in scripture a "morning cloud and early dew", Hos. 6: 4.

These may believe for a time, and fall away at last, Luke 8: 13.

Their wills may be half won, they may be drawn half way to Christ,

and return again. So it was with Agrippa, Acts 26: 28. "en oligoi me

peiteis", within a very little thou persuades me to be a Christian:

But in God's elected ones it is effectual: Their wills are not only

almost, but altogether persuaded to embrace Christ, and quit the

ways of sin, how pleasant, gainful, and dear soever they have been

to them. The Lord not only draws, but draws home those souls to

Christ, John 6: 37. "All that the Father has given me, shall come to

me."

It is confessed, that in drawing home of the very elect to

Christ, there may be, and frequently are, many pauses, stands, and

demurs; they have convictions, affections, and resolutions stirring

in them, which, like early blossoms, seem to be nipt and die away

again. There is frequently, (in young ones especially), an hopeful

appearance of grace; they make conscience of avoiding sins, and

performing duties: they have sometimes great awakenings under the

Word, they are observed to retire for meditation and prayer; and

delight to be in the company of Christians: and after all this,

youthful lusts and vanities are found to stifle and cheek these

hopeful beginnings, and the work seems to stand, (it may be some

years), at a pause; however, at last, the Lord makes it victorious

over all opposition, and sets it home with power upon their hearts.

Fifthly, To conclude, those whom the Father draws to Christ, he

draws them finally and for ever. "The gifts and calling of God are

without repentance," Rom. 11: 29. they are so, as to God the giver;

he never repents, that he has called his people into the fellowship

of his Son Christ Jesus: and they are so on the believer's part; he

is never sorry, whatever he afterwards meets with, that he is come

to Christ.

There is a time when Christians are drawn to Christ, but there

shall never be a time in which they shall be drawn away from Christ,

John 10: 29. There is no plucking them out of the Father's hand. It

was common to a proverb, in the primitive times, when they would

express an impossibility, to say, "You may as soon draw a Christian

from Christ, as do it." When Christ asked that question of the

disciples, "Will ye also go away? Lord, (said Peter, in the name of

them all), to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal

life," John 6: 68. They who are thus drawn, do with full purpose of

heart, cleave unto the Lord. And thus of the manner and quality of

effectual drawing.

Thirdly, In the last place, I am to evince the impossibility of

coming to Christ without the Father's drawings; and this will

evidently appear upon the consideration of these two particulars.

First, The difficulty of this work is above all the power of

nature to overcome.

Secondly, That little power and ability that nature has, it

will never employ to such a purpose as this, till the drawing power

of God be upon the will of a sinner.

First, If all the power of nature were employed in this design,

yet such are the difficulties of this work, that it surmounts all

the abilities of nature. This the scripture very plainly affirms,

Eph. 2: 8. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of

yourselves, it is the gift of God." To think of Christ is easy, but

to come to Christ, is to nature impossible. To send forth cold and

ineffectual wishes to Christ we may, but to bring Christ and the

soul together, requires the Almighty power of God, Eph. 1: 19. The

grace of faith by which we come to Christ, is as much the free gift

of God, as Christ himself, who is the object of faith, Phil. 1: 29.

"To you it is freely given to believe." And this will easily appear

to your understandings, if you do but consider

/ Subject, \

The | Act, and | of this work of faith, or coming to Christ.

\ Enemies /

First, Consider the subject of faith in which it is wrought; or

what it is that is drawn to Christ: It is the heart of a sinner

which is naturally as indisposed for this work, as the wood which

Elijah laid in order upon the altar was to catch fire, when he had

poured so much water upon it, as did not only wet the wood, but also

filled up the trench round about it, 1 Kings 18: 33. For it is

naturally a dark, blind, and ignorant heart, Job 11: 12. And such an

heart can never believe, till he that commanded the light to shine

out of darkness do shine into it, 2 Cor. 4: 6.

Nor will it avail any thing to say, though man be born in

darkness and ignorance, yet afterwards he may acquire knowledge in

the use of means, as we see many natural men do to a very high

degree: For this is not that light that brings the soul to Christ,

yea, this natural unsanctified light blinds the soul, and prejudices

it more against Christ than ever it was before, 1 Cor. 1: 21, 26.

As it is a blind, ignorant heart, so it is a selfish heart by

nature: All its designs and aims terminate in self; this is the

centre and weight of the soul, no righteousness but its own is

sought after, that, or none, Rom. 10: 3. Now, for a soul to renounce

and deny self, in all its forms, modes, and interests, as every one

does that comes to Christ; to disclaim and deny natural, moral, and

religious self, and come to Christ as a poor, miserable, wretched

empty creature; to live upon his righteousness for ever, is as

supernatural and wonderful, as to see the hills and mountains start

from their bases and centres, and fly like wandering atoms in the

air.

Nay, this heart which is to come to Christ, is not only dark

and selfish, but full of pride. O, it is a desperate proud heart by

nature, it cannot submit to come to Christ, as Benhadad's servant

came to the king of Israel, with sackcloth on their loins, and ropes

upon their heads. To take guilt, shame, and confusion of face to

ourselves, and acknowledge the righteousness of God in our eternal

damnation; to come to Christ naked and empty, as one that justifies

the ungodly. I say, nature left to itself, would as soon be damned

as do this; the proud heart can never come to this, till the Lord

has humbled and broken it by his power.

Secondly, Let us take the act of faith into consideration also,

as it is here described by the soul's coming to Jesus Christ; and

you will find a necessity of the Father's drawings; for this

evidently implies, that which is against the stream and current of

corrupt nature, and that which is above the sphere and capacity of

the most refined and accomplished nature.

First, It is against the stream and current of our corrupt

nature to come to Christ. For let us but consider the term from

which the soul departs, when it comes to Christ. In that day it

leaves all its lusts, and ways of sin, how pleasant, sweet, and

profitable soever they have been unto it, Isa. 55: 7. "Let the

wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and

let him return unto the Lord." Way and thoughts, i.e. both the

practice of, and delight he had in sin, must be forsaken, and the

outward and inward man must be cleansed from it. Now there are in

the bosoms of unregenerate men such darling lusts, that have given

them so much practical and speculative pleasure, which have brought

so much profit to them, which have been born and bred up with them;

and which, upon all these accounts, are endeared to their souls to

that degree, that it is easier for them to die, than to forsake

them, yea, nothing is more common among such men, than to venture

eternal damnation, rather than suffer a separation from their sins.

And which is yet more difficult in coming to Christ, the soul

forsakes not only its sinful self; but its righteous self, i.e. not

only its worst sins, but its best performances, accomplishments, and

excellencies. Now this is one of the greatest straits that nature

can be put to. Righteousness by works was the first liquor that ever

was put into the vessel, and it still retains the tang and savour of

it, and will to the end of the world, Rom. 10: 3 "For they, being

ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their

own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the

righteousness of God." "ouk hupetagesan", they have not submitted.

To come naked and empty to Christ, and receive all from him as a

free gift, is, to proud corrupt nature, the greatest abasement and

submission in the world.

Let the gospel furnish its table with the richest and costliest

dainties that ever the blood of Christ purchased, such is the pride

of nature, that it disdains to taste them, except it may also pay

for the same. If the old hive be removed from the place where it was

wont to stand, the bees will come home to the old place, yea, and

many of them you shall find will die there, rather than go to the

hive, though it stand in a far better place than it did before. Just

so stands the case with men. The hive is removed, i.e. we are not to

expect righteousness as Adam did, by obeying and working, but by

believing and coming to Christ; but nature had as soon be damned as

do it is: It still goes about to establish its own righteousness.

Virtues, duties, and moral excellencies, these are the

ornaments of nature; here is nature set off in its sumptuous attire,

and rich embellishments, and now to renounce it, disclaim and

contemn it, as dross and dung, in comparison of Christ, as believers

do, Phil. 3: 8. this, I say, is against the grain of nature. We

reckon it the strange effect of self-denial in Mahomet the Great,

who being so enamoured with his beautiful Irene, would be persuaded,

upon reasons of state, with his own hand to strike off her head: and

that even when she appeared in all her rich ornaments before him,

rather like such a goddess, as the poets in their ecstasies use to

feign, than a mortal creature. And yet certainly this is nothing to

that self-denial which is exercised in our coming to Christ.

Secondly, And if we look to the other term to which the soul

moves, we shall find it acting as much above the sphere and ability

of improved nature, as here it acts and moves against the stream and

current of corrupted nature: for how wonderful and supernatural an

adventure is that, which the soul makes in the day that it comes to

Jesus Christ.

Surely, for any poor soul to venture itself for ever upon Jesus

Christ whom it never saw, nay, upon Christ, whose very existence its

own unbelief calls in question whether he be or no: and that when it

is even weighed down to the dust, with the burdensome sense of its

own vileness and total unworthiness, feeling nothing in itself but

sin and misery, the workings of death and fears of wrath: to go to

Christ, of whose pardoning grace and mercy it never had any the

least experience, nor can find any ground of hope in it self that it

shall be accepted; this is as much above the power of nature, as it

is for a stone to rise from the earth, and fix itself among the

stars. Well might the apostle ascribe it to that Almighty Power

which raised up Christ from the dead, Eph. 1: 19, 20. If the Lord

draw not the soul, and that omnipotently, it can never come from

itself to Christ. And yet farther,

Thirdly, The natural impossibility of coming to Christ, will

more clearly appear, if we consider the enemies to faith, or what

blocks are rolled by Satan and his instruments into the way to

Christ: to mention, in this place, no more but our own carnal

reason, as it is armed and managed by the subtilty of Satan, what a

wonder is it that any soul should come to Christ?

These are the strong holds, (mentioned 2 Cor. 10: 4.) out of

which those objections, fears, and discouragements sally, by which

the soul is fiercely assaulted in the way to Christ.

Wilt thou forsake all thy pleasures, merry company, and

sensible comforts, to live a sad, retired, pensive life? Wilt thou

beggar and undo thyself, let go all thy comforts in hand, for an

hope of that which thine eyes never saw, nor hast thou any certainty

that it is any more than a fancy! Wilt thou that hast lived in

reputation and credit all thy life, now become the scorn and

contempt of the world? Thinkest thou thyself able to live such a

strict, severe, mortified, and self-denying, life, as the word of

God requires? And what if persecution should arise, (as thou mayest

expect it will,) canst thou forsake father and mother, wife and

children, yea, and give up thine own life too, to a cruel and bloody

death! be advised better, before thou resolve in so important a

matter. What thinkest thou of thy forefathers, that lived and died

in that way thou art now living? Art thou wiser than they? Do not

the generality of men walk in the same paths thou hast hitherto

walked in? If this way lead to hell, as thou fearest it may, think

then how many millions of men must perish as well as thyself; and is

such a supposition consistent with the gracious and merciful nature

of God? Besides, think what sort of people those are, unto whom thou

art about to join thyself in this new way? Are there not to be found

among them many things to discourage thee, and cool thy zeal? They

are generally of the lower and baser sort of men, poor and

despicable: Sees thou not, though their profession be holy, how

earthly, carnal, proud, factious, and hypocritical, many of them are

found to be! And doubtless, the rest are like them, though their

hypocrisy be not yet discovered.

O what stands and demurs, what hesitations and doubts, is the

soul clogged with in its way to Christ! But yet none of these can

withhold and detain the soul when the Father draws: Greater then is

he that is in us, than he that is in the world. And thus you see the

nature, manner, and efficacy of divine drawings, and how impossible

it is for any soul to come to Christ without them.

The inferences and improvements of the point follow.

Inference 1. How deeply and thoroughly is the nature of man

corrupted, and what an enemy is every man to his own happiness, that

he must be drawn to it? John 5: 40 "You will not come unto me, that

ye might have life."

Life is desirable in every man's eyes, and eternal life is the

most excellent: yet, in this, the world is rather agreed to die and

perish forever than come to Christ for life. Had Christ told us of

fields and vineyards, sheep and oxen, gold and silver, honours and

sensual pleasures, who would not have come to him for these? But to

tell of mortification, self denial, strictness of life, and

sufferings for his sake, and all this for an happiness to be enjoyed

in the world to come, nature will never like such a proposition as

this.

You see where it sticks, not in a simple inability to believe,

but in an inability complicated with enmity; they neither call come,

nor will come to Christ. It is true, all that do come to Christ,

come willingly, but thanks be to the grace of God, that has freed

and persuaded the will, else they never had been willing to come.

Who ever found his own heart first stir and move towards Christ? How

long may we wait and expect before we shall feel our hearts

naturally burn with desires after, and love to Jesus Christ?

This aversion of the will and affections from God is one of the

main roots of original sin. No argument can prevail to bring the

soul to Christ, till this be mastered and overpowered by the

Father's drawing. In our motions to sin we need restraining, but in

all our motions to Christ we as much need drawing. He that comes to

heaven may say, Lord, if I had had mine own way and will, I had

never come here: if thou hadst not drawn me, I should never have

come to thee. O the riches of the grace of God! Oh unparalleled

mercy and goodness! not only to prepare such a glory as this for an

unworthy soul, but to put forth the exceeding greatness of thy

power, afterwards to draw an unwilling soul to the enjoyment of it.

Infer. 2 What enemies are they to God and the souls of men that

do all they can to discourage and hinder the conversion of men to

Christ? God draws forward, and these do all that in them lies to

draw backward, i.e. to prejudice and discourage them from coming to

Jesus Christ in the way of faith: this is a direct opposition to

God, and a plain confederacy with the devil.

O how many have been thus discouraged in their way to Christ by

their carnal relations, I cannot say friends! Their greatest enemies

have been the men of their own house. These have pleaded (as if the

devil had hired and feed them) against the everlasting welfare of

their own flesh. O cruel parents, brethren, and sisters, that jeer,

frown, and threaten, where they should encourage, assist, and

rejoice! Such parents are the devil's children Satan chooses such

instruments as you are, above all others, for this work: he knows

what influence and authority you have upon them, and over them; and

what fear, love, and dependence they have for you, and upon you; so

that none in all the world are like to manage the design of their

damnation so effectually, as you are like to do.

Will you neither come to Christ yourselves, nor suffer your

dear relations that would? Had you rather find them in the ale-house

than in the closet? Did you instrumentally give them their being,

and will you be the instruments of ruining for ever those beings

they had from you? Did you so earnestly desire children, so tenderly

nurse and provide for them; take such delight in them and, after all

this, do what in you lies to damn and destroy them? If these lines

shall fall into any such hands, O that God would set home the

conviction and sense of this horrid evil upon their hearts.

And no less guilty of this sin are scandalous and loose

professors, who serve to furnish the devil with the greatest

arguments he has to dissuade men from coming to Christ; it is your

looseness and hypocrisy by which he hopes to scare others from

Christ. It is said, Cant. 2: 7. "I charge you by the roes and hinds

of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my beloved till he

please."

Roes and hinds, like young converts and comers towards Christ,

are shy and timorous creatures, that start at the least sound, or

yelp of a dog, and fly away. Take heed what you do in this case,

lest you go down to hell under the guilt of damning more souls than

your own.

Infer. 3. Learn hence the true ground and reason of those

strange, amazing, and supernatural effects, that you behold and so

admire in the world, as often as you see sinners forsaking their

pleasant, profitable corruptions and companions, and embracing the

ways of Christ, godliness, and mortification.

It is said, 1 Pet. 4: 4. "They think it strange, that you run

not with them into the same excess of riot." The word is "en hoi

ksenidzontai", they stand at a gaze, as the hen that has hatched

partridge eggs does, when she sees them take the wing and fly away

from her.

Beloved, it is the world's wonder to see their companions in

sin forsake them; those that were once as profane and vain as

themselves, it may be more, to forsake their society, retire into

their closets, mourn for sin, spend their time in meditation and

prayer, embrace the severest duties, and content to run the greatest

hazards in the world for Christ; but they see not that Almighty

Power that draws them, which is too strong for all the sinful ties

and engagements in the world to withhold and detain them.

A man would have wondered to see Elisha leave the oxen, and run

after Elijah, saying, "Let me go, I pray thee, and kiss my father

and mother, and then I will follow thee; when Elijah had said

nothing to persuade him to follow him only as he passed by him, he

cast his mantle on him, 1 Kings 10: 19, 20. Surely that soul whom

God draws, must needs leave all and follow Christ, for the power of

God resteth on it. All carnal ties and engagements to sin break and

give way, when the Father draws the soul to Christ in the day of his

power.

Infer. 4. Is this the first spring of spiritual motion after

Christ? Learn then from hence, how it comes to pass that so many

excellent sermons and powerful persuasions are ineffectual, and

cannot draw and win one soul to Christ. Surely it is because

ministers draw alone; and the special saving power of God goes not

forth at all times alike with their endeavours.

Paul was a chosen vessel, filled with a greater measure of

gifts and graces by the Spirit, than any that went before him or

followed after him; and, as his talents, so his diligence in

improving them was beyond any recorded example we read of amongst

men; "He rather flew like a seraphim, than travelled upon his

Master's errand about the world." Apollos was an eloquent preacher,

and mighty in the scriptures, yet Paul is "nothing, and Apollos

nothing; but God that gives the increase," 1 Cor. 3: 7. We are too

apt to admire men, yea, and the best are but too apt to go forth in

the strength of their own parts and preparations; but God secures

his own glory, and magnifies his own power, frequently, in giving

success to weaker endeavours, and men of lower abilities, when he

withholds it from men of more raised, refined, and excellent gifts

and abilities.

It is our great honour, who are the ministers of the gospel,

that we are "sunergoi", workers together with God, 1 Cor. 3: 9. in

his strength we can prevail; "the weapons of our warfare are mighty

through God," 2 Cor. 10: 4. But if his presence, blessing, and

assistance be not with us, we are nothing, we can do nothing.

If we prepare diligently, pray heartily, preach zealously, and

our hearers go as they came, without any spiritual effects and

fruits of our labours, what shall we say, but as Martha said to

Christ, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died:" Had

the Spirit of God gone forth with his especial efficacy and

blessing, with this prayer, or that sermon, these souls had not

departed dead and senseless from under it.

Infer. 5. Does all success and efficacy depend upon the

Father's drawings? Let none then despair of their unregenerate and

carnal relations, over whose obstinacy they do, and have cause to

mourn.

What, if they have been as many years under the preaching of

the gospel, as the poor man lay at the pool of Bethesda, and

hitherto to no purpose? A time may come at last, (as it did for him)

when the Spirit of God may move upon the waters; I mean put a

quickening and converting power into the means, and then the desire

of your souls for them shall be fulfilled.

It may be you have poured out many prayers and tears to the

Lord for them; you have cried for them as Abraham for his son, "O

that Ishmael might live before thee!" O that this poor husband,

wife, child, brother, or sister, might live in thy sight; and still

you see them continue carnal, dead, and senseless: Well, but yet not

give up your hopes, nor cease your pious endeavours, the time may

come when the Father may draw as well as you, and them you shall see

them quit all, and come to Christ; and nothing shall hinder them.

They are now drawn away of their own lusts; they are easily drawn

away by their sinful companions; but when God draws, none of these

shall withdraw them from the Lord Jesus. What is their ignorance,

obstinacy, and hardness of heart, before that mighty power that

subdues all things to itself? Go therefore to the Lord by prayer for

them, and say, Lord, I have laboured for my poor relations in vain,

i have spent my exhortations to little purpose; the work is too

difficult for me, I can carry it no farther, but thou canst: O let

thy power go forth; they shall be willing in the day of thy power.

Inf. 6. If none can come to Christ except the Father draw them,

then surely none can be drawn from Christ except the Father leave

them: That power which at first drew them to Christ can secure and

establish them in Christ to the end. John 10: 29. "My Father which

gave them me is greater then all, and non man is able to pluck them

out of my Father's hand."

When the power of God at first draws us out of our natural

state to Christ, it finds us not only impotent but obstinate, not

only unable, but unwilling to come; and yet this power of God

prevails against all opposition; how much more is it able to

preserve and secure us, when his fear is put into our inward parts,

so that we dare not depart, we have no will to depart from him? Well

then if the world say, I will ensnare thee; if the devil say, I will

destroy thee; if the flesh say, I will betray thee; yet thou art

secure and safe, as long as God has said, "I will never leave thee

nor forsake thee,", Heb. 13:5.

Infer. 7. Let this engage you to a constant attendance upon the

ordinances of God, in which this drawing power of God is sometimes

put forth upon the hearts of men.

Beloved, there are certain seasons in which the Lord comes nigh

to men in the ordinances and duties of his worship; and we know not

at what time the Lord cometh forth by his Spirit upon this design:

he many times comes in an hour when we think not of him! "I am found

of them that sought me not", Isa. 65:1. It is good therefore to be

found in the way of the Spirit. Had that poor man, that lay so long

at the pool of Bethesda, reasoned thus with himself, So long have I

lain here in vain expecting a cure, it is to no purpose to wait

longer, and so had been absent at that very time when the angel came

down, he had, in all likelihood, carried his disease to the grave

with him.

How dost thou know but this very sabbath, this sermon, this

prayer, which thou hast no heart to attend, and are tempted to

neglect, may be the season and instrument wherein, and by which, the

Lord may do that for thy soul which was never done before?

Infer. 8. To conclude, How are all the saints engaged to put

forth all the power and ability they have for God, who has put forth

his infinite Almighty Power to draw them to Christ?

God has done great things for your souls; he has drawn you out

of the miserable state of sin and wrath; and that when he let others

go, by nature as good as you, he has drawn you into union with

Christ, and communion with his glorious privileges. O that you would

henceforth employ all the power you have for God in the duties of

obedience, and in drawing others to Christ, as much as in you lies,

and say continually with the Church, "Draw me, we will run after

thee," Cant. 1: 4.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

Sermon 5.

Of the Work of the Spirit more particularly, by which the

Soul is enabled to apply Christ.

Eph. 2: 1.

And you has he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.

In the former sermons we have seen our union with Christ in the

general nature of it, and the means by which it is effected, both

external, by the preaching of the gospel, and internal, by the

drawing of the Father. We are now to bring our thoughts yet closer

to this great mystery, and consider the bands by which Christ and

believers are knit together in a blessed union.

And if we heedfully observe the scripture expressions, and

ponder the nature of this union, we shall find there are two bands

which knit Christ and the soul together, viz.

1. The Spirit on Christ's part.

2. Faith on our part.

The Spirit, on Christ's part, quickening us with spiritual

life, whereby Christ first takes hold of us, and faith on our part,

when thus quickened, whereby we take hold of Christ; accordingly,

this union with the Lord Jesus is expressed in scripture sometimes

by the one and sometimes by the other of the means or bands by which

it is effected. Christ is sometimes said to be in us; so Col. 1: 27.

"Christ is in you the hope of glory." And Rom. 8: 10. "And if Christ

be in you, the body is dead because of sin." At other times it is

expressed by the other band on our part, as 1 John 5: 20. "We are in

him that is true, even in his Son Christ Jesus." And 2 Cor. 5: 17.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

The difference betwixt both these is thus aptly expressed by a

late author. Christ is in believers by his Spirits 1 John 4: 13.

"The believer is in Christ by faith, John 1: 12. Christ is in the

believer by inhabitation, Rom. 3: 17. The believer is in Christ by

implantation, Rom. 6: 35. Christ is in the believer as the head is

in the body, Col. 1: 18. As the root in the branches, John 15: 5.

Believers are in Christ as the members are in the head, Eph. 1: 2,3.

or as the branches are in the root, John 15: 1, 7. Christ in the

believer implies life, and influence from Christ, Col. 3: 4. The

believer implies communion and fellowship with Christ, 1 Cor. 1: 30.

When Christ is said to be in the believer, we are to understand it

in reference to sanctification. When the believer is said to be in

Christ, it is in order to justification."

Thus we apprehend, being ourselves first apprehended by Jesus

Christ, Phil. 3: 12. ate cannot take hold of Christ till first he

take hold of us; no vital act of faith can be exercised till a vital

principle be first inspired: of both these bands of union we must

speak distinctly, and first of "Christ quickening us by his Spirit,

in order to our union with him," of which we have an account in the

scripture before us, "You he has quickened, who were dead in

trespasses and sins". In which words we find these two things noted,

viz.

1. The infusion of a vital principle of grace.

2. The total indisposedness of the subject by nature.

First, The infusion of a vital principle of grace, You has he

quickened. These words [has he quickened] are a supplement made to

clear the sense of the apostle, which else would have been more

obscure, by reason of that long parenthesis betwixt the first and

fifth verses, "for as the learned observe, this word "humas", you,

is governed by the verb "sunedzo-opoiese", has he quickened, ver. 5.

So that here the words are transposed from the plain grammatical

order, by reason at the interjections of a long sentence, therefore,

with good warrant our translators have put the verb into the first

verse, which is repeated, ver. 5. and so keeping faithfully to the

scope, have excellently cleared the syntax and order of the words."

Now this verb "sunedzo-opoiese", has he quickened, imports the first

vital act of the Spirit of God, or his first enlivening work upon

the soul, in order to its union with Jesus Christ: For look;, as the

blood of Christ is the fountain of all merit, so the Spirit of

Christ is the fountain of all spiritual life, and until he quicken

us, i.e. infuse the principle of the divine life into our souls, we

can put forth no hand, or vital act of faith, to lay hold upon Jesus

Christ.

This his quickening, work is therefore the first in order of

nature to our union with Christ, and fundamental to all other acts

of grace done and performed by us, from our first closing with

Christ throughout the whole course of our obedience; and this

quickening act is said, ver. 5. to be together with Christ. Either

noting (as some expound it) that it is the effect of the same power

by which Christ was raised from the dead, according to Eph. 1. 19.

or rather, to be quickened together with Christ, notes that new

spiritual life which is infused into our dead souls in the time of

our union with Christ: "For it is Christ to whom we are conjoined

and united in our regeneration, out of whom, as a fountain, all

spiritual benefits flow to us, among which this vivification or

quickening is one, and a most sweet and precious one."

Zanchy Bodius, and many others, will have this quickening to

comprise both our justification and regeneration, and to stand op

posed both to eternal and spiritual death, and it may well be

allowed; but it most properly imports our regeneration, wherein the

Spirit, in an ineffable and mysterious way, makes the soul to live

to God, yea, to live the life of God, which soul was before dead in

trespasses and sins. In which words we have,

Secondly, In the next place, the total indisposedness of the

subjects by nature: Yet, as it is well noted by a learned man, "the

apostle does not say of these Ephesians that they were half dead, or

sick, and infirm, but dead wholly; altogether dead, destitute of any

faculty or ability, so much as to think one good thought, or perform

one good act." You were dead in respect of condemnation, being under

the damning sentence of the law, and you are dead in respect of the

privation of spiritual life; dead in opposition to justification,

and dead in opposition to regeneration and sanctification: And the

fatal instrument by which their souls died is here shewed them; you

were dead in, or by trespasses and sins, this was the sword that

killed your souls, and cut them off from God. Some do curiously

distinguish betwixt trespasses and sins, as if one pointed at

original, the other at actual sins; but I suppose they are

promiscuously used here, and serve to express the cause of their

ruin, or means of their spiritual death and destruction: this was

their case when Christ came to quicken them, dead in sin; and being

so, they could not move themselves towards union with Christ, but as

they were moved by the quickening Spirit of God. Hence the

observation will be this,

Doct. That those souls which have union with Christ, are

quickened with a supernatural principle of life by the Spirit

of God in order thereunto.

The Spirit of God is not only a living Spirit formally

considered; but he is also the Spirit of life, effectively or

casually considered; And without his breathing, or infusing life

into our souls, our union with Christ is impossible.

It is the observation of learned Camero, "that there must be an

unction before there can be an union with Christ. Unction is to be

conceived efficiently as the work of God's Spirit, joining the

believer to Christ, and union is to be conceived formally, the

joining itself of the persons together:" We close with Christ by

faith, but that faith being a vital act, presupposes a principle of

life communicated to us by the Spirit; therefore it is said, John

11: 26. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die". The

vital act and operation of faith springs from this quickening

Spirit: So in Rom. 8: 1, 2. The apostle, having in the first verse

opened the blessed estate of them that are in Christ, shows us in

the second verse how we come to be in him: "The Spirit of life

(saith he) which is in Christ Jesus, has made me free from the law

of sin and death."

There is indeed a quickening work of the Spirit, which is

subsequent to regeneration, consisting in his exciting, recovering,

and actuating of his own graces in us; and from hence is the

liveliness of a Christian; and there is a quickening act of the

Spirit in our regeneration, and from hence is the spiritual life of

a Christian; of this I am here to speak, and that I may speak

profitably to this point, I will in the doctrinal part labour to

open these five particulars.

First, What this spiritual life is in its nature and

properties.

Secondly, In what manner it is wrought or inspired into the

soul.

Thirdly, For what end, or in what design, this life is so

inspired.

Fourthly, I shall show this work to be wholly supernatural.

And then, Fifthly, Why this quickening must be antecedent to

our actual closing with Christ by faith.

First, We shall enquire into the nature and properties of this

life, and discover (as we are able) what it is. And we find it to

consist in that wonderful change which the Spirit of God makes upon

the frame and temper of the soul, by his infusing or implanting the

principle of grace in all the powers and faculties thereof.

A change it makes upon the soul, and that a marvellous one, no

less than from death to life; for though a man be physically a

living man, i.e. his natural soul has union with his body, yet his

soul having no union with Christ, he is theologically a dead man,

Luke 15: 24. and Col. 2: 13. Alas, it deserves not the name of life,

to have a soul serving only to season and preserve the body a little

while from corruption: to carry it up and down the world, and only

enable it to eat, and drink, and talk, and laugh, and then die: Then

do we begin to live, when we begin to have union with Christ the

Fountain of life, by his Spirit communicated to us: From this time

we are to reckon our life as some have done: There be many changes

made upon men besides this, many are changed from profaneness to

civility, and from mere civility to formality, and a shadow of

religion, who still remain in the state and power of spiritual

death, notwithstanding: but when the Spirit of the Lord is poured

out upon us, to quicken us with the new spiritual life, this is a

wonderful change indeed: It gives us an esse supernaturale, a new

supernatural being, which is therefore called a new creature, the

new man, the hidden man of the heart: The natural essence and

faculties of the soul remain still, but it is divested of the old

qualities, and endowed with new ones, 2 Cor. 5: 17. Old things are

passed away, behold, all things are become new.

And this change is not made by altering and rectifying the

disorders of the life only, leaving the temper and frame of the

heart still carnal; but by the intrusion of a supernatural permanent

principle into the soul, John 4: 14. "It shall be in him a well of

water:" principles are to a course of actions, as fountains or

springs are to the streams and rivers that flow from them, and are

maintained by them: and hence is the evenness and constancy of

renewed souls in the course of godliness.

Nor is this principle or habit acquired by accustoming

ourselves to holy actions, as natural habits are acquired by

frequent acts, which beget a disposition, and thence grow up to an

habit or second nature, but it is infused, or implanted in the soul

by the Spirit of God. So we read, Ezek. 36: 25,26. "A new heart also

will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:" It grows

not up out of our natures, but is put or infused into us: as it is

said of the two witnesses, Rev. 11: 11. who lay dead in a civil

sense, three days and a half, that the Spirit of life from God

entered into them: so it is here in a spiritual sense, the Spirit of

life from God enters into the dead, carnal heart: it is all by way

of supernatural infusion.

Nor is it limited to this or that faculty at the soul, but

grace or life is poured into all the faculties: "Behold, all thing

are become new," 2 Cor. 5: 17. The understandings, will, thoughts,

and affections, are all renewed by it: the whole inner man is

changed, yea, the tongue and hand, the discourses and actions, even

all the ways and courses of the outward man are renewed by it.

But more particularly, we shall discerns the nature of this

spiritual life, by considering the properties of it; among which,

these are very remarkable.

First, The soul that is joined to Christ is quickened with

divine life, so we read in 2 Pet. 1: 4. where believers are said to

be partakers of the divine nature: a very high expression, and

wearily to be understood. Partakers of the divine nature: not

essentially; so it is wholly incommunicable to the creature, nor yet

hypostatically, and personally; so Christ only was a partaker at it;

but our participation of the divine nature, must be understood in a

way proper to believers; that is to say, we partake of it by the

inhabitation of the Spirit of God in us, according to 1 Cor. 3: 16,

17. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit

of God do dwelleth in you?" The Spirit, who is God by nature dwells

in, and actuates the soul whom he regenerates, and by sanctifying

it, causes it to live a divine life: from this life of God the

unsanctified are said to be alienated, Eph. 4: 18. but believers are

partakers of it.

Secondly, And being divine, it must needs be the most

excellent, and transcendent life that any creature does, or can live

in this world: it surmounts the natural, rational, and moral life of

the unsanctified, as much as the angelical life excels the life of

flies and worms of the earth.

Some think it a rare life to live in sensual pleasures; but the

scripture will not allow so much as the name of life to them; but

tell, us, "they are dead while they live," 1 Tim. 5:6. certainly it

is a wonderful elation of the nature of man to be quickened with

such a life as this. There are two ways wherein the blessed God has

honoured poor man above the very angels of heaven. One was by the

hypostatical union of our nature, in Christ, with the divine nature:

the other is by uniting our persons mystically to Christ, and

thereby communicating spiritual life to us: this latter is a most

glorious privilege, and in one respect a more singular mercy than

the former; for that honour which is done to our nature by the

hypostatical union, is common to all, good and bad, even they that

perish have yet that honour; but to be implanted into Christ by

regeneration, and live upon him as the branch does upon the vine,

this is a peculiar privilege, a mercy kept from the world that is to

perish, and only communicated to God's elect, who are to live

eternally with him in heaven.

Thirdly, This life infused by the regenerating Spirit, is a

most pleasant life. All delights, all pleasures, all joys, which are

not fantastic and delusive, leave their spring and origin here, Rom.

8: 6. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace," i.e. a most

serene, placid life, such a soul becomes, so far as it is influenced

and sanctified by the spirit, the very region of life and peace:

when one think is thus predicated of another, in casu recta, (saith

a learned man) it speaks their intimate connection: peace is so

connatural to this life, that you may either call it a life that has

peace in it, or a peace that has life in it: yea, it has its

enclosed pleasures in it, "such as a stranger intermeddles not

with," Prov. 14: 10 Regeneration is the term from which all true

pleasure commences; you never live a cheerful day, till you begin to

live to God: therefore it is said, Luke 15: 24. when the prodigal

son was returned to his father, and reconciled, then they began to

be merry.

None can make another, by any words, to understand what that

pleasure is which the renewed soul feels diffused through all its

collies and affections, in its communion with the Lord, and in the

sealings and witnessings of his spirit. That is a very apt and well

known similitude, which Peter Martyr used, and the Lord blessed to

the conversion of that noble marquis Galeacus: if, said he, a man

should see a company of people dancing, upon the top of a remote

hill, he would be apt to conclude they were a company of wild

distracted people, but if he draw nearer, and behold the excellent

order, and hear the ravishing sweet music that are among them, he

will quickly alter his opinion of them, and be for dancing himself

with them.

All the delights in the sensual life, all the pleasure that

ever your lust gave you, are but at the putrid, stinking waters of a

corrupt pond, where loads lie croaking and spawning, compared to the

crystal streams of the most pure and pleasant fountain.

Fourthly, This life of God, with which the regenerate are

quickened in their union with Christ, as it is a pleasant, so it is

also a rowing increasing life, John 4:14. "It shall be in him a well

of water springing up into everlasting life".

It is not in our sanctification, as it is in our justification;

our justification is complete and perfect, no defect is found there;

but the new creature labours under many defects: all believers are

equally justified, but not equally sanctified. Therefore you read, 2

Cor. 4: 16 that "the inward man is renewed day by day:" And 2 Pet.

3: 18 Christians are exhorted "to grow in grace, and in the

knowledge of our Lord and Saviour:" if this work were perfect, and

finished at once, as justification is, there could be no renewing

day by day, nor growth in grace. Perfectum est cui nihil deest & cui

nihil addi potest; i.e. that is perfect which wants nothing, and to

which nothing can be added. The apostle indeed prays for the

Thessalonians, "that God would sanctify them," "holoteleis", wholly,

perfectly, 1 Thess. 5: 23. And this is matter of prayer and hope;

for, at last, it will grow up to perfection; but this perfect

holiness is reserved for the perfect state in the world to come, and

none but deluded, proud spirits boast of it here: but when "that

which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done

away," 1 Cor. 13: 9, 10. And upon the imperfection of the new

creature in every faculty, that warfare and daily conflict spoken

of, Gal. 5: 17. and experienced by every Christian, is grounded;

grace rises gradually in the soul, as the sun does in the heavens,

"which shineth more and more unto a perfect day," Prov. 4: 18.

Fifthly, To conclude, This life with which the regenerate are

quickened, is an everlasting life. "This is the record, that God has

given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," 1 John 5:

11. This principle of life, is the seed of God; and that remains in

the soul for ever, 1 John 3: 9. It is no transient, vanishing thing,

but a fixed, permanent principle, which abides in the soul for ever;

a man may lose his gifts, but grace abides; the soul may, and must

be separated from the body, but grace cannot be separated from the

soul: when all forsake us, this will not leave us.

This infused principle is therefore vastly different, both from

the extraordinary gifts of prophecy, wherein the Spirit was

sometimes said to come upon men, under the Old Testament, 1 Sam. 10:

6, 10 and from the common vanishing effects he sometimes produceth

in the unregenerate, of which we have frequent accounts in the new

Testament, Heb 6: 4 and John 5: 35. It is one thing for the Spirit

to come upon a man in the way of present influence and assistance,

and another thing to dwell in a man as in his temple

And thus of the nature and quality of this blessed work of the

Spirit in quickening us.

Secondly, Having seen the nature and properties of the

spiritual life, we are concerned in the next place to enquire into

the way and manner in which it is wrought and infused by the Spirit,

and here we must say,

First of all, that the work is wrought in the soul very

mysteriously; so Christ tells Nicodemus, John 3: 8 "The wind bloweth

where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not

tell whence it comes, or whither it goes, so is every one that is

born of the Spirit". There be many opinions among philosophers about

the original of wind; but we have no certain knowledge of it; we

describe it by its effects and properties, but know little of its

original: and if the works of God in nature be so abstruse, and

unsearchable, how much more so are these sublime, and supernatural

works of the Spirit?

We are not able to solve the Phenomena of nature, we can give

no account of our own formation in the womb, Eccl 11: 5. Who can

exactly describe how the parts of the body are formed, and the soul

infused? "It is curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth,"

as the Psalmist speaks, Psal 139: 16. but how, we know not Basil

saith, divers questions may be moved about a fly, which may puzzle

the greatest philosopher: we know little of the forms and essences

of natural things, much less at these profound, and abstruse

spiritual things

Secondly, But though we cannot pry into these secrets by the

eye of reason, yet God has revealed this to us in his word, that it

is wrought by his own mighty power, Eph. 1: 19. The apostle ascribes

this work to the exceeding greatness of the power of God; and this

must needs be, if we consider how the Spirit of God expresses it in

scripture by a new creation; i e. a giving being to something out of

nothing, Eph. 2: 10. In this it differs from all the effects of

human power, for man always works upon some pre-existent matter, but

here is no such matter; all that is in man, the subject of this

work, is only a passive capacity, or receptivity, but nothing is

found in him to contribute towards this work; this supernatural life

is not, nor can it be educed out of natural principles; this wholly

transcends the sphere of all natural power; but of this more anon.

Thirdly, This also we may affirm of it, that this divine life

is infused into all the natural faculties. and powers of the soul,

not one exempted, 1 Thess. 5: 23. The whole soul and spirit is the

recipient subject of it, and with respect to this general infusion

into all the faculties and powers of the soul, it is called a new

creature, a new man, having an integral perfection, and fulness of

all its parts and members; it becomes light in the mind, Johns 17:

3. Obedience in the will, 1 Pet. 1: 2. In the affections an heavenly

temper and tenderness, Col. 3: 1, 2. And so is variously denominated

even as the sea is from the several shores it washes, though it be

one and the same sea. And here, we must observe, lies one main

difference betwixt a regenerate soul and an hypocrite; the one is

all of a piece, as I may say, the principle of spiritual life runs

into all, and every faculty and affections, and sanctifies or renews

the whole man; whereas the change upon hypocrites is but partial and

particular; he may have new light, but no new love; a new tongue,

but not a new heart; this or that vice may be reformed, but the

whole course of his life is not altered.

Fourthly, and lastly, This infusion of spiritual life is done

instantaneously, as all creation work is; hence it is resembled to

that plastic power, which, in a moment, made the light to shine out

of darkness; just so God shines into our hearts, 2 Cor. 4: 6.

It is true, a soul may be a long time under the preparatory

works of the Spirit, he may be under convictions and humiliations,

purposes and resolutions a long time; he may be waiting, at the pool

of Bethesda, attending the means and ordinances, but when the Spirit

comes once to quicken the soul, it is done in a moment: even as it

is in the infusion of the rational soul, the body is long ere it be

prepared and mounded, but when once the embryo or matter is ready,

it is quickened with the spirit of life in an instant: so it is

here; but O what a blessed moment is this! Upon which the whole

weight of our eternal happiness depends; for it is Christ in us,

i.e. Christ formed in us, who is the hope of glory, Col. 1: 27. And

our Lord expressly tells us, John 3: 3. That except we be regenerate

and born again, we cannot see the kingdom of God. And thus of the

way and manner of its infusion.

Thirdly, Let the design and end of God, in this his quickening

work, be next considered; for what end and with what design and aim

this work is wrought. And if we consult the scriptures in this

matter, we shall find this principle of life is infused in order to

our glorifying God, in this world, by a life of obedience, and our

enjoying of God in the works to come.

First, spiritual life is infused in order to a course of

obedience in this world, whereby God is glorified. So we read in

Eph. 2: 10, "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has

before ordained that we should walk in them:" habits are to actions,

as the root is to the fruit, it is for fruit sake that we plant the

root, and ingraft the branches. So in Ezek 36: 26, 27 "A new spirit

will I also put within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes,

and ye shall keep my judgements and do them". This is the next or

immediate design and end, not only of the first infusion of the

principle of life into the soul, but of all the exciting, actuating,

and assisting works of the Spirit afterwards. Now this principle of

spiritual life infused, has a twofold influence into obedience.

First, This makes a sincere and true obedience, when it flows

from an inward vital principle of grace. The hypocrite is moved by

something ab extra, from without, as the applause of men, the

accommodation of fleshly interests, the force of education or if

there be any thing from within that moves him, it is but self-

interest, to quiet a disturbing conscience, and support his vain

hopes of heaven; but he never acts from a new principle, a new

nature, inclining him to holy actions. Sincerity mainly lies in the

harmony and correspondence of actions to their principles: from this

infused principle it is, that men hunger and thirst for God, and go

to their duties as men do to their meals, when they find an empty

craving stomach.

O reader, pause a little upon this ere thou pass on, ask thy

heart whether it be so with thee: are holy duties connatural to

thee? Does thy soul move and work after God by a kind of

supernatural instinct? This then will be to thee a good evidence of

thy integrity.

Secondly, From this infused principle of life results the

excellence of our obedience, as well as the sincerity of it; for by

virtue and reason thereof, it becomes free and voluntary, not forced

and constrained, it drops like honey, and of its own accord, out of

the comb, Cant. 4: 11. or as waters from the fountain, without

forcing, John 4: 14. An unprincipled professor must be pressed hard

by some weight of affliction, ere he will yield one tear, or pour

out a prayer, Psal 78: 14. "When he slew them, then they sought

him."

Now the freedom of obedience is the excellency of it, God's eye

is much upon that, 1 Cor. 9: 17. yea, and the uniformity of our

obedience, which is also a special part of the beauty of it, results

from hence: he that acts from a principle acts fluently and

uniformly, and there is a proportion betwixt the parts of his

conversation; this is it which makes us holy, "en pasei anastrofe",

in all manner of conversation, or in every point and turning of our

conversations, as the word imports, 1 Pet. 1: 15. Whereas he that is

moved by this or that external accidental motive, must needs be very

uneven, "like the legs of a lame man," as the expression is, Prov.

26: 7. "which are not equal." Now a word of God, and then the

discourse runs muddy and profane or carnal again; all that evenness

and uniformity that are in the several parts of a Christian's life,

are the effect of this infused principle of spiritual life.

Thirdly, Another aim and design of God in the infusion of this

principle of life, is thereby to prepare and qualify the soul for

the enjoyment of himself in heaven: "Except a man be born again he

cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3: 3. All that shall possess

that inheritance must be begotten again to it, as the apostle

speaks, 1 Pet. 1: 3, 4. This principle of grace is the very seed of

that glory; it is eternal life in the root and principle, John 17:

3. by this the soul is attempered and qualified for that state and

enjoyment. What is the life of glory but the vision of God, and the

soul's assimilation to God by that vision? From both which results

that unspeakable joy and delight which passeth understanding: but

what vision of God, assimilation to God, or delight in God, can that

soul have which was never quickened with the supernatural principle

of grace? The temper of such souls is expressed in that sad

character, Zech. 11: 8. "My soul loathed them, and their soul also

abhorred me." For want of this vital principle it is, that the very

same duties and ordinances which are the delights and highest

pleasures of the saints, are no better than a mere drudgery and

bondage to others, Mal. 1: 13. Heaven would be no heaven to a dead

soul; this principle of life, in its daily growth and improvement,

is our meetness, as well as our evidence, for heaven: these are the

main ends of its infusion.

Fourthly, In the next place, according to the method proposed,

I am obliged to show you, that this quickening work is wholly

supernatural; it is the sole and proper work of the Spirit of God.

So Christ himself expressly asserts it, in John 3: 6, 8. "That which

is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit

is spirit: the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou heareth the

sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it

goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Believers are the birth or offspring of the Spirit, who

produceth the new creature in them in an unintelligible manner, even

to themselves. So far is it above their own ability to produce, that

it is above their capacity to understated the way of its production:

as if you should ask, Do you know from whence the wind comes? No: Do

you know whither it goes? No: But you hear and feel it when it

blows? Yes: Why, so is every one that is born of the Spirit; he

feels the efficacy, and discerns the effect of the Spirit on his own

soul, but cannot understand or describe the manner of their

production. This is not only above the carnal, but above the renewed

mind to comprehend; we can contribute nothing, I mean actively, to

the production of this principle of life, we may indeed be said to

concur passively with the Spirit in it; i. e. there is found in us a

capacity, aptness, or receptiveness of this principle of life: our

nature is endowed with such faculties and powers as are meet

subjects to receive, and instruments to act this spiritual life: God

only quickens the rational nature with spiritual life.

It is true also, that in the progress of sanctification, a man

does actively concur with the Spirit, but in the first production of

this spiritual principle he can do nothing; he can indeed perform

those external duties that have a remote tendency to it, but he

cannot by the power of nature perform any saving act, or contribute

any thing more than a passive capacity to the implantation of a new

principle: as will appear by the following arguments.

Arg. 1 He that actively concurs to his own regeneration, makes

himself to differ; but this is denied to all regenerate men, 1 Cor

4: 7 "Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou

that thou midst not receive?"

Arg. 2 That to which the scripture ascribes both impotence and

enmity, with respect to grace, cannot actively, and of itself,

concur to the production of it: but the scripture ascribes both

impotency and enmity to nature, with respect to grace. It denies to

it a power to do any thing of itself, John 15:5. And, which is less,

it denies to it a power to speak a good word, Mat. 12: 34. And,

which is least of all, it denies it power to think a good thought, 2

Cor 3:5. This impotency, if there were no more, cuts off all

pretence of our active concurrence; but then if we consider that it

ascribes enmity to our natures, as well as impotency, how clear is

the case! See Rom 8: 7 "The carnal mind is enmity against God". And

Col 1: 21. "And you that were enemies in your minds by wicked

works." So then nature is so far productive of this principle, as

impotency and enmity can enable it to be so

Arg. 3 That which is of natural production, must needs be

subject to natural dissolution, that which is born of the flesh is

flesh, a perishing thing, for every thing is as its principle is,

and there can be no more in the effect, then there is in the cause:

but this principle of spiritual life is not subject to dissolution,

it is the water that springs up into everlasting life, John 4: 14.

The seed of God, which remaineth in the regenerate soul, 1 Johns 3:

9. And all this, because it is "born not of corruptible, but of

incorruptible seed," 1 Pet. 1: 23.

Arg. 4. If our new birth be our resurrection, a new creation,

yea, a victory over nature, then we cannot actively contribute to

its production; but under all these notions it is represented to us

in the scriptures; it is our resurrection from the dead, Eph. 5: 14.

And you know the body is wholly passive in its resurrection: but

though it concurs not, yet it gives pre-existent matter: therefore

the metaphor is designedly varied, Eph. 4: 24. where it is called a

creation: in which there is neither active concurrence, nor pre-

existent matter; but though creation excludes pre-existent matter,

yet in producing something out of nothing, there is no reluctancy

not opposition: therefore to show how purely supernatural this

principle of life is, it is clothed and presented to us in the

notion of a victory, 2 Cor. 10: 4. And so leaves all to grace.

Arg. 5. If nature could produce, or but actively concur to the

production of this spiritual life, then the best natures would be

soonest quickened with it; and the worst natures not at all, or at

last, and least of all: but contrarily, we find the worst natures

often regenerated, and the best left in the state of spiritual

death: with how many sweet homilitical virtues was the young man

adorned? Mark 10: 21. yet graceless: and what a sink of sin was Mary

Magdalene, Luke 7: 37. yet sanctified. Thus beautiful Rachel is

barren, while Leah bears children. And there is scarce any thing

that affects and melts the hearts of Christians more than this

comparative consideration does, when they consider vessels of gold

cast away, and leaden ones chosen for such noble uses. So that it is

plain enough to all wise and humble souls, that this new life is

wholly of supernatural production.

Fifthly, and lastly, I shall briefly represent the necessary

antecedence of this quickening work of the Spirit, to our first

closing with Christ by faith: and this will easily let itself into

your understandings, if you but consider the nature of the vital act

of faith; which is the soul's receiving of Christ, and resting upon

him for pardon and salvation: in which two things are necessarily

included, viz.

1. The renouncing of all other hopes and dependencies.

2. The opening of the heart fully to Jesus Christ.

First, The renouncing of all other hopes and dependencies

whatsoever. Self in all its acceptations, natural, sinful, and

moral, is now to be denied and renounced for ever, else Christ cam

never be received, Rom. 10: 3. not only self in its vilest

pollutions, but self in its richest ornaments and endowments: but

this is as impossible to the unrenewed and natural man, as it is for

rocks or mountains to start from their centre, and fly like

wandering atoms in the air: nature will rather chose to run the

hazard of everlasting damnation, than escape it by a total

renunciation of its beloved hosts, or self-righteousness: this

supernatural work necessarily requires a supernatural principle,

Rom. 8: 2.

Secondly, The openings the heart fully to Jesus Christ, without

which Christ can never be received, Rev. 3: 20. but this also is the

effect of the quickening Spirit, the Spirit of life which is in

Christ Jesus. Sooner may we expect to see the flowers and blossoms

open without the influence of the sun, than the heart and will of a

sinner open to receive Christ without a principle of spiritual life

first derived from him: and this will be past doubt to all that

consider not only the impotence but the ignorance, prejudice, and

aversations of nature, by which the door of the heart is barred, and

chained against Christ, John 5: 40. So that nature has neither

ability nor will, power nor desire, to come to Christ: if any have

an heart opened to receive him, it is the Lord that opens it by his

Almighty Power, and that in the way of an infused principle of life

supernatural.

Quest. But here it may be doubted and objected, against this

position. If we cannot believe till we are quickened with spiritual

life, as you say, and cannot be justified till we believe, as all

say, then it will follow, that a regenerate soul may be in the state

of condemnation for a time, and consequently perish, if death should

befall him in that juncture.

Sol. To this I return, That when we speak of the priority of

this quickening work of the Spirit to our actual believing, we

rather understand it of the priority of nature, than of time, the

nature and order of the work requiring it to be so: a vital

principle must, in order of nature, be infused before a vital act

can be exerted. First, Make the tree good, and then the fruit good:

and admit we should grant some priority in time also to this

quickening principle, before actual faith, yet the absurdity

mentioned would be no way consequent upon that concession; for as

the vital act of faith quickly follows that regenerating principle,

so the soul is abundantly secured against the danger objected: God

never beginning any special work of grace upon the soul, and then

leaving it and the soul with it in hazard, but preserves both to the

finishing and completing of his gracious design, Phil. 1: 6.

First use of Information.

Inf. 1. If such be the nature and necessity of this principle

of divine life, as you have heard it opened in the foregoing

discourse, then hence it follows, That unregenerate men are not

better than dead men. So the text represent them "you has he

quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" i. e. spiritually

dead, though naturally alive; yea and lively too as any other

persons in the world. There is a threefold consideration of objects,

viz.

1. Naturally

2. Politically

3. Theologically.

First, Naturally, To all those things that are natural, they

are alive: they can understand, reason, discourse, project, and

contrive, as well as others; they can eat, drink, and build, plant,

and suck out the natural comfort of these things, as much as any

others. So their life is described, Job 21: 12 "They take the

timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend

their days in wealth," &c And James 5: 5 "Ye have lived in pleasure

upon earth," as the fish lives in the water its natural element, and

yet this natural sensual life is not allowed the name of life, 1

Tim. 5: 9 such persons are dead whilst they live; it is a base and

ignoble life, to have a soul only to salt the body or to enable a

man for a few years to eat, and drink, and talk; and laugh, and then

die.

Secondly, Objects may be considered politically, and with

respect to such things, they are alive also: they can buy and sell,

and manage all their worldly affairs with as much dexterity, skill,

and policy as other men: yea, "the children of this world are wiser

in their generation than the children of light," Luke 16: 8. The

entire stream of their thoughts, projects, and studies, running in

that one channel; leaving but one design to manage, they must needs

excel in worldly wisdom: But then,

Thirdly, Theologically considered, they are dead; without life,

sense, or motion, towards God, and the things that are above: their

understandings are dead, 1 Cor. 2: 14 and cannot receive the things

that are of God; their wills are dead, and cannot move towards Jesus

Christ, John 6: 65. Their affections are dead, even to the most

excellent and spiritual objects; and all their duties are dead

duties, without life or spirit. This is the sad case of the

unregenerate world.

Inf. 2. This speaks encouragement to ministers and parents, to

wait in hopes of success at last, even upon those that yet give them

little hope of conversion at the present.

The world you see is the Lord's; when the Spirit of life comes

upon their dead souls, they shall believe, and be made willing; till

then, we do but plough upon the rocks: yet let not our hand slack in

duty, pray for them, and plead with them: you know not in which

prayer, or exhortation, the spirit of life may breathe upon them.

Can these dry bones live? Yes, if the Spirit of life from God

breathe upon them, they can, and shall live: what though their

dispositions be averse to all things that are spiritual and serious,

yet even such have been regenerated, when more sweet and promising

natures have been passed by, and left under spiritual death.

It was the observation of Mr. Ward, upon his brother Mr Daniel

Rogers, (who was a man of great gifts and eminent graces, yet of a

very bad temper and constitution) Though my brother Rogers, saith

he, has grace enough for two men, yet not half enough for himself.

It may be you have prayed and striven long with your relations

and to little purpose, yet be not discouraged. How often was Mr John

Rogers, that famous and successful divine, a grief of heart to his

relations in his younger years, proving a wild and lewd young man,

to the great discouragement of his pious friends; yet, at last, the

Lord graciously changed him, so that Mr. Richard Rogers would say,

when he could exercise the utmost degree of charity or hope, for any

that at present were vile and naught, I will never despair of any

man for Johns Rogers' sake.

Inf. 4. How honourable are Christians by their new birth! "They

are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will

of man, but of God," John 1: 13. i. e. not in an impure, or mere

natural way, but in a most spiritual and supernatural manner: they

are the offspring of God, the children of the Most High, as well by

regeneration as by adoption; which is the greatest advancement of

the human nature, next to its hypostatical union with the second

person. Oh, what honour is this for a poor sinful creature, to have

the very life of God breathed into his soul! All other dignities of

nature are trifles compared with this. This makes a Christian a

sacred hallowed thing, the living temple of God, 1 Cor 6: 19. The

special object of his delight.

Inf. 4. How deplorable is the condition of the unregenerate

world, in no better case than dead men? Now to affect our hearts

with the misery of such conditions, let us consider and compare it

in the following particulars,

First, There is no beauty in the dead, all their loveliness

goes away at death; there is no spiritual beauty or loveliness in

any that are unregenerate: It is true, many of them have excellent

moral homilitical virtues, which adorn their conversations in the

eyes of men; but what are all these, but so many sweet flowers

strewed over a dead corpse?

Secondly, The dead have no pleasure nor delight; even so the

unregenerate are incapable of the delights of the Christian life;

"to be spiritually minded is life and peace," Rom. 8: 6. i.e. this

is the only serene, placid, and pleasant life: when the prodigal,

who was once dead, was alive, then he began to be merry, Luke 15:24.

They live in sensual pleasures, but this is to be dead while alive,

in scripture-reckoning.

Thirdly, The dead have no heat, they are as cold as clay; so

are all the unregenerate towards God and things above: their lusts

are hot, but their affections to God cold and frozen: that which

makes a gracious heart melt, will not make an unregenerate heart

move.

Fourthly, The dead must be buried, Gen. 23: 4. "Bury my dead

out of my sight:" So must the unregenerate be buried out of God's

sight for ever: buried in the lowest hell, in the place of darkness,

for ever, John 3: 3. Wo to the unregenerate, good had it been for

them had they never been born!

Infer. 5. How greatly are all men concerned to examine their

condition with respect to spiritual life and death! It is very

common for men to presume upon their union with, and interest in

Christ. This privilege is, by common mistake, extended generally to

all that profess the Christian religion, and practice the external

duties of it, when, in truth, no more are or can be united to

Christ, than are quickened by the Spirit of life which is in Christ

Jesus, Rom. 8: 1, 2. O try your interest in Christ by this rule, if

I am quickened by Christ, I have union with Christ. And,

First, If there be spiritual sense in your souls, there is

spiritual life in them: there are "aisteteria", senses belonging to

the spiritual as well as to the animal life, Heb. 5: 14. They can

feel and sensibly groan under soul pressures and burdens of sin,

Rom. 7: 24. The dead feel not, moan not under the burdens of sin,

but the living do: they may be sensible indeed of the evil of sin,

with respect to themselves, but not as against God, damnation may

scare them, but pollution does not; hell may fright them, but not

the offending of God.

Secondly, If there be spiritual hunger and thirst, it is a

sweet sign of spiritual life; this sign agrees to Christians of a

day old, 1 Pet. 2: 2. Even "new born babes desire the sincere milk

of the word:" If spiritual life be in you, you know how to expound

that scripture, Psal. 42: 1. without any other interpreter than your

own experience: you will feel somewhat like the gnawing of an empty

stomach making you restless during the interruption of your daily

communion with the Lord.

Thirdly, If there be spiritual conflicts with sin, there is

spiritual life in your souls, Gal. 5: l7. Not only a combat betwixt

light in the higher, and lust in the lower faculties; not only

opposition to more gross external corruptions, that carry more

infamy and horror with them than other sins do: but the same faculty

will be the seat of war; and the more inward and secret any lust is,

by so much the more will it be opposed and mourned over.

In a word, the weakest Christian may, upon impartial

observation, find such signs of spiritual life in himself (if he

will allow himself time to reflect upon the bent and frame of his

own heart) as desires after God, conscience of duties, fears, cares,

and sorrows, about sin; delight in the society of heavenly and

spiritual men; and a loathing and burden in the company of vain and

carnal persons.

Object. O but I have a very dead heart to spiritual things!

Sol. It is a sign of life that you feel, and are sensible of

that deadness; and besides, there is a great deal of difference

betwixt spiritual deadness and death; the one is the state of the

unregenerate, the other is the disease of regenerate men.

Object. Some signs of spiritual life are clear to me, but I

cannot close with others.

Sol. If you can really close with any, it may satisfy you,

though you be dark in others; for if a child cannot go, yet if it

can suck; but if it cannot suck, yet if it can cry; yea, if it

cannot cry, yet if it breathe, it is alive.

Sermon 6.

Of that Act on our Part, by which we do actually and effectually

apply Christ to our own Souls.

John 1: 12.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the

sons of God; even to them that believe on his Name.

No sooner is the soul quickened by the Spirit of God, but it

answers, in some measure, the end of God in that work, by its active

reception of Jesus Christ, in the day of believing: What this vital

act of faith is upon which so great a weight depends, as our

interest in Christ and everlasting blessedness, this scripture

before us will give you the best account of; wherein (omitting the

consideration of the coherence and context of the words) we have

three things to ponder.

First, The high and glorious privilege conferred, viz. "Power

to become the sons of God."

Secondly, The subject of this privilege described, "As many as

received him."

Thirdly, The description explained, by way of opposition, "Even

as many as believe on his name."

First, The privilege conferred is a very high and glorious one,

than which no created being is capable of greater; "power to become

the sons of God:" this word "eksousian" is of large extent and

signification, and is, by some, rendered "this right, by others this

dignity, by others this prerogative, this privilege or honour:" It

implies a title or right to adoption, not only with respect to the

present benefits of it in this life, but also to that blessed

inheritance which is laid up in heaven for the sons of God. And so

Grotius rightly expounds it of our consummate sonship, consisting in

the actual enjoyment of blessedness, as well as that which is

inchoate: not only a right to pardon, favour, and acceptance now,

but to heaven and the full enjoyment of God hereafter. O what an

honour, dignity, and privilege is this!

Secondly, The subjects of this privilege are described; "As

many as received him." This text describes them by that very grace,

faith, which gives them their title and right to Christ and his

benefits; and by that very act of faith, which primarily confers

their right to his person, and secondarily to his benefits, viz.

receiving him: there be many graces besides faith, but faith only is

the grace that gives us right to Christ; and there be many acts of

faith besides receiving, but this receiving or embracing of Christ,

is the justifying and saving act: "As many as received him," "hosoi

de elabon auton", as many, be they of any nation, sex, age, or

condition. For "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision, nor

uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free: but Christ is

all, and in all," Col. 3: 11.

Nothing but unbelief bars men from Christ and his benefits. As

many as [received him;} the word signifies "to accept, take," or,

(as we fitly render it), to receive, assume, or take to us; a word

most aptly expressing the nature and office of faith, yea, the very

justifying and saving act; and we are also heedfully to note its

special object, "elabon auton"" The text saith not "auta", his, but

"auton", him, i.e. his person, as he is clothed with his offices,

and not only his benefits and privileges. These are secondary and

consequential things to our receiving him. So that it is a

receiving, assuming, or accepting the Lord Jesus Christ, which must

have respect to the tenders and proposals of the gospel, "for

therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,"

Rom. 1: 17. therein is Jesus Christ revealed, proposed, and offered

unto sinners, as the only way of justification and salvation; which

gospel-offer, as before was opened, is therefore ordinarily

necessary to believing, Rom. 10: 11,12, 13, &c.

Thirdly, This description is yet further explained by this

additional exegetical clause, [even to them that believe on his

name;] here the terms are varied, though the things expressed in

both be the same; what he called receiving there, is called

believing on his name here, to show us that the very essence of

saving faith consists in our receiving of Christ. By his name, we

are to understand Christ himself: it is usual to take these two,

believing in him, and believing in his name, as terms convertible,

and of the same importance, "hu hu; shmo ushmo", Ipse est nomen

suum, et nomen ejus ipse est: His name is Himself, and Himself is

his name. So that here we have the true nature and precious benefits

of saving faith excellently expressed in this scripture, the sum of

which take in this proposition;

Doct. That the receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ is that

saving and vital act of faith which gives the soul right both

to his person and benefits.

We cannot act spiritually till we begin to live spiritually:

Therefore the spirit of life must first join himself to us, in his

quickening work, (as was shown you in the last sermon), which being

done, we begin to act spiritually, by taking hold upon, or receiving

Jesus Christ, which is the thing designed to be opened in this

sermon.

The soul is the life of the body, faith is the life of the

soul, and Christ is the life of faith. There are several sorts of

faith besides saving faith, and in saving faith there are several

acts, besides the justifying or saving act; but this receiving act,

which is to be our subject this day, is that upon which both our

righteousness and eternal happiness do depend. "This, as a form,

differences saving faith from all other kinds or sorts of faith;" by

this it is that we are justified and saved. "To as many as received

him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God:" yet it does

not justify and save us by reason of any proper dignity that is

found in this act, but by reason of the object it receives or

apprehends. The same thing is often expressed in scripture by other

terms, as "Coming to Christ," John 6: 35. Trusting or staying upon

Christ, Isa. 50: 10. But whatever is found in those expressions, it

is all comprehended in this, as will appear hereafter. Now, the

method into which I shall cast my discourse on this subject, that I

may handle it with as much perspicuity and profit as I can, shall

be,

First, To explain and open the nature of this receiving of

Christ, and show you what it includes.

Secondly, To prove that this is the justifying and saving act

of faith.

Thirdly, To show you the excellency of this act of faith.

Fourthly, To remove some mistakes, and give you the true

account of the dignity and excellency of this act.

Fifthly, And then bring home all, in a proper and close

application.

First, In the first place then, I will endeavour to explain and

open the nature of this receiving of Christ, and show you what is

implied in it.

And, indeed, it involves many deep mysteries, and things of

greatest weight. People are generally very ignorant and unacquainted

with the importance of this expression; they have very slight

thoughts of faith who never passed under the illuminating,

convincing, and humbling work of the Spirit: but we shall find that

saving faith is quite another thing, and differs in its whole kind

and nature from that traditional faith, and common assent, which is

so fatally mistaken for it in the world.

For, First, It is evident that no man can receive Jesus Christ

in the darkness of natural ignorance: we must understand and discern

who and what he is, whom we receive to be the Lord our

righteousness. If we know not his person, and his offices, we do not

take, but mistake Christ. It is a good rule in the civil law, Non

consentit qui non sentit. A mistake of the person invalidates the

match. He that takes Christ for a mere man, or denies the

satisfaction of his blood, or divests him of his human nature, or

denies any of his most glorious and necessary offices, let them cry

up as high as they will, his spirituality, glory, and exemplary life

and death, they can never receive Jesus Christ aright. This is such

a crack, such a flaw in the very foundation of faith, as undoes and

destroys all. Ignorantis non est consensus: All saving faith is

founded in light and knowledge, and therefore it is called

knowledge, Isa. 53: 11. and seeing is inseparably connected with

believing, John 6: 40. Men must hear and learn of the Father before

they can come to Christ, John 6: 45. The receiving act of faith is

directed and guided by knowledge. I will not presume to state the

degree of knowledge which is absolutely necessary to the reception

of Christ; I know the first acting of faith are, in most Christians,

accompanied with much darkness and confusion of understanding: but

yet we must say in the general, that wherever faith is, there is so

much light as is sufficient to discover to the soul its own sins,

dangers and wants, and the all-sufficiency, suitableness, and

necessity of Christ, for the supply and remedy of all; and without

this, Christ cannot be received. "Come unto me, all ye that labour,

and I will give you rest," Matt. 11: 28.

Secondly, The receiving of Christ, necessarily implies the

assent of the understanding to the truths of Christ revealed in the

gospel, viz. his person, natures, offices, his incarnation, death,

and satisfaction; which assent, though it be not in itself saving

faith, yet is it the foundation and ground work of it; it being

impossible the soul should receive, and fiducially embrace, what the

mind does not assent unto as true and infallibly certain. Now, there

are three degrees of assent; conjecture, opinion, and belief:

Conjecture is but a slight and weak inclination to assent to the

thing propounded, by reason of the weighty objections that lie

against it. Opinion is a more steady and fixed assent, when a man is

almost certain, though yet some fear of the contrary remains with

him. Belief is a more full and assured assent to the truth; to which

the mind may be brought four ways.

First, By the perfect intelligence of sense, not hindered or

deceived. So I believe the truth of these propositions, Fire is hot,

water is moist, honey is sweet, gall is bitter.

Secondly, By the native clearness of self evident principles.

So I believe the truth of these propositions, The whole is more than

a part; the cause is before the effect.

Thirdly, By discourse, and rational deduction. so I believe the

truth of this proposition, Where all the parts of a thing are, there

is the whole.

Fourthly, By infallible testimony, when any thing is witnessed

or asserted by one whose truth is unquestionable. And of this sort

is the assent of faith, which is therefore called our receiving the

witness of God, 1 John 5: 9. our setting to our seal that God is

true, John 3: 33. This prima veritas, divine verity, is the very

formal object of faith: into this we resolve our faith. Thus saith

the Lord, is that firm foundation upon which our assent is built.

And thus we see good reason to believe those profound mysteries of

the incarnation of Christ; the hypostatical union of the two natures

in his wonderful person; the mystical union of Christ and believers;

though we cannot understand these things, by reason of the darkness

of our minds. It satisfies the soul to find these mysteries in the

written word; upon that foundation it firmly builds its assent: and

without such an assent of faith, there can be no embracing of

Christ: all acts of faith and religion, without assent, are but as

so many arrows shot at random into the open air, they signify

nothing for want of a fixed determinate object.

It is therefore the policy of Satan, by injecting or fomenting

atheistical thoughts, (with which young converts use to find

themselves greatly infested) to undermine and destroy the whole work

of faith. But God makes his people victorious over them: yea, and

even at that time they do assent to the truths of the word, when

they think they do not; as appears by their tenderness and fear of

sin, their diligence and care of duty. If I discern these things in

a Christian's life, he must excuse me if I believe him not, when he

saith he does not assent to the truths of the gospel.

Thirdly, Our receiving Christ necessarily implies our hearty

approbation, liking and estimation; yea, the acquiescence of our

very souls in Jesus Christ, as the most excellent, suitable, and

complete remedy for all our wants, sins, and dangers, that ever

could be prepared by the wisdom and love of God for us: We must

receive him with such a frame of heart, as rests upon, and trusts in

him, it ever we receive him aright, "To them that believe he is

precious," 1 Pet. 2: 7. This is the only sovereign-plaister in all

the world that is large enough, and efficacious enough, to cure our

wounds: And therefore as Christ is most highly esteemed, and

heartily approved, as the only remedy for our souls; so the

sovereign grace and wisdom of God are admired, and the way and

method he has taken to save poor souls, by Jesus Christ, most

heartily approved as the most apt and excellent method, both for his

glory and our good, that ever could be taken: for it is a plain

case, that none will espouse themselves with conjugal affections, to

that person whom they esteem not as the best for them that can be

chosen: none will forsake and quit all for his sake, except they

account him as the spouse did, "the chiefest of ten thousand."

There are two things in Christ, which must gain the greatest

approbation in the soul of a poor convinced sinner, and bring it to

rest upon Jesus Christ.

First, That it can find nothing in Christ that is distasteful,

or unsuitable to it, as it does experimentally find in the best

creatures. In him is no bleakness, but a fulness of all saving

abilities; "Able to save to the uttermost:" No pride, causing him to

scorn and condemn the most wretched soul that comes to him: No

inconstancy or levity, to cause him to cast off the soul whom he has

once received: No passion but a Lamb for meekness and patience:

There is no spot to be found in him, but "He is altogether lovely,"

Cant. 5: 16.

Secondly, As the believer can find nothing in Christ that is

distasteful, so it finds nothing wanting in Christ that is

necessary, or desirable: Such is the fulness of wisdom,

righteousness, sanctification, and redemption that is in Christ,

that nothing is left to desire but the full enjoyment of him. O,

saith the soul, how completely happy shall I be, if I can but win

Christ! I would not envy the nobles of the earth, were I but in

Christ. I am hungry and athirst, and Christ is meat indeed, and

drink indeed; this is the best thing in all the world for me,

because so necessary and so suitable to the needs of a soul ready to

perish. I am a law-condemned and a self-condemned sinner, trembling

for fear of the execution of the curse upon me every moment; in

Christ is complete righteousness to justify my soul; O there is

nothing better for me than Christ. I see myself plunged, both in

nature and practice, into the odious pollutions of sin, and in

Christ is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness: His blood

is a fountain of merit, his spirit is a fountain of holiness and

purity: None but Christ, none but Christ. O the manifold wisdom and

unsearchable love of God, to prepare and furnish such a Christ so

fully answering all the needs, all the distresses, all the fears and

burdens of a poor sinner! Thus the believing soul approves of Christ

as best for it. And thus in believing, it gives glory to God, Rom.

4:21.

Fourthly, Receiving Christ consists in the consent and choice

of the will; and this is the opening of the heart and stretching

forth of he soul to receive him: Thy people shall be willing in the

day of thy power," Psal. 110:3.

It is the great design and main scope of the gospel, to work

over the wills of poor sinners to this: And this was the great

complaint of Christ against the incredulous Jews, John 5: 40. "Ye

will not come unto me that ye might have life."

It is disputed by some, whether faith can be seated in two

distinct faculties, as we seem to place it, when we say it involves

both the approbation of the judgement and the consent of the will. I

will not here entangle my discourse with that fruitless dispute. I

am of the same judgement with those divines, that think faith cannot

be expressed fully by any one single habit, or act of the mind or

will distinctly, for that (as one well notes) there are such

descriptions given of it in scripture, such things are proposed as

the object of it, and such is the experience of all that sincerely

believe, as no one single act, either of the mind or will, can

answer unto: Nor do I see any thing repugnant to scripture or

philosophy if we place it in both faculties. Consent (saith Vasquez)

seems to denote the concourse at the will with the understanding;

but to leave that, it is most certain the saving, justifying act of

faith lies principally in the consent of the will, which consent is

the effect of the Almighty power of God, Eph. 1: 19. He allures and

draws the will to Christ, and he draws with the cords of a man, i.e.

he prevails with it by rational arguments: For the soul being

prepared by convictions of its lost and miserable estate by sin, and

that there is but one door of hope open to it for an escape from the

wrath to come, and that is Christ; being also satisfied of the

fulness and completeness of his saving ability, and of his

willingness to make it over for our salvation, upon such just and

equal terms; this cannot but prevail with the will of a poor

distressed sinner, to consent and chose him.

Fifthly, and lastly, The last and principal thing included in

our receiving of Christ, is the respect that this act of acceptance

has unto the terms upon which Christ is tendered to us in the

gospel, to which it is most agreeable, 1 Cor. 15: 11. "So we preach,

and so ye believed:" Faith answers the gospel-offer, as the impress

upon the zeal does the engraving in the seal; and this is of

principal consideration, for there is no receiving Christ upon any

other terms but his own, proposed in the gospel to us; He will never

come lower, nor make them easier than they are for any man's sake in

the world; we must either receive him upon these, or part with him

for ever as thousands do, who could not be content to agree to some

articles, but rather choose to be damned for ever than submit to

all: This is the great controversy betwixt Christ and sinners; upon

this, many thousands break off the treaty, and part with Christ,

because he will not come to their terms; but every true believer

receives him upon his own, i.e. their acceptance of him by faith, is

in all things consentaneous to the overtures made of him in the

written word. So he tenders himself, and so they receive him, as

will be evident in the following particulars.

First, The gospel offers Christ to us sincerely and really, and

so the true believer receives and accepts him, even with a faith

unfeigned; 1 Tim. 1: 5. If ever the soul be serious and in earnest

in any thing, it is so in this: Can we suppose the heart of him that

flies for his life to the refuge city, to be serious and in earnest

to escape by flight the avenger of blood who pursues him? Then is

the heart of a convinced sinner serious in this matter; for under

that notion is the work of faith presented to us, Heb. 6: 18.

Secondly, Christ is offered to us in the gospel entirely and

undividedly, as clothed with all his offices, priestly, prophetical,

and regal; as Christ Jesus the Lord, Acts 16: 31. and so the true

believer receives him; The hypocrite, like the harlot, is for

dividing, but the sincere believer finds the need he has of every

office of Christ, and knows not how to want any thing that is in

him.

His ignorance makes him necessary and desirable to him as a

prophet: His guilt makes him necessary as a priest: His strong and

powerful lusts and corruptions make him necessary as a king: and in

truth, he sees not any thing in Christ that he can spare; he needs

all that is in Christ, and admires infinite wisdom in nothing more

than the investing Christ with all these offices, which are so

suited to the poor sinner's wants and miseries. Look, as the three

offices are undivided in Christ, so they are in the believer's

acceptance; and before this trial no hypocrite can stand; for all

hypocrites reject and quarrel with something in Christ; they like

his pardon better than his government. They call him indeed, Lord

and Master, but it is but an empty title they bestow upon him; for

let them ask their own hearts if Christ be Lord over their thoughts,

as well as words; over their secret, as well as open actions; over

their darling lusts, as well as others; let them ask, who will

appear to be Lord and Master over them, when Christ and the world

come in competition? When the pleasure of sin shall stand upon one

side, and sufferings to death, and deepest points of self denial,

upon the other side? Surely it is the greatest affront that can be

offered to the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, to separate in our

acceptance, what is so united in Christ, for our salvation and

happiness. As without any one of these offices, the work of our

salvation could not be completed, so without acceptance of Christ in

them all, our union with him by faith cannot be completed.

The gospel-offer of Christ includes all his offices, and gospel-

faith just so receives him; to submit to him, as well as to be

redeemed by him; to imitate him in the holiness of his life, as well

as to reap the purchases and fruits of his death. It must be an

entire receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, Christ is offered to us in the gospel exclusively, as

the alone and only Saviour of sinners; with whose blood and

intercession nothing is to be mixed; but the soul of a sinner is

singly to rely and depend on him, and no other, Acts 4: 2. 1 Cor. 3:

11 and so faith receives him, Psal. 71: 16 "I will make mention of

thy righteousness, even of thine only", Phil 3: 9. "And be found in

him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but

that which is through the faith of Christ." To depend partly upon

Christ's righteousness, and partly upon our own, is to set one foot

upon a rock, and the other in a quick sand; either Christ will be to

us all in all, or nothing at all, in point of righteousness and

salvation; he affects not social honour; as he did the whole work,

so he expects the sole praise; if we be not able to save to the

uttermost, why do we depend capon him at all? and if he be, why do

we lean upon any beside him?

Fourthly, The gospel offers Christ freely to sinners as the

gift, not the sale of God, John 4: 10; Isa. 55: 1; Rev 22: 17 and

even so faith receives him. The believer comes to Christ with an

empty hand, not only as an undeserving, but as an hell-deserving

sinner; he comes to Christ as to one that justifies the ungodly, Rom

4: 5. "Unto him that worketh not, but believeth in him that

justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Where by him that worketh not, he means a convinced, humbled sinner

who finds himself utterly unable to do the task the law sets him,

i.e. perfectly to obey it; and therefore in a law sense is said not

to work; for it is all one as to the intent and purpose of the law,

not to work, and not to work perfectly. This is he convinced of; and

therefore comes to Christ as one that is in himself ungodly,

acknowledging the righteousness, by which alone he can stand before

God, is in Christ, and not in himself, in whole, or in part; and by

the way, let this encourage poor souls that are scared and daunted

for want of due qualifications, for closings with and embracing

Christ. There is nothing qualifies a man for Christ more than a

sense of his unworthiness of him, and the want of all excellencies

or ornaments, that may commend him to divine acceptance.

Fifthly, The gospel offers Christ orderly to sinners, first his

person, then his privileges. God first gives his Son, and then with

him, or as a consequent of that gift, he gives us all things, Rom.

8: 32. In the same order must our faith receive him. The believer

does not marry the portion first, and then the person, but to be

found in him is the first and great care of a believer.

I deny not but it is lawful for any to have an eye to the

benefits of Christ. Salvation from wrath is, and lawfully may be

intended and aimed at: "Look unto me, and be saved all ye ends of

the earth," Isa. 45: 22. Nor do I deny but there are many poor

souls, who being in deep distress and fear, may, and often do, look

mostly to their own safety at first, and that there is much

confusion, as well in the acting of their faith, as in their

condition; but sure I am, it is the proper order in believing, first

to accept the person of the Lord Jesus: Heaven is no doubt very

desirable, but Christ is more: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?"

Psal. 73: 25. Union with Christ is, in order of nature, antecedent

to the communication of his privileges, therefore so it ought to be

in the order and method of believing.

Sixthly, Christ is advisedly, offered in the gospel to sinners,

as the result of God's eternal counsel, a project of grace upon

which his heart and thoughts have been much set, Zech. 6: 13. The

counsel of peace was betwixt the Father and the Son. And so the

believer receives him, most deliberately weighing the matter in his

most deep and serious thoughts; for this is a time of much

solicitude and thoughtfulness. The soul's espousals are acts of

judgement, Hos. 2: 19. on our part, as well as on God's; We are

therefore bid to sit down and count the cost, Luke 14: 28. Faith, or

the actual receiving of Christ, is the result of many previous

debates in the soul; The matter has been pondered over and over: The

objections and discouragements, both from the self-denying terms of

the gospel, and our own vileness and deep guilt, have been

ruminated, and lain upon our hearts day and night, and after all

things have been balanced in the most deep consideration, the soul

is determined to this conclusion, I must have Christ, be the terms

never so hard, be my sins never so great and many, I will yet go to

him, and venture my soul upon him; if I perish, I perish. I have

thought out all my thoughts, and this is the result, union with

Christ here, or separation from God for ever must be my lot.

And thus does the Lord open the hearts of his elect, and win

the consent of their wills to receive Jesus Christ upon the deepest

consideration and debate of the matter in their own most solemn

thoughts: They understand and know, that they must deeply deny

themselves, take up his cross and follow him, Matt. 16: 24. renounce

not only sinful but religious self; these are hard and difficult

things, but yet the necessity and excellency of Christ make them

appear eligible and rational: by all which you see faith is another

thing than what the sound of that word (as it is generally

understood) signifies to the understandings of most men. This is

that fiducial receiving of Christ here to be opened.

Secondly, Our next work will be to evince this receiving of

Christ as has been opened, to be that special saving faith of God's

elect: This is that faith of which such great and glorious things

are spoken in the gospel, which, whosoever has shall be saved, and

he that has it not shall be damned; and this I shall evidently prove

by the following arguments or reasons.

Arg. 1. First, That faith which gives the soul right and title

to spiritual adoption, with all the privileges and benefits thereof,

is true and saving faith.

But such a receiving of Christ as has been described, gives the

soul right and title to spiritual adoption, with all the privileges

and benefits thereof.

Therefore such a receiving of Christ as has been described is

true and saving faith.

The major proposition is undeniable, for our right and title to

spiritual adoption, and the privileges thereof arise from our union

with Jesus Christ; we being united to the Son of God, are, by virtue

of that union, reckoned or accounted sons, Gal. 3: 26. "You are all

the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ:" The act of saving

faith is union with Christ's person, the consequent of that union is

adoption, or right to the inheritance.

The minor is most plain in the text: "To as many as received

him, to them gave he power or right to become the sons of God:"

false faith has no such privilege annexed to it; no unbeliever is

thus dignified: No stranger entitled to this inheritance.

Arg. 2. Secondly, That only is saving and justifying faith,

which is in all true believers, in none but true believers, and in

all true believers at all times.

But such a receiving of Christ as has been described, is in all

true believers, in none but true believers, and in all true

believers at all times.

Therefore such a receiving of Christ as has been described, is

the only saving and justifying faith.

The major is undeniable, that must needs contain the essence of

saving faith, which is proper to every true believer at all times,

and to no other.

The minor will be as clear, for there is no other act of faith,

but this of fiducial receiving Christ as he is offered, that does

agree to all true believers, to none but true believers, and to all

true believers at all times.

There be three acts of faith, assent, acceptance, and

assurance: The Papists generally give the essence of saving faith to

the first, viz. assent. The Lutherans, and some of our own, give it

to the last, viz. assurance: but it can be neither way so. Assent

does not agree only to true believers, or justified persons.

Assurance agrees to justified persons, and them only, but not to all

justified persons, and that at all times.

Assent is too low to contains the essence of saving faith, it

is found in the unregenerate as well as the regenerate: yea, in

devils as well as men, James 2: 19. it is supposed and included in

justifying faith, but it is not the justifying or saving act.

Assurance is as much too high, being found only in some eminent

believers: and in them too but at some times. There is many a true

believer to whom the joy and comfort of assurance is denied; they

may say of their union with Christ, as Paul said of his vision;

whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; so they,

whether in Christ or out of Christ, they cannot tell.

A true believer may "walk in darkness, and see no light," Isa.

50: 10. Nay a man must be a believer before he know himself to be

so; the direct act of faith is before the reflex act: so that the

justifying act of faith lies neither in assent nor in assurance.

Assent saith, I believe that Christ is, and that he is the Saviour

of the elect. Assurance saith, I believe and am sure that Christ

died for me, and that I shall be saved through him. So that assent

widens the nature of faith too much, and assurance upon the other

hand straitens it too much; but acceptance, which saith, I take

Christ in all his offices to be mine, this fits it exactly, and

belongs to all true believers, and to none but true believers; and

to all true believers at all times. This therefore must be the

justifying and saving act of faith.

Arg. 3. Thirdly, That and no other is the justifying and saving

act at faith, to which the properties and effects of saving faith do

belong, or in which they are only found.

But in the fiducial receiving of Christ are the properties and

effects of saving faith only found.

This therefore must be the justifying and saving act of faith.

First, By saving faith, Christ is said to "dwell in our

hearts," Eph. 3: 17. but it is neither by assent, nor assurance, but

by acceptance, and receiving him that he dwells in our hearts; not

by assent, for then he would dwell in the unregenerate; nor by

assurance, for he must dwell in our hearts before we can be assured

of it: therefore it is by acceptance.

Secondly, By faith we are justified, Rom. 5: 1. But neither

assent nor assurance, for the reasons above, do justify; therefore

it must be by the receiving act, and no other.

Thirdly, The scripture ascribes great difficulties to that

faith by which we are saved, as being most cross and opposite to the

corrupt nature of man; but of all the acts of faith, none is clogged

with like difficulties, or conflicts with greater oppositions than

the receiving act does; this act is attended with the greatest

difficulties, fears, and deepest self-denial. In assent, a man's

reason is convinced, and yields to the evidence of truth, so that he

can do no other but assent to the truth. In assurance there is

nothing against man's will or comfort, but much for it; every one

desires it: but it is not so in the acceptance of Christ, upon the

self-denying terms of the gospel, as will hereafter be evinced. We

conclude there fore, that in this consists the nature and essence of

saving faith.

Thirdly, Having seen what the receiving of Jesus Christ is, and

that it is the faith by which we are justified and saved, I next

come to open the dignity and excellency of this faith, whose praises

and encomiums are in all the scriptures; there you find it renowned

by the title of precious faith, 2 Pet. 1: 7. enriching faith, Jam.

2: 5. the work of God, John 6: 29. the great mystery of godliness, 1

Tim. 3: 16. With many more rich epithets throughout the scriptures

bestowed upon it.

Now faith may be considered two ways, viz. either qualitatively

or relatively.

Considered qualitatively, as a saving grace, it has the same

excellency that all other precious saving graces have; as it is the

fruit of the Spirit, it is more precious than gold, Prov. 8: 11, 19.

And so are all other graces as well as faith; in this sense they all

shine with equal glory, and that a glory transcending all the glory

of this world: but then consider faith relatively, as the instrument

by which the righteousness of Christ is apprehended and made ours;

and in that consideration it excels all other graces.

This is the grace that is singled out from among all other

graces, to receive Christ, by which office it is dignified above all

its fellows: as Moses was honoured above the many thousands of

Israel, when God took him up into the mount, admitted him nearer to

himself than any other of all the tribes might come; for they stood

without the rail, while Moses was received into the special presence

of God, and was admitted to such views as others must not have: so

faith is honoured above all its fellow graces, in being singled out,

and solemnly appointed to this high office in our justification:

this is that precious eye that looks unto Christ as the stung

Israelites did to the brazen serpent, and derives healing virtue

from him to the soul. It is the grace which instrumentally saves us,

Eph. 2: 8. As it is Christ's glory to be the door of salvation, so

it is faith's glory to be the golden key that opens that door.

What shall I say of faith? It is the bond of union; the

instrument of justification; the spring of spiritual peace and joy;

the means of spiritual life and subsistence; and therefore the great

scope and drift of the gospel; which aims at and presseth nothing

more than to bring men and women to believe.

First, This is the bond of our union with Christ, that union is

begun in our vivification, and completed in our actual receiving of

Christ. The first is the bond of union on the Spirit's part, the

second a bond of union on our part. "Christ dwelleth in our hearts

by faith," Eph. 3: 17. And therein it is a door opened to let in

many rich blessings to the soul, for, by uniting us to Christ, it

brings us into special favour and acceptation with God, Eph. 1: 6.

Makes us the special objects of Christ's conjugal love and delight,

Eph. 5: 29. Draws from his heart sympathy and a tender sense of all

our miseries and burdens, Heb. 4: 15.

Secondly, It is the instrument of our justification, Rom. 5: 1.

Till Christ be received (thus received by us) we are in our sins;

under guilt and condemnation; but when faith comes, then comes

freedom: "By him all that believe are justified from all things."

Acts 13: 38; Rom 8: 1. For it apprehends or receives the pure and

perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus, wherein the soul, how

guilty and sinful soever it be in itself, stands faultless and

spotless before the presence of God; all obligations to punishment

are, upon believing, immediately dissolved; a full and final pardon

sealed. O precious faith! who can sufficiently value it!

What respect, reader, wouldst thou have to that hand that

should bring thee a pardon when on the ladder or block? Why, such a

pardon, which thou canst not read without tears of joy, is brought

thee by the hand of faith O inestimable grace! This clothes the pure

righteousness of Jesus upon our defiled souls, and so causes us to

become the "righteousness of God in him," or as it is 1 John 3: 7

"Righteous as he is righteous:" Non formali & intrinsica justitia,

sed relativa: Not with a formal inherent righteousness of our own,

but with a relative imputed righteousness from another.

I know this most excellent and most comfortable doctrine of

imputed righteousness, is not only denied but derided by Papists.

Stapleton calls it spectrum cerebri Lutherani: The monstrous birth

of Luther's brain! But, blessed be God, this comfortable truth is

well secured against all attempts of its adversaries. Let their

blasphemous mouths call it in derision, as they do putative

righteousness, i.e. a mere fancied or conceited righteousness: Yet

we know assuredly Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and that

in the way of faith. If Adam's sin became ours by imputation, then

so does Christ's righteousness also become ours by imputation, Rom.

5: 17. If Christ were made a sinner by the imputation of our sins to

him, who had no sin of his own, then we are made righteous by the

imputations of Christ's righteousness to us, who have no

righteousness of our own, according to 2 Cor 5: 21. This was the way

in which Abraham, the father of them that believe, was justified;

and therefore this is the way in which all believers, the children

of Abraham, must, in the like manner, be justified, Rom 4: 22, 23,

24. Who can express the worth of faith in this one respect, were

this all it did for our souls?

But, Thirdly, It is the spring of our spiritual peace and joy:

and that as it is the instrument of our justification. If it be an

instrument of our justification, it cannot but be the spring of our

consolation, Rom 5: 1 "Being justified by faith, we have peace with

God " In uniting us with Christ, and apprehending; and applying his

righteousness to us, it becomes the seed or root of all the peace

and joy of a Christian's life. Joy, the child of faith, therefore

bears its name, Phil 1 25 "The joy of faith". So 1 Pet 1. 8, 9

"believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable." We cannot forbear

rejoicing when by faith we are brought to the sight and knowledge of

such a privileged state; when faith has first given and then cleared

our title to Christ, joy is no more under the soul's command; we

cannot but rejoice, and that with joy unspeakable.

Fourthly, It is the means of our spiritual livelihood and

subsistence: all other graces, like birds in the nest, depend upon

what faith brings in to them; take away faith, and all the graces

languish and die: joy, peace, hope, patience, and all the rest,

depend upon faith, as the members of the natural body do upon the

vessels by which blood and spirits are conveyed to them. "The life

which I now live (saith the apostle) is by the faith of the Son of

God," Gal. 2: 20. It provides our ordinary food, and extraordinary

cordials, Psal. 27: 13. "I had fainted, unless I had believed." And

seeing it is all this to our souls,

Fifthly, In the last place, it is no wonder that it is the main

scope and drift of the gospel, to press and bring souls to

believing: it is the gospel's grand design to bring up the hearts of

men and women to faith. The urgent commands of the gospel aim at

this, 1 John 3: 23. Mark 1: 14, 15. John 12: 36. Hither also look

the great promises and encouragements of the gospel, John 6: 35, 37.

So Mark 16: 16. And the opposite sin of unbelief is every where

fearfully aggravated and threatened, John 16: 8, 9. John 3: 18, 35.

And this was the third thing promised, namely, a discovery of the

transcendent worth and excellency of saving faith.

Fourthly, But lest we commit a mistake here, to the prejudice

of Christ's honour and glory, which must not be given to another, no

not to faith itself; I promised you in the fourth place, to show you

upon what account faith is thus dignified and honoured; that so we

may give unto faith the things that are faith's, and to Christ the

things that are Christ's.

And I find four opinions about the interest of faith in our

justification: some will have it to justify us formally, not

relatively: i.e. upon the account of his own intrinsical value and

worth; and this is the popish sense of justification by faith. Some

affirm, that though faith be not our perfect legal righteousness,

considered as a work of ours, yet the act of believing is imputed to

us for righteousness, i.e. God graciously accepts it instead of

perfect legal righteousness, and so, in his esteem, it is our

evangelical righteousness. And this is the Armenian sense of

justification by faith.

Some there are also, even among our reformed divines, that

contend that faith justifies and saves us, as it is the condition of

the new covenant. And lastly, others will have it to justify us as

an instrument apprehending, or receiving the righteousness of

Christ; with which opinion I must close. When I consider my text

calls it a receiving of Christ. Most certain it is,

That, First, It does not justify in the popish sense, upon the

account of its own proper worth and dignity; for then,

First, Justification should be of debt, not of grace; contrary

to Rom. 3: 23, 24.

Secondly, This would frustrate the very scope and end of the

death of Christ; for if righteousness come by the law, i.e. by the

way of works and desert, then is Christ dead in vain, Gal. 2: 21.

Thirdly, Then the way of our justification by faith would be so

far from excluding, that it would establish boasting, expressly

contrary to the apostle, Rom. 3: 26,27.

Fourthly, Then there should be no defects or imperfections in

faith, for a defective or imperfect thing can never be the matter of

our justification before God: if it justify upon the account of its

own worth and proper dignity, it can have no flaw or imperfection in

it, contrary to the common sense of all believers. Nay,

Fifthly, Then it is the same thing to be justified by faith,

and to be justified by works, which the apostle so carefully

distinguisheth and opposeth, Phil. 3: 9. and Rom. 4: 6. So that we

conclude it does not justify in the Popish sense, for any worth or

proper excellency that is in itself.

Secondly, And it is as evident, it does not justify us in the

Arminian sense, viz. as the "to credere", the act of believing is

imputed or accepted by God, as our evangelical righteousness,

instead of perfect legal righteousness. In the former opinion you

have the dregs of Popery, and here you have refined Popery. Let all

Armenians know, we have as high an esteem for faith as any men in

the world, but yet we will not rob Christ to clothe faith. We cannot

embrace their opinion, because,

First, We must then dethrone Christ to exalt faith: we are

willing to give it all that is due to it, but we dare not despoil

Christ of his glory for faith's sake: "He is the Lord our

righteousness," Jer. 23. We dare not set the servant above the

master. We acknowledge no righteousness but what the obedience and

satisfaction of Christ yields us. His blood, not our faith; his

satisfaction, not our believing it, is the matter of our

justification be fore God.

Secondly, We dare not yield this point, lest we undermine all

the comfort of Christians, by setting their pardon and peace upon a

weak imperfect work of their own. Oh how tottering and unstable must

their station be, that stand upon such a bottom as this! What

alterations are there in our faith, what mixtures of unbelief at all

times, and prevalence of unbelief at some times; and is this a

foundation to build our justification and hope upon? Debile

fundamentum fallit opus: If we lay the stress here, we build upon

very loose ground, and must be at a continual loss both as to safety

and comfort.

Thirdly, We dare not wrong the justice and truth of God at that

rate, as to affirm that he esteems and imputes our poor weak faith

for perfect legal righteousness. We know that the judgement of God

is always according to truth; if the justice of God require full

payment, sure it will not say, it is fully satisfied by any acts of

ours, when all that we can do amounts not to one mite of the vast

sum we owe to God. So that we deservedly reject this opinion also.

Thirdly, And for the third opinion, That it justifies as the

condition of the new covenant; though some of great name and worth

among our Protestant divines seem to go that way, yet I cannot see,

according to this opinion, any reason why repentance may not as

properly be said to justify us as faith, for it is a condition of

the new covenant as much as faith; and if faith justify as a

condition, then every other grace that is a condition must justify

as well as faith. I acknowledge faith to be a condition of the

covenant, but cannot allow that it justifies as a condition. And

therefore must profess myself best satisfied in the last opinion,

which speaks it an instrument in our justification: it is the hand

which receives the righteousness of Christ that justifies us, and

that gives it its value above all other graces; as when we say a

diamond ring is worth one hundred pounds, we mean not the gold that

receives, but the stone that is set in it, is worth so much. Faith,

considered as an habit, is no more precious than other gracious

habits are, but considered as an instrument to receive Christ and

his righteousness, so it excels them all; and this instrumentality

of faith is noted in these phrases, "epi tei pisei", Rom. 3: 28. and

"dia tes pisteos", Rom. 3: 22. By faith, and through faith. And thus

much of the nature and excellency of saving faith.

Sermon 7.

John 1: 12.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the

sons of God; even to then that believe on his name.

The nature and excellency of saving faith, together with its

relation to justification, as an instrument in receiving Christ and

his righteousness, having been discoursed doctrinally already; I now

come to make application of it, according to the nature of this

weighty and fruitful point.

And the uses I shall make of it will be for our,

1. Information, | 3. Exhortation, and,

2. Examination, | 4. Direction.

First Use of Information.

Use 1. And in the first, this point yields us many great and

useful truths for our information: As,

Inference 1. Is the receiving of Christ the vital and saving

act of faith, which gives the soul right to the person and

privileges of Christ? Then it follows, That the rejecting of Christ

by unbelief, must needs be the damning and soul-destroying sin,

which cuts a man off from Christ, and all the benefits purchased by

his blood. If there be life in receiving, there must needs be death

in rejecting Christ.

There is no grace more excellent than faith; no sin more

execrable and abominable than unbelief. Faith is the saving grace,

and unbelief the damning sin, Mark 16: 16. "He that believeth not

shall be damned." See John 3: 18, 36. and John 8: 24.

And the reason why this sin of unbelief is the damning sin is

this, because, in the justification of a sinner, there must be a

co-operation of all the con-causes that have a joint influence on

that blessed effect. As there must be free grace for an impulsive

cause, the blood of Christ as the meritorious cause, so, of

necessity, there must be faith, the instrumental cause, to receive

and apply what the free grace of God designed, and the blood of

Christ purchased for us. For where there are many social causes, or

con-causes to produce one effect, there the effect is not produced

till the last cause be in act.

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name,

whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," Acts

10: 43. Faith in its place is as necessary as the blood of Christ in

its place: "It is Christ in you the hope of glory," Col. 1: 27. Not

Christ in the womb, not Christ in the grave, nor Christ in heaven,

except he be also Christ in you.

Though Christ be come in the flesh; though he died and rose

again from the dead; yet if you believe not, you must for all that

die in your sins, John 8: 24. And what a dreadful thing is this!

better die any death whatever than die in your sins. If you die in

your sins, you will also rise in your sins, and stand at the bar of

Christ in your sins: you can never receive remission, till first you

have received Christ. O cursed unbelief, which damns the soul:

dishonours God, 1 John 5: 10. slights Jesus Christ, the wisdom of

God, as if that glorious design of redemption by his blood, the

triumph and master-piece of divine wisdom, were mere foolishness, 1

Cor. 1: 23, 24. Frustrates the great design of the gospel, Gal. 4:

11. and consequently it must be the sin of sins, the worst and most

dangerous of all sins; leaving a man under the guilt of all his

other sins.

Inf. 2. If such a receiving of Christ, as has been described,

be saving and justifying faith, when faith is a work of greater

difficulty than most men understand it to be, and there are but few

sound believers in the world.

Before Christ can be received, the heart must be emptied and

opened: but most men's hearts are full of self-righteousness and

vain confidence: this was the case of the Jews, Rom. 10: 3. "Being

ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their

own righteousness have not submitted themselves to the righteousness

of God."

Man's righteousness was once in himself, and what liquor is

first put into the vessel, it ever afterwards savours of it. It is

with Adam's posterity as with bees, which have been accustomed to go

to their own hive, and carry all thither; if the hive be removed to

another place, they will still fly to the old place, hover up and

down about it, and rather die there than go to a new place. So it is

with most men. God has removed their righteousness from doing to

believing; from themselves to Christ, but who shall prevail with

them to forsake self? Nature will venture to be damned rather than

do it: there is much submission in believing, and great self denial:

a proud self-conceited heart will never stoop to live upon the stock

of another's righteousness.

Besides, it is no easy thing to persuade men to receive Christ

as their Lord in all things, and submit their necks to his strict

and holy precepts, though it be a great truth that "Christ's yoke

does not gall, but grace and adorn the neck that bears it;" that the

truest and sweetest liberty is in our freedom from our lusts, not in

our fulfilling them; yet who can persuade the carnal heart to

believe this? And much less will men ever be prevailed withal, to

forsake father, mother, wife, children, inheritance, and life it

self, to follow Christ: and all this upon the account of spiritual

and invisible things: and yet this must be done by all that receive

the Lord Jesus Christ upon gospel terms; yea, and before the soul

has any encouraging experience of its own, to balance the manifold

discouragements of sense, and carnal reason, improved by the utmost

craft of Satan to dismay it: for experience is the fruit and

consequent of believing. So that it may well be placed among the

great mysteries of godliness, that Christ is believed on in the

world, 1 Tim. 3: 16.

Inf. 3. Hence it will follow, That there may be more true and

sound believers in the world, than know, or dare conclude themselves

to be such.

For, as many ruin their own souls by placing the essence of

saving faith in naked assent, so some rob themselves of their own

comfort, by placing it in full assurance. Faith, and sense of faith,

are two distinct and separable mercies: you may have truly received

Christ, and not receive the knowledge or assurance of it, Isa. 1.

10. Some there be that say, Thou art our God, of whom God never

said, You are my people: these have no authority to be called the

sons of God: others there are, of whom God saith, These are my

people, yet dare not call God their God: these have authority to be

called the sons of God, but know it not. They have received Christ,

that is their safety, but they have not yet received the knowledge

and assurance of it; that is their trouble: the Father owns his

child in the cradle, who yet knows him not to be his Father.

Now there are two reasons why many believers, who might argue

themselves into peace, do yet live without the comforts of their

faith: and this may come to pass, either from,

First, The inevidence of the premises.

Secondly, Or the weighty importance of the conclusion.

First, It may come to pass from the inevidence of the premises.

Assurance is a practical syllogism, and it proceeds thus:

All that truly have received Christ Jesus, they are the

children of God.

I have truly received Jesus Christ. Therefore am the child of

God.

The major proposition is found in the scripture, and there can

be no doubt of that. The assumption depends upon experience, or

internal sense; I have truly received Jesus Christ; here usually is

the stumble: many great objections lie against it, which they cannot

clearly answer: As,

Obj. 1. Light and knowledge are necessarily required to the

right receiving of Christ, but I am dark and ignorant; many carnal,

unregenerate persons know more than I do, and are more able to

discourse of the mysteries of religion than I am.

Sol. But you ought to distinguish of the kinds and degrees of

knowledge, and then you would see that your bewailed ignorance is no

bar to your interest in Christ. There are two kinds of knowledge:

1. Natural. | 2. Spiritual.

There is a natural knowledge, even of spiritual objects, a

spark of nature blown up by an advantageous education; and though

the objects of this knowledge be spiritual things, yet the light in

which they are discerned is but a mere natural light.

And there is a spiritual knowledge of spiritual things, the

teaching of the anointing, as it is called, 1 John 2: 27. i.e. the

effect and fruit of the Spirit's sanctifying work upon our souls,

when the experience of a man's own heart informs and teacheth his

understanding, when by feeling the workings of grace in our own

souls we come to understand its nature; this is spiritual knowledge.

Now, a little of this knowledge is a better evidence of a man's

interest in Christ, than the most raised and excellent degree of

natural knowledge: As the philosopher truly observes; Praestat

paucula de meliori scientia degustasse, quam de ignobilori multa:

One dram of knowledge of the best and most excellent things, is

better than much knowledge of common things. So it is here, a little

spiritual knowledge of Jesus Christ, that has life and savour in it,

is more than all the natural, sapless knowledge of the unregenerate,

which leaves the heart dead, carnal, and barren: it is not the

quantity, but the kind, not the measure, but the savour: If you know

so much of the evil of sin, as renders it the most bitter and

burdensome thing in the world to you, and so much of the necessity

and excellency of Christ, as renders him the most sweet and

desirable thing in the world to you, though you may be defective in

many degrees of knowledge, yet this is enough to prove yours to be

the fruit of the Spirit: you may have a sanctified heart, though you

have an irregular or weak head: many that knew more than you are in

hell: and some that once knew as little as you, are now in heaven:

In absoluto et facili stat aeternitas: God has not prepared heaven

only for clear and subtle heads. A little sanctified and effectual

knowledge of Christ's person, offices, suitableness, and necessity,

may bring thee thither, when others, with all their curious

speculations and notions, may perish for ever.

Obj. 2. But you tell me, that assent to the truths of the

gospel is necessarily included in saving faith, which, though it be

not the justifying and saving act, yet it is pre-supposed and

required to it. Now I have many staggering and doubtings about the

certainty and reality of these things; many horrid atheistical

thoughts, which shake the assenting act of faith in the very

foundation, and hence I doubt I do not believe.

Sol. There may be, and often is, a true and sincere assent

found in the soul, that is assaulted with violent atheistical

suggestions from Satan; and thereupon questions the truth of it. And

this is a very clear evidence of the reality of our assent, that

whatever doubts, or contrary suggestions there be, yet we dare not

in our practice contradict or slight those truths or duties which we

are tempted to disbelieve, ex. gr. We are assaulted with atheistical

thoughts, and tempted to slight and cast off all fears of sin, and

practice of religious duties, yet when it comes to the point of

practice, we dare not commit a known sin, the awe of God is upon us;

we dare not omit a known duty, the tie of conscience is found strong

enough to hold it close to it: in this case, it is plain we do

really assent, when we think we do not. A man thinks he does not

love his child, yet carefully provides for him in health, and is

full of griefs and fears about him in sickness: why now, so long as

I see all fatherly duties performed, and affections to his child's

welfare manifested, let him say what he will as to the want of love

to him, whilst I see this, he must excuse me if I do not believe

him, when he saith he has no love for him. Just so is it in this

case, a man saith I do not assent to the being, necessity, or

excellency of Jesus Christ; yet, in the mean time, his soul is

filled with cares and fears about securing his interest in him, he

is found panting and thirsting for him with vehement desires, there

is nothing in all the world would give him such joy, as to be well

assured of an interest in him; while it is thus with any man, let

him say or think what he will of his assent, it is manifest by this

he does truly and heartily assent, and there can be no better proof

of it than these real effects produced by it.

Secondly, But if these, and other objections were never so

fully answered for the clearing of the assumption, yet it often

falls out, that believers are afraid to draw the conclusion; and

that fear partly arises from,

First, The weighty importance of this matter.

Secondly, The sense of the deceitfulness of their own hearts.

First, The conclusion is of infinite importance to them, it is

the everlasting happiness of their souls, than which nothing is, or

can be of greater weight upon their spirits: things in which we are

most deeply concerned, are not lightly and hastily received by us:

it seems so great and so good, that we are still apt (if there be

any room for it) to suspect the truth and certainty thereof, as

never being sure enough.

Thus when the women that were the first messengers and

witnesses of Christ's resurrection, Luke 24: 10,11. came and told

the disciples those wonderful and comfortable tidings, it is said,

"That their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed

them not." They thought it was too good to be true; too great to be

hastily received; so it is in this case.

Secondly, The sense they have of the deceitfulness of their own

hearts, and the daily workings of hypocrisy there, makes them afraid

to conclude in so great a point as this is.

They know that very many daily cozen and cheat themselves in

this matter; they know also that their own hearts are full of

falseness and deceit; they find them so in their daily observations

of them; and what if they should prove so in this? Why then they are

lost for ever! They also know there is not the like danger in their

fears and jealousies, that would be in their vain confidences and

presumptions; by the one, they are only deprived of their present

comfort, but by the other, they would be ruined for ever: and

therefore choose rather to dwell with their own fears (though they

be uncomfortable companions) than run the danger of so great a

mistake, which would be infinitely more fatal. And this being the

common case of most Christians, it follows that there must be many

more believers in the world than do think, or dare conclude

themselves to be such.

Inf. 4. If the right receiving of Jesus Christ, be true,

saving, and justifying faith, then those that have the least, and

lowest degree and measure of saving faith, have cause for ever to

admire the bounty and riches of the grace of God to then therein.

If you have received never so little of his bounty by the hand

of providence, in the good things of this life, yet if he have given

you any measure of true saving faith, he has dealt bountifully in

deed with you: this mercy alone is enough to balance all other wants

and inconveniences of this life, "poor in the world, rich in faith,

James 2: 5. O, let your hearts take in the full sense of this bounty

of God to you; say with the apostle, Eph. 1: 3. "Blessed be the God

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all

spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus", and you

will in this one mercy, find matter enough of praise and

thanksgiving, wonder and admiration to your dying day, yea, to all

eternity: for, do but consider,

First, The smallest measure of saving faith which is found in

any of the people of God, receives Jesus Christ; and in receiving

him, what mercy is there which the believing soul does not receive

in him, and with him? Rom. 8: 32.

O believer, though the arms of thy faith be small and weak, yet

they embrace a great Christ, and receive the richest gift that ever

God bestowed upon the world: no sooner art thou become a believer,

but Christ is in thee the hope of glory; and thou hast authority to

become a son or daughter of God; thou hast the broad seal of heaven

to confirm thy title and claim to the privileges of adoption, for

"to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the

sons of God." [To as many] be they strong, or be they weak, provided

they really receive Christ by faith; there is authority or power

given, so that it is no act of presumption in them to say, God is

our Father, heaven is our inheritance. O precious faith! the

treasures of ten thousand worlds cannot purchase such privileges as

these: all the crowns and sceptres of the earth, sold at full value,

are no price for such mercies.

Secondly, The least degree of saving faith brings the soul into

a state of perfect and full justification. For if it receives Jesus

Christ, it must needs therefore in him, and with him, receive a

free, full, and final pardon of sin: the least measure of faith

receives remission for the greatest sins. "By him all that believe

are justified from all things," Acts 13: 39. It unites thy soul with

Christ, and then, as the necessary consequent of that union, there

is no condemnation, Rom. 8: 1. "ouden katakrima", not one

condemnation, how many soever our sins have been.

Thirdly, The least measure or degree of saving faith, is a

greater mercy than God has bestowed, or ever will bestow upon many

that are far above you in outward respects: All men have not faith:

nay, it is but a remnant among men that believe. Few of the nobles

and potentates of the world have such a gift as this: they have

houses and lands, yea, crowns and sceptres, but no faith, no Christ,

no pardon; they have authority to rule over men, but no authority to

become the sons of God, 1 Cor. 1: 26, 27.

Say therefore in thy most debased, straitened, afflicted

condition, "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt

bountifully with thee."

Fourthly, The least degree of saving faith is more than all the

power of nature can produce. There must be a special revelation of

the arm of the Lord in that work, Isa. 53: 1. Believers are not born

of the flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God,"

John 1: 12,13. A11 believing motions towards Christ, are the effects

of the Father's drawing, John 6: 44. A glorious and irresistible

power goes forth from God to produce it, whence it is called "the

faith of the operation of God," Col. 2: 12.

So then, let not believers despise the day of small things, or

overlook that great and infinite mercy which is wrapt up in the

least degree of saving faith.

Infer. 5. Learn hence the impossibility of their salvation, who

neither know the nature, nor enjoy the means of saving faith.

My soul pities and mourns over the infidel world. Ah! What will

become of the millions of poor unbelievers! there is but one door of

salvation, viz. Christ; and but one key of faith to open that floor:

and as that key was never given to the Heathen world: so it is laid

aside, or taken away from the people by their cruel guides, all over

the Popish world; were you among them, you should hear nothing else

pressed as necessary to your salvation but a blind, implicit faith,

to believe as the church believes; that is, to believe they know not

what.

To believe as the pope believes; that is as an infidel

believes, for so they confess he may be, and though there be such a

thing as an explict faith sometimes spoken of among them, yet it is

very sparingly discoursed, very falsely described, and exceedingly

slighted by them as the merest trifle in the world.

First, It is but sparingly discoursed of: they love not to

accustom the people's ears to such a doctrine; one of themselves

confesses that there is so deep a silence of explicit, particular

faith in the Romish church, that you may find many every where, that

believe no more of these things than Heathen philosophers.

Secondly, When it is preached or written of, it is falsely

described: for they place the whole nature and essence of justifying

and saving faith in a naked assent, which the devils have as well as

men, James 2: 19. No more than this is pressed upon the people at

any time, as necessary to their salvation.

Thirdly, And even this particular explicit faith, when it is

spoken or written of, is exceedingly slighted. I think if the devil

himself were in the pulpit, he could hardly tell how to bring men to

a more low and slight esteem of faith; to represent it more as a

very trifle, or a quite needless thing, than these his agents have

done. Some say if a man believe with a particular explicit faith,

i.e. if he actually assent to the scripture-truths once in a year,

it is enough. Yea, and others think it too much to oblige people to

believe once in twelve months; and, for their ease, tell them, if

they believe once in twelve years it is sufficient; and, lest this

should be too great a task, others affirm, that if it be done but

once in their whole life, and that at the point of death too, it is

enough, especially for the rude and common people. Good God! what a

doctrine is here! It was a saying long ago of Gregory (as I

remember,) Malus minister est nisius diaboli: A wicked minister is

the devil's goshawk, that goes a birding for hell; and O what game

leave these hawks of hell among such numerous flocks of people! O,

bless God while you live for your deliverance from popery; and see

that you prize the gospel, and means of grace you enjoy at an higher

rate, lest God bring you once more under that yoke, which neither

you nor your fathers could bear.

Second use for examination.

Does saving faith consist in a due and right receiving of the

Lord Jesus Christ? Then let me persuade you to examine yourselves in

this great point of faith. Reflect solemnly upon the transactions

that have been betwixt Christ and your souls; think close on this

subject of meditation.

If all you were worth in the world lay in one precious stone,

and that stone were to be tried by the skilful Lapidary, whether it

were true or false, whether it would fly or endure under the smart

stroke of his hammer, sure your thoughts could not be unconcerned

about the issue. Why all that you are worth in both worlds depends

upon the truth of your faith which is now to be tried.

Therefore read not these lines with a running, careless eye,

but seriously ponder the matter before you. You would be loth to put

to sea, though it were but to cross the channel, in a rotten leaky

bottom: And will you dare to venture into the ocean of eternity in a

false rotten faith! God forbid. You know the Lord is coming to try

every man's faith as by fire, and that we must stand or fall for

ever with the sincerity or hypocrisy of our faith. Surely, you can

never be too exact and careful about that, on which your whole

estate depends, and that for ever.

Now there are three things upon which we should have a very

tender and watchful eye, for the discovery of the sincerity of our

faith, and they are,

/ Antecedents \

The | Concomitants | of Faith.

\ Consequent /

As these are, so we must judge and reckon our faith to be. And,

accordingly they furnish us with three general marks or trials of

faith.

First, If you would discern the sincerity of your faith,

examine whether those antecedents, and preparative works of the

spirit, were ever found in your souls, which use to introduce and

usher it into the souls of God's elect: Such are illumination,

conviction, self-despair, and earnest cries to God.

First, Illumination is a necessary antecedent to faith: You can

not believe till God has opened your eyes to see your sin, your

misery by sin, and your remedy in Jesus Christ alone: You find this

act of the Spirit to be the first in order both of nature and time,

and introductive to all the rest, Acts 26: 18. "To turn them from

darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." As faith

without works (which must be a consequent to it) is dead, so faith

without light, which must be an antecedent to it, is blind: Faith is

the hand by which Christ is received, but knowledge is the eye by

which that hand is directed.

Well then, has God opened your eyes to see sin and misery in

another manner than ever you saw them before? For certainly, if God

has opened your eyes by saving illuminations, you will find as great

a difference betwixt your former and present apprehensions of sin

and danger, as betwixt the painted lion upon the wall or a

sign-post, and the real living lion that meets you roaring in the

way.

Secondly, Conviction is an antecedent to believing: Where this

goes not before, no faith can follow after: The Spirit first

convinces of sin, then of righteousness John 16: 8. So Mark 1: 15.

"Repent ye, and believe the gospel". Believe it, O man! that breast

of thine must be wounded, that vain and frothy heart of thine must

be pierced and stung with conviction, sense, and sorrow for sin:

Thou must have some sick days, and restless sights for sin, if ever

thou rightly close with Christ by faith. It is true, there is much

difference found in the strength, depth, and continuance of

conviction, and spiritual troubles in converts; but sure it is, the

child of faith is not ordinarily born without some pangs. Conviction

is the application of that light which God makes to shine in our

minds, to our particular case and condition by the conscience; and

sure, when men come to see their miserable and sad estate by a true

light, it cannot but wound them, and that to the very heart.

Thirdly, Self-despair, or a total and absolute loss in

ourselves about deliverance, and the way of escape, either by

ourselves, or any other mere creature, does, and must go before

faith.

So it was with those believers, Acts 2: 37. "Men and brethren,

what shall we do?" They are the words of men at a total loss: It is

the voice of poor distressed souls, that saw themselves in misery,

but knew not, saw not, nor could devise any way of escape from it,

by any thing they could do for themselves, or any other creature for

them: And hence the apostle uses that emphatical word, Gal. 3: 23.

"sungkekleisminoi", i.e. shut up to the faith, i.e. as men besieged

and distressed in a garrison in a time of storm, when the enemy

pours in upon them through the breaches, and overpowers them: There

is but one sally-port or gate, at which they can escape, and to that

they all throng, as despairing of life, if they take any other

course. Just so do men's convictions besiege them, distress them,

beat them off from all their holds and entrenchments, and bring them

to a pinching distress in themselves, shutting them up to Christ as

the only way to escape. Duties cannot save me, reformation cannot

save me; nor angels, nor men can save me; there is no way but one,

Christ, or condemnation for ever.

I thought once, that a little repentance, reformation,

restitution, and a stricter life, might be a way to escape the wrath

to come; but I find the bed is too short, and the covering too

narrow: All is but loss, dung, dross, in comparisons with Jesus

Christ; if I trust to those Egyptian reeds, they will not only fail

me, but pierce and wound me too: I see no hope within the whole

Horizon of sense.

Fourthly, Hence come vehement and earnest cries to God for

faith, for Christ, for help from heaven, to transport the soul out

of this dangerous condition, to that strong rock of salvation; to

bring it out of this furious, stormy sea of trouble, where it is

ready to wreck every moment, into that safe and quiet harbour,

Christ.

O when a man shall see his misery and danger, and no way to

escape but Christ, and that he has no ability himself to come to

Christ, to open his heart thus to receive him, but that this work of

faith is wholly supernatural, the operations of God; how will the

soul return again, and again upon God, with such cries as in Mark 9:

24. "Lord, help my unbelief?" "Lord, enable me to come to Christ,

give me Christ or I perish for ever; What profit is there in my

blood? Why should I die in the sight and presence of a Saviour? O

Lord, it is thine own work, a most glorious work: Reveal thine arm

in this work upon my soul, I pray thee; give me Christ, if thou deny

me bread? give me faith, if thou deny me breath. It is more

necessary that I believe, than that I live."

O Reader, reflect upon the days and nights that are past, the

places where thou hast been conversant: where are the bed-sides, or

the secret corners where thou hast besieged heaven with such cries?

If God have thus enlightened, convinced, distressed thy soul, and

thus set thee a mourning after Christ, it will be one good sign that

faith is come into thy soul; for here are certainly the harbingers

and forerunners of it, that ordinarily make way for faith into the

souls of men.

Secondly, If you would be satisfied of the sincerity and truth

of your faith, then examine what concomitants it is attended with in

your souls. I mean, what frames and tempers your souls were in, at

that time when you think you received Christ. For certainly, in

those that receive Christ, (excepting those into whose hearts God

has in a more still and insensible way infused faith betides, by his

blessing upon pious education) such concomitant frames of spirit may

be remarked as these following.

First, The heart is deeply serious, and as much in earnest in

this matter, as ever it was, or can be, about any thing in the

world. This you see in that example of the gaoler, Acts 16: 29. "He

came in trembling and astonished". It is the most solemn and

important matter that ever the soul had before it in this world, or

ever shall, or can have: How much are the hearts of men affected in

their outward straits and distresses, about the concernments of the

body? Their hearts are not a little concerned in such questions as

these, "What shall I eat? what shall I drink?" wherewithal shall I

and mine be fed and clothed? but certainly the straits that souls

are in about salvation, must be allowed to be greater than these;

and such questions as that of the gaoler's, "Sirs! what must I do to

be saved?" make deeper impressions upon the heart, than what shall I

eat or drink? Some indeed have their thoughts sinking deeper into

these things than others: These thoughts lie with different degrees

of weight upon men: but all are most solemnly and awfully concerned

about their condition: All frothiness and frolics are gone, and the

heart settles itself in the deepest earnest about its eternal state.

Secondly, The heart that receives Jesus Christ is in a frame of

deep humiliation and self-abasement O, when a man begins to

apprehend the first approaches of grace, pardon, and mercy by Jesus

Christ to his soul: when a soul is convinced of its utter

unworthiness and desert of hell; and can scarce expect any thing

else from the just and holy God but damnation, how do the first

dawnings of mercy melt and humble them! "O Lord, what am I that thou

shouldst feed me, and preserve me! that thou shouldst but for a few

years spare me and forbear me! but that ever Jesus Christ should

love me, and give himself for me; that such a wretched sinner as I

should obtain union with his person, pardon, peace, and salvation by

his blood! Lord, whence is this to such a worm as I? and will Christ

indeed bestow himself upon me? shall so great a blessing as Christ

ever come within the arms of such a soul as mine? will God in very

deed be reconciled to me in his Son? what, to me! to such an enemy

as I have been! shall my sins which are so many, so horrid, so much

aggravated, beyond the sins of most men, be forgiven? O what am I,

vile dust? base wretch, that ever God should do this for me!" And

how is that scripture fulfilled and made good, Ezek 16: 63 "That

thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth

any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for

all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Thus, that poor

broken-hearted believer stood behind Christ weeping, and washing his

feet with tears, as one quite melted down, and overcome with the

sense of mercy to such a vile sinner, Luke 7: 38.

Thirdly, The soul that receives Jesus Christ is in a weary

condition, restless, and full of disquietness, neither able to bear

the burden of sin, nor knowing how to be discharged from it, except

Christ will give it ease, Mat. 11: 28, "Come unto me," that is,

believe in me, "you that are weary and heavy laden:" If they do not

look into their own souls, they know there is no safety, and if they

do, there is no comfort. O! the burdensome sense of sin overweighs

them; they are ready to fall, to sink under it.

Fourthly, The soul that rightly receives Christ, is not only in

a weary, but in a longing condition: never did the hart pant more

earnestly for the water-brooks: never did the hireling desire the

shadow: never did a condemned person long for a pardon, more than

the soul longs after Jesus Christ. O, said David, that one would

give me of the water of the well of Bethlehem to drink. O, saith the

poor humbled sinner, that one would give me of the opened fountain

of the blood of Christ to drink! O for one drop of that precious

blood! O for one encouraging smile from Christ! O now were ten

thousand worlds at my command, and Christ to be bought, how freely

would I lay them all down to purchase him! but he is the gift of

God. O that God would give me Christ, if I should go in rags, and

hunger and thirst all my days in this world!

Fifthly, The soul in the time of its closing with, or receiving

Christ, is in a state of conflict: It hangs between hopes and fears,

encouragements and discouragements, which occasions many a sad stand

and pause in the way of Christ; sometimes the number and nature of

its sins discourage it, then the riches and freeness of the grace of

Christ erects his hopes again: there is little hope, saith unbelief;

nay, it is utterly impossible, saith Satan, that ever such a wretch

as thou shouldst find mercy; now the hands hang down. O but then

there is a necessity, an absolute necessity, I have not the choice

of two, but am shut up to one way of deliverance; others have found

mercy and the invitation is to all that are weary, and to all that

are athirst he saith, him that comes to him, he will in no wise cast

out: now new hopes inspire the soul, and the hands that did hang

down are strengthened.

These are the concomitant frames that accompany faith.

3. Mark. Lastly, Examine the consequents and effects of faith,

if you would be satisfied of the truth and sincerity of it: and such

are,

First, Evangelical meltings, and ingenuous thawings of the

heart under the apprehensions of grace and mercy: Zech. 12: 10.

"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn."

Secondly, Love to Christ, his ways and people, Gal. 5: 6. Faith

worketh by love, i. e. represents the love of God, and then makes

use of the sweetness of it by way of argument, to constrain the soul

to all acts of obedience, where it may testify the reality of its

love to God and Christ.

Thirdly, Heart-purity, Acts 15: 9. "Purifying the hearts by

faith:" It does not only cleanse the lands but the heart. No

principle in man, besides faith, can do this: morality may hide

corruption, but faith only purifies the heart from it.

Fourthly, Obedience to the commands of Christ, Rom. 16: 26. The

very name of faith is called upon obedience: for it accepts Christ

as Lord, and urges upon the soul the most powerful arguments in the

world to draw it to obedience.

In a word, let the poor doubting believer, that questions his

faith, reflect upon those things that are unquestionable in his own

experience, which being well considered, will greatly tend to his

satisfaction in this point.

It is very doubtful to you whether you believe, but yet in the

mean time, it may be past doubt, (being a matter of clear

experience) that you have been deeply convinced of sin, struck off

from all carnal props and refuges, made willing to accept Jesus

Christ upon what terms soever van might enjoy him. You doubt whether

Christ be yours, but it is past doubt that you have a most high and

precious esteem of Christ, that you heartily long for him, that you

prize and love all, whether persons or things, that bear his image:

that nothing in the world would please your hearts like a

transformation into his likeness: that you had rather your souls

should be filled with his Spirit, than your houses with gold and

silver. It is doubtful whether Christ be yours, but it is past doubt

that one smile from Christ, one token of his love would do you more

good than all the honours and smiles of the world; and no thing so

grieves you, as your grieving him by sin does. You dare not say that

you have received him, nor can you deny but that you have had many

sick days and nights for him; that you have gone into many secret

places with yearning bowels after him. Whether he be yours or not,

you cannot tell; but that you are resolved to be his, that you can

tell. Whether he will save you is but a doubt, but that you resolve

to lie at his feet, and wait only on him, and never go to another

for salvation, is no doubt.

Well, well; poor pensive soul, if it be so, arise, lift up thy

dejected head, take thine own Christ into thine arms. These are

undoubted signs of a real closure with Christ, thou makes thyself

poor, and yet hast great riches: Such things as these are not found

in them that despise and reject Christ by unbelief.

3. Use of Exhortation.

3. Use. This point is likewise very improveable by way of

exhortation, and that both to

Unbelievers and Believers.

First, To unbelievers, who from hence must be pressed, as ever

they expect to see the face of God in peace, to receive Jesus Christ

as he is now offered to them in the gospel. This is the very scope

of the gospel; I shall therefore press it by three great

considerations, viz.

First, that is in Christ whom you are to receive.

Secondly, What is in the offer of Christ by the gospel.

Thirdly, What is in the rejecting of that offer.

First Motive.

First, Consider well what is in Christ, whom I persuade you

this day to receive: Did you know what is in Christ, you would never

neglect or reject him as you do: For,

First, "God is in Christ," 2 Cor. 5: 19. the Deity has chosen

to dwell in his flesh; he is "God manifest in flesh," 1 Tim. 3: 16.

a Godhead dwelling in flesh is the world's wonder; so that in

receiving Christ, you receive God himself.

Secondly, The authority of God is in Christ, Exod. 23: 21. "My

name is in him: Him has God the Father sealed," John 6: 27. he has

the commission, the great seal of heaven to redeem and save you. All

power in heaven and earth is given to him, Matth. 28: 18. he comes

in his Father's name to you, as well as in his own name.

Thirdly, The wisdom of God is in Christ, 1 Cor. 1: 24. "Christ

the wisdom of God," yea, "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom

and knowledge," Col. 2: 3. Never did the wisdom of God display

itself before the eyes of angels and men as it has done in Christ.

The "angels desire to look into it," 1 Pet. 1: 12. yet they are not

so much concerned in the project and design of this wisdom in

redemption as you are.

Fourthly, The fulness of the Spirit is in Christ, yea, it fills

him so as it never did, nor will fill any creature, John 3: 34. "God

giveth not the Spirit by measure to him: all others have their

limits, stints, and measures; some more, some less; but the Spirit

is in Christ without measure. O how lovely and desirable are those

men that have a large measure of the Spirit in them! but he is

anointed with the Spirit of holiness above all his fellows, Psal.

45: 2, 7. Whatever grace is found in all the saints, which makes

them desirable and lovely, wisdom in one, faith in another, patience

in a third; they all centre in Christ as the rivers do in the sea,

quae faciunt divisa beatum, in hoc mixta fluunt.

Fifthly, The righteousness of God is in Christ, by which only a

poor guilty sinner can be justified before God, 2 Cor. 5: 21. we are

"made the righteousness of God in him:" he is "Adonai Tsidkenu",

"the Lord our righteousness," Jer. 23: 6. "the author of our

righteousness", or the Lord who justifies us, by that name he will

be known, and called by his people, than which none can be sweeter.

Sixthly, The love of God is in Christ, yea, the very yearning

bowels of divine love are in him: What is Christ, but the love of

God wrapt up in flesh and blood? 1 John 4: 9, 10. "In this was

manifested the love of God towards us:" and herein is love, that God

sent his Son; this is the highest flight that ever divine love made;

and higher than this it cannot mount. O love, unparalleled and

admirable!

Seventhly, The mercies and compassions of God are all in

Christ, Jude, ver. 21. Mercy is the thing that poor sinners want, it

is that they cry for at the last gasp; it is the only thing that can

do them good. O what would they give to find mercy in that great

day? Why, if you receive Christ, you shall with him receive mercy;

but out of him there is no mercy to be expected from the hands of

God; for God will never exercise mercy to the prejudice of his

justice; and it is in Christ that justice and mercy meet and embrace

each other.

Eighthly, To conclude, The salvation of God is in Christ, Acts

4: 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other." Christ is the door

of salvation, and faith is the key that opens that door to men. If

you therefore believe not, i.e. if you so receive not Jesus Christ,

as God has offered him, you exclude yourselves from all hopes of

salvation. The devils have as much ground to expect salvation as

you. You see what is in Christ to induce you to receive him.

Motive 2.

Next, I beseech you, consider what there is in the offer of

Christ to sinners, to induce you to receive him. Consider well to

whom and how Christ is offered in the gospel.

First, To whom is he offered; not to the fallen angels, but to

you; they lie in chains of darkness, Jude, ver. 6. as he took not

their nature, so he designs not their recovery, and therefore will

have no treaty at all with them: but he is offered to you, creatures

of an inferior rank and order by nature; nor is he offered to the

damned, the treaty of peace is ended with them: Christ will never

make then another tender of salvation; nor is he offered to millions

as good as you, now living in the world. The sound of Christ and

salvation is not come to their ears, but he is offered to you by the

special favour and bounty of heaven; and will you not receive him?

Oh! then how will the devils, the damned, an the heathen upbraid

your folly! and say, had we had one such tender of mercy, of which

you have had thousands, we would never have been now in this place

of torments.

Secondly, Consider how Christ is offered to you, and you shall

find that he is offered,

1. Freely, as the gift of God, to your souls; you are not to

purchase him, but only to receive him, Isa. 55: 1 "Ho, every one

that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and you that has no money,

let him come," &c.

2. Christ is offered importunately, by repeated intreaties, 2

Cor. 5: 20. "As though God did beseech you, we pray you in Christ's

name, be ye reconciled to God." O! what amazing condescension is

here in the God of mercy! God now beseeches you, will you not yield

to the entreaties of your God? O then what wilt thou say for

thyself, when God will not hear thee, when thou shalt entreat and

cry for mercy? Which brings us to

Motive 3. Consider the sin and danger that there is in refusing

or neglecting the present offers of Christ in the gospel, and surely

there is much sin in it; the very malignity of sin, and the sum of

all misery lies here; for in refusing Christ,

1. You put the greatest contempt and slight upon all the

attributes of God that is possible for a creature to do: God has

made his justice, his mercy, his wisdom, and all his attributes to

shine in their brightest glory in Christ. Never was there such a

display of the glory of God made to the world in any other way.

O then, what is it to reject and despise Jesus Christ, but to

offer the greatest affront to the glory of God that it is possible

for men to put upon it?

2. You hereby frustrate and evacuate the very design and

importance of the gospel to yourselves; you "receive the grace of

God in vain," 2 Cor. 6: 1. As good, yea, better has it been for you,

that Christ had never cone into the world, or, if he had, that your

lot had fallen in the dark places of the earth, where you had never

heard his name; yea, good had it been for that man if he had never

been born.

3. Hereby a man murders his own soul. "I said therefore unto

you, that you shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I

am he, ye shall die in your sins," John 8: 24. Unbelief is

self-murder; you are guilty of the blood of your own souls: life and

salvation were offered you, and you rejected them. Yea;

4. The refusing of Christ by unbelief will aggravate your

damnation above all others that perish in ignorance of Christ. O, it

will be more tolerable for heathens than for you; the greatest

measures of wrath are reserved to punish the worst of sinners; and

among sinners, none will be found worse than unbelievers.

Secondly, To believers, this point is very useful to persuade

them to divers excellent duties; among which, I shall singly out two

principal ones, viz.

1. To bring up their faith of acceptance, to the faith of

assurance.

2. To bring up their conversations to the principles and rules

of faith.

1. You that have received Jesus Christ truly, give yourselves

no rest till you are fully satisfied that you have done so;

acceptance brings you to heaven hereafter, but assurance will bring

heaven into your souls now. O, what a life of delight and pleasure

does the assured believer live! What pleasure is it to him to look

back and consider where he once was, and where he now is? To look

forward, and consider where he now is, and where shortly he shall

be! I was in my sins, I am now in Christ. I am in Christ now, I

shall be with Christ, and that for ever, after a few days. I was

upon the brink of hell, I am now upon the very borders of heaven; I

shall be in a very little while among the innumerable company of

angels and glorified saints, bearing part with them in the song of

Moses, and of the Lamb, for evermore.

And why may not you that have received Christ, receive the

comfort of your union with him? There be all the grounds and helps

of assurance furnished to your hand, there is a real union betwixt

Christ and your souls, which is the very ground-work of assurance.

You have the scriptures before you which contain the signs of faith,

and the very things within you that answer those signs in the word.

So you read, and so, just so, you might feel it in your own hearts,

would you attend to your own experience. The Spirit of God is ready

to seal you, it is his office and his delight so to do. O therefore,

give diligence to this work, attend the study of the scriptures and

of your own hearts more, and grieve not the holy Spirit of God, and

you may arrive to the very desire of your hearts.

2. Bring up your conversations to the excellent principles and

rules of faith; "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk

in him," Cor. 2: 6. Live as you believe; you received Christ

sincerely in your first close with him, O maintain the like

seriousness and sincerity in all your ways, to the end of your

lives: you received him entirely and undividedly at first, let there

be no exceptions against any of his commands afterward. You received

him exclusively to all others, see that you watch against all self-

righteousness and self-conceitedness now, and mingle nothing of your

own with his blood, whatever gifts or enlargements in duty God shall

give you afterwards.

You received him advisedly at first, weighing and considering

the self-denying terms upon which he was offered to you; O show that

it was real, and that you see no cause to repent the bargain,

whatever you shall meet with in the ways of Christ and duty

afterwards: convince the world of your constancy and cheerfulness in

all your sufferings for Christ, that you are still of the same mind

you were, and that Christ, with his cross, Christ, with a prison,

Christ, with the greatest afflictions, is worthy of all acceptation:

"As ye have received him, so walk ye in him." Let him be as sweet,

as lovely, as precious to you now, as he was in the first moment you

received him; yea, let your love to him, delights in him, and

self-denial for him, increase with your acquaintance with him, day

by day.

Use of direction.

Use: Lastly, I will close all with a few words of direction to

all that are made willing to receive the Lord Jesus Christ; and sure

it is but needful that help were given to poor Christians: in this

matter, it is a time of trouble, fear, and great temptation;

mistakes are easily made of dangerous consequence; attend heedfully,

therefore, to a few directions.

Direction 1. First, In your receiving Christ, Beware you do not

mistake the means for the end. Many do so, but see you do not.

Prayer, sermons, reformations, are means to bring you to Christ, but

they are not Christ; to close with those duties is one thing, and to

close with Christ is another thing. If I go into a boat, my design

is not to dwell there, but to be carried to the place whereon I

desire to be landed: so it must be in this case, all your duties

must land you upon Christ; they are means to bring you to Christ.

Direct. 2. Secondly, See that you receive not Christ for a

present help, but for your everlasting portion. Many do so; they

will enquire after Christ, pray for Christ, cast themselves (in

their way) upon Christ, and the satisfaction of his blood, when the

efficacy and terror of conscience is upon them, and they feel the

sting of guilt within them; but as soon as the storm is over, and

the rod that conscience shaked over them laid by, there is no more

talk of Christ then: alas! it was not Christ, but quietness that

they sought; beware of mistaking peace for Christ.

Direct. 3. Thirdly, In receiving, Christ, come empty-handed

unto him: "believing on him who justifies the ungodly," Rom. 4: 5.

and know that the deepest sense of your own vileness, emptiness, and

unworthiness, is the best frame of heart that can accompany you to

Christ. Many persons stand off from Christ for want of fit

qualifications; they are not prepared for Christ as they should be,

i. e. they would not come naked and empty, but have something to

commend them to the Lord Jesus for acceptance. O! this is the pride

of men's hearts, and the snare of the devil. Let him that has no

money come: you are not to come to Christ because you are qualified,

but that you may be qualified with whatever you want; and the best

qualification you can bring with your is a deep sense that you have

no worth nor excellency at all in you.

Direct. 4. Fourthly, In receiving Christ, beware of dangerous

delays. O follow on that work till it be finished. You read of some

that are almost persuaded, and of others not far from the kingdom of

God; O take heed of what the prophet says, Hosea 13: 13. Delays here

are full of danger, life is uncertain, so are means of grace too.

The man-slayer needed no motives to quicken his flight to the city

of refuge.

Direct. 5. Fifthly, See that you receive all Christ, with all

your heart. To receive all Christ, is to receive his person clothed

with all his offices; and to receive him with all your heart, is to

receive him into your understanding, will, and affections, Acts 8:

37. As there is nothing in Christ that may be refused, so there is

nothing in you from which he must be excluded.

Direct. 6. Lastly, Understand that the opening of your hearts

to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, is not a work done by any power of

your own, but the arm of the Lord is revealed therein, Isa. 53: 1.

It is therefore your duty and interest to be daily at the feet of

God, pouring out your souls to him in secret, for abilities to

believe. And so much, as to our actual reception of Christ.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

Sermon 8.

Setting forth the Believer's Fellowship With Christ, the

next End of his Application to them.

Psalm 45:7.

Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness

above thy fellows.

The method of grace in uniting souls with Jesus Christ, has

been opened in the former discourses; thus does the Spirit, (whose

office it is) make application of Christ to God's elect: The result

and next fruit whereof is communion with Christ in his graces and

benefits. Our mystical union is the very ground-work and foundation

of our sweet, soul enriching communion and participation of

spiritual privileges; we are first ingrafted into Christ, and then

suck the sap and fatness of the root: first married to the person of

Christ, then endowed and instated in the privileges and benefits of

Christ. This is my proper work to open at this time, and from this

scripture.

"The words read, are a part of that excellent song of love,

that "heavenly Epithalamium, wherein the spiritual espousals of

Christ and the church are figuratively and very elegantly celebrated

and shadowed. The subject matter of this psalm is the very same with

the whole book of the Canticles;" and in this psalm, under the

figure of king Solomon, and the daughter of Egypt, whom he espoused,

the spiritual espousals of Christ and the church are set forth and

represented to us. Among many rapturous and elegant expressions in

praise of this glorious bridegroom, Christ, this is one, which you

have before you: "God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of

gladness above thy fellows:" i. e. enriched and filled thee, in a

singular and peculiar manner, with the fulness of the Spirit,

whereby thou art consecrated to thy office: and by reason whereof

thou out-shinest and excellest all the saints, who are thy fellows

or co-partners in these graces. So that in these words you have two

parts; viz. First, The saints' dignity, and Secondly, Christ's

pre-eminency:

First, The saints' dignity, which consists in this, that they

are Christ's fellows. The Hebrew word is very full and copious, and

is translated "consorts, companions, co-partners, partakers: or, as

ours read it, fellows:" i. e. such as are partakers with him in the

anointing of the Spirit, who do, in their measure, receive the same

Spirit, every Christian being anointed, modo sibi proportionato,

with the same grace, and dignified with the same titles, 1 John 2:

27. Rev. 1: 6. Christ and the saints are in common one with another:

Does the spirit of holiness dwell in him? so it does in them too. Is

Christ King and Priest? Why, so are they too by the grace of union

with him. He has made us kings and priests to God, and his Father.

This is the saints' dignity to be Christ's fellows, consorts, or co-

partners; so that look, whatever spiritual grace or excellency is in

Christ, it is not appropriated to himself, but they do share with

him: for indeed he was filled with the fulness of the Spirit, for

their sakes and use: as the sun is filled with light, not to shine

to itself, but to others; so is Christ with grace. And therefore,

some translate the text, not prae consortibus, above thy fellows;

but propter consortes, for thy fellows. Making Christ the first

receptacle of grace, who first and immediately is filled from the

fountain, the Godhead: but it is for his people, who receive and

derive from him, according to their proportion.

This is a great truth, and the dignity of the saints lies

chiefly in their partnership with Christ, though our translation,

above thy fellows, suits best, both with the importance of the word,

and scope of the place.

Secondly, But then, whatever dignity is ascribed herein to the

saints, there is, and still must be, a pre-eminency acknowledged,

and ascribed to Christ: if they are anointed with the Spirit of

grace, much more abundantly is Christ: "God, thy God, has anointed

thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

By the oil of gladness understand the Spirit of holiness,

compared here with oil, of which there was a double use under the

law, viz. a civil and a sacred use. It had a sacred and a solemn

use, in the inauguration and consecration of the Jewish kings and

high priests; it had also a civil, and common use, for the anointing

their bodies, to make their limbs more agile, expedite, and nimbler

to make the face shine, for it gave a lustre, freshness, and

liveliness to the countenance. It was also used in lamps, to feed

and maintain the fire, and give them light. These were the principal

uses of oil. Now, upon all these accounts, it excellently

expresseth, and figuratively, represents to us the Spirit of grace

poured forth upon Christ and his people. For,

First, By the Spirit poured out upon him, he was prepared for,

and consecrated to his offices, he was anointed with the Holy Ghost

and with power, Acts 10: 38.

Secondly, As this precious oil runs down from Christ, the head,

to the borders of his garments, I mean, as it is shed upon

believers, so it exceedingly beautifies their faces, and makes them

shine with glory.

Thirdly, It renders them apt, expedite, and ready to every good

ark: Non tardat uncta rota.

Fourthly, It kindles and maintains the flame of divine love in

their souls, and, like a lamp, enlightens their minds in the

knowledge of spiritual things; the anointing teaches them.

"And this oil is here called the oil of gladness, because it is

the cause of all joy and gladness to them that are anointed with

it": Oil was used (as you heard before) at the instalment of

sovereign princes, which was the day of the gladness of their

hearts; and, among the common people, it was liberally used at all

their festivals, but never upon their days of mourning. Whence it

becomes excellently expressive of the nature and use of the Spirit

of grace, who is the cause and author of all joy in believers, John

17: 13.

And with this oil of gladness is Christ said to be anointed

above his fellows, i. e. to have a far greater share of the Spirit

of grace than they: "For to every one of the saints is given grace

according to the measure of the gift of Christ," Eph. 4: 7. But to

him the Spirit is not given by measure, John 3: 34. "It has pleased

the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell", Col. 1: 19. and

"of his fulness we all receive grace for grace," John 1: 16. The

saints partake with him, and through him in the same Spirit of

grace, for which reason they are his fellows; but all the grace

poured out upon believers comes exceeding short of that which God

has poured out upon Jesus Christ. The words being thus opened, give

us this note,

Doct. That all true believers have a real communion or

fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the saints' union with Christ, there does naturally and

immediately result a most sweet and blessed communion and fellowship

with him in graces and spiritual privileges, Eph. 1: 3. "Blessed be

the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with

all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or things) in Christ: in

giving us his Son, he freely gives us all things," Rom. 8: 32. So in

1 Cor. 1: 30. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made

unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." And

once more, 1 Cor. 3: 22, 23. "All are yours, and ye are Christ's."

What Christ is and has is theirs by communication to them, or

improvement for them, and this is very evidently implied in all

those excellent scripture metaphors, by which our union with Christ

is figured and shadowed out to us, as the marriage-union betwixt a

man and his wife, Eph. 5: 31,32. You know that this conjugal union

gives the wife interest in the estate and honours of the husband, be

she never so meanly descended in herself. The natural union betwixt

the head and members of the body, by which also the mystical union

of Christ and believers is set forth, 1 Cor. 12: 12. excellently

illustrates this fellowship or communion betwixt them, for from

Christ "the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that

which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in

the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body," as the

apostle speaks, Eph. 4: 16. The union betwixt the graff and the

stock, which is another emblem of our union with Christ, John 15: 1.

imports, in like manner, this communion or partnership betwixt

Christ and the saints; for no sooner does the graft take hold of the

stock, but the vital sap of the stock is communicated to the graft,

and both live by one and the same juice.

Now, that the scope of this discourse be not mistaken, let the

reader know that I am not here treating of the saint's communion or

fellowship with God in his duties, as in prayer, hearing,

sacraments, &c. but of that interest which believers have in the

good things of Christ, by virtue of the mystical union betwixt then

through faith: there is a twofold communion of the saints with

Christ.

The first is an act.

The second is a state.

There is an actual fellowship or communion the saints have with

Christ in holy duties, wherein Christians let forth their hearts to

God by desires, and God lets forth his comforts and refreshments

again into their hearts; they open their mouths wide, and he fills

them: this communion with God is the joy and comfort of a believer's

life, but I am not to speak of that here. It is not any act of

communion, but the state of communion, from which all acts of

communion flow, and upon which they all depend, that I am now to

treat of; which is nothing else but the joint interest that Christ

and the saints have in the same things; as when a ship, an house, or

estate, is among many partners, or joint heirs, every one of them

has a right to it, and interest in it, though some of them have a

greater, and others a lesser part. So it is betwixt Christ and his

people; there is a "koinonia", i. e. a fellowship or joint interest

betwixt them, upon which ground they are called co-heirs with

Christ, Rom. 8: 17. This communion or participation in Christ's

benefits, depends upon the hypostatical union of our nature, and the

mystical union of our persons with the Son of God; in the first he

partakes with us, in the second we partake with him; the former is

the remote, the latter the next cause thereof.

In the explication of this point, I shall speak to these four

things:

1. What are those things in which Christ and believers have

fellowship.

2. By what means they come to have such a fellowship with

Christ.

3. How great a dignity this is to have fellowship with Jesus

Christ.

4. And then apply the whole in divers practical inferences.

First, What are those things in which Christ and believers have

fellowship, to which I must speak both negatively and positively.

1. Negatively, The saints have no fellowship with Jesus Christ

in those things that belong to him as God; such as his

consubstantiality, co-equality, and co-eternity with the Father. It

is the blasphemy of the wicked Familists to talk of being godded

into God, and christed into Christ. Neither men nor angels partake

in these things; they are the proper and incommunicable glory of the

Lord Jesus.

2. The saints have no communion or fellowship in the honour and

glory of his mediatory works, viz. his satisfaction to God, or

redemption of the elect. It is true, we have the benefit and fruit

of his mediation and satisfaction: his righteousness also is imputed

to us for our personal justification, but we share not in the least

with Christ in the glory of this work; nor have we an inherent

righteousness in us as Christ has; nor can we justify and save

others as Christ does: we have nothing to do with his peculiar

honour and praise in these things. Though we have the benefit of

being saved, we may not pretend to the honour of being Saviours, as

Christ is to ourselves or others. "Christ's righteousness is not

made ours as to its universal value, but as to our particular

necessity; nor is it imputed to us as to so many causes of salvation

to others, but as to so many subjects to be saved by it ourselves."

Secondly, But then there are many glorious and excellent things

which are in common betwixt Christ and believers, though in them all

he has the pre-eminence; he shines in the fulness of them, as the

sun, and we with a borrowed and lesser light, but of the same kind

and nature as the stars. Some of these I shall particularly, and

briefly unfold in the following particulars.

First, Believers have communion with Christ in his names and

titles; they are called Christians from Christ, Eph. 3: 15. from him

the whole family in heaven and earth is named: this is that worthy

name the apostle speaks of, James 2: 7. He is the Son of God, and

they also, by their union with him, have power or authority to

become the sons of God, John 1: 12. He is the heir of ail things,

and they are joint-heirs with him, Rom. 8: 17. He is both King and

Priest, and he has made them kings and priests, Rev. 1: 6. But they

do not only partake in the names and titles, but this communion

consists in things as well as titles. And therefore,

Secondly, They have communion with him in his righteousness,

i.e. the righteousness of Christ is made theirs, 2 Cor. 5: 21. and

he is "the Lord our righteousness," Jer. 23: 6. It is true, the

righteousness of Christ is not inherent in us, as it is in him; but

it is ours by imputation, Rev. 4: 5, 11. and our union with him is

the ground of the imputation of his righteousness to us, 2 Cor. 5:

21. "We are made the righteousness of God in him," Phil. 3: 9. for

Christ and believers are considered as one person, in construction

of law; as a man and his wife, a debtor and surety, are one: and so

his payment or satisfaction is in our name, or upon our account.

Now, this is a most inestimable privilege, the very ground of

all our other blessings and mercies. O, what a benefit is this to a

poor sinner, that owes to God infinitely more than he is ever able

to pay, by doing or suffering; to have such a rich treasure of merit

as lies in the obedience of Christ, to discharge, in one entire

payment, all his debts to the last earthing? "Surely shall one say,

in the Lord have I righteousness," Isa. 45: 24. even as a poor woman

that owes more than she is worth, in one moment is discharged of all

her obligations, by her marriage to a wealthy man.

Thirdly, Believers have communion with Christ in his holiness

or sanctification, for of God he is made unto them, not only

righteousness, but sanctification also; and as in the former

privilege, they have a stock of merit in the blood of Christ to

justify them; so here, they have the Spirit of Christ to sanctify

them, 1 Cor. 1: 30. and therefore we are said of his fullness to

receive "grace for grace," John 1: 16, i.e. say some, grace upon

grace, manifold graces, or abundance of grace; or grace for grace,

that is, grace answerable to grace: as in the seal and wax, there is

line for line, and cut for cut, exactly answerable to each other; or

grace for grace, that is, say others, the free grace of God in

Christ, for the sanctification or filling of our souls with grace:

be it in which sense it will, it shows the communion believers have

with Jesus Christ in grace and holiness. Now, holiness is the most

precious thing in the world, it is the image of God, and chief

excellency at man: it is our evidence for glory, yea, and the first

fruits of glory. In Christ dwells the fulness of grace, and from

him, our head, it is derived and communicated to us; thus he that

sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, Heb. 2:

11. You would think it no small privilege to have bags of gold to go

to, and enrich yourselves with, and yet that were but a very trifle

in comparison to have Christ's righteousness and holiness to go to

for your justification and sanctification. More particularly,

Fourthly, Believers have communion with Christ in his death;

they die with him, Gal. 2: 20. "I am crucified with Christ," i.e.

the death of Christ has a real killing and mortifying influence upon

the lusts and corruptions of my heart and nature: true it is, he

died for sin one way, and we die to sin another way: he died to

expiate it, we die to it, when we mortify it: the death of Christ is

the death of sin in believers; and this is a very glorious

privilege; for the death of sin is the life of your souls; if sin do

not die in you by mortification, you must die for sin by eternal

damnation. If Christ had not died, the Spirit of God, by which you

now mortify the deeds of the body, could not have been given unto

you: then you must have lived vassals to your sins, and died at last

in your sins; but the fruit, efficacy, and benefit of Christ's death

is yours for the killing those sins in you, which else have been

your ruin.

Fifthly, Believers have communion with Christ in his life and

resurrection from the dead; as he rose from the dead, so do they;

and that by the power and influence of his vivification and

resurrection. It is the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus that

makes us free from the law of sin and death, Rom. 8: 2. Our

spiritual life is from Christ, Eph. 2: 1. "And you has he quickened

who were dead in trespasses and sins:" and hence Christ is said to

live in the believer, Gal. 2: 20. "Now I live, yet not I, but Christ

liveth in me:" and it is no small privilege to partake of the very

life of Christ, which is the most excellent life that ever any

creature can live; yet such is the happiness of all the saints, the

life of Christ is manifest in them, and such a life as shall never

see death.

Sixthly, To conclude, believers have fellowship with Jesus

Christ in his glory, which they shall enjoy in heaven with him: they

shall be ever with the Lord," 1 Thes. 4: 17. and that is not all,

(though, as one saith, it were a kind of heaven but to look through

the key-hole, and have but a glimpse of Christ's blessed face) but

they shall partake of the glory which the Father has given him; for

so he speaks, John 17: 22, 24. and more particularly, they shall sit

with him in his throne, Rev. 3: 21. And when he comes to judge the

world, he will come to be glorified in the saints, 2 Thes. 1: 10. So

that you may see what glorious and inestimable things are, and will

be in common betwixt Christ and the saints. His titles, his

righteousness, his holiness, his death, his life, his glory. I do

not say that Christ will make any saint equal with him in glory;

that is impossible, he will be known from all the saints in heaven,

as the sun is distinguished from the stars; but they shall partake

of his glory, and be filled with his joy there; and thus you see

what those things are that the saints have fellowship with Christ

in.

Secondly, Next I would open the way and means by which we come

to have fellowship with Jesus Christ in these excellent privileges;

and this I shall do briefly in the following positions.

Position 1.

First, No man has fellowship with Christ in any special saving

privilege by nature, howsoever it be cultivated or improved; but

only by faith uniting him to the Lord Jesus Christ; It is not the

privilege of our first, but second birth. This is plain from John 1:

12,13, "But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to

become the sons of God, even as many as believe on his name, who are

born not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of

God." We are by nature children of wrath, Eph. 2: 3. we have

fellowship with Satan in sin and misery: the wild branch has no

communication of the sweetness and fatness of a more noble and

excellent root until it be ingrafted upon it, and have immediate

unions and coalition with it, John 15: 1, 2.

Position 2.

Believers themselves have not an equal share one with another,

in all the benefits and privileges of their union with Christ, but

in some there is an equality, and in others an inequality; according

to the measure and gift of Christ, to every one.

In justification they are all equal: the weak and the strong

believer are alike justified, because it is one and the same perfect

righteousness of Christ, which is applied to the one and to the

other, so that there are no different degrees of justification, but

all that believe are justified from all things, Act. 13: 39 and

"there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom 8:

1, be they never so weak in faith, or defective in degrees of grace.

But there is apparent difference in the measures of their

sanctification, some are strong men, and other's are babes in

Christ, 1 Cor. 3: 1. The faith of some flourishes and grows

exceedingly, 2 Thess. 1: 3 the things that are in others are ready

to die, Rev 3: 2. It is a plain case, that there is great variety

found in the degrees of grace, and comfort among them that are

jointly interested in Christ, and equally justified by him.

Position 3.

The saints have not fellowship and communion with Christ, in

the fore-mentioned benefits and privileges by one and the same

medium, but by various mediums and ways, according to the nature of

the benefits, in which they participate.

For instance, they have partnership and communion with Christ,

as has been said, in his righteousness, holiness, and glory, but

they receive these distinct blessings by divers mediums of

communion: we have communion with Christ in his righteousness, by

the way of imputation; we partake of his holiness, by the way of

infusion; and of his glory in heaven, by the beatifical vision. Our

justification is a relative change, our sanctification a real

change, our glorification a perfect change, by redemption from all

the remains both of sin and misery.

Thus has the Lord appointed several blessings for believers in

Christ, and several channels of conveying them from him to us; by

imputed righteousness, we are freed from the guilt of sin: by

imparted holiness, we are freed from the dominion of sin, and by our

glorification with Christ, we are freed from all the relics and

remains both of sin and misery let in by sin upon our natures.

Position 4.

That Jesus Christ imparts to all believers, all the spiritual

blessings that he is filled with, and withholds none from any that

have union with him, be these blessings never so great, or they that

receive them never so weak, mean, and contemptible in outward

respects, Gal 3: 27 "Ye are the children of God by faith in Jesus

Christ." The salvation that comes by Jesus Christ is stiled the

common salvation, Jude 3. and heaven the inheritance of the saints

in light, Col 1: 12. "There is neither Greek nor Jew, (saith the

apostle), circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian,

bond nor free, hut Christ is all, and in all," Col. 3: 11. He means,

there is no privilege in the one to commend them to God, and no want

of any thing, in the other to debar them from God; let men have or

want outward excellencies, as beauty, honour, riches, nobility,

gifts of the mind. sweetness of nature, and all such like ornaments,

what is that to God? He looks not at these things, but respects

them, and communicates his favour to them as they are in Christ: He

is all and in all. The gifts and blessings of the Spirit are given

to men as they are in Christ, and without respect to any external

differences made in this world among men: hence we find excellent

treasures of grace in mean and contemptible persons in the world,

poor in the world and rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom; and

as all believers, without difference, receive from Christ, so they

are not debarred from any blessing that is in Christ: "All is yours,

for ye are Christ's, 1 Cor. 3: ult. With Christ God freely gives us

all things," Rom. 8: 32.

Position 5.

The communion believers have with Christ, in spiritual

benefits, is a very great mystery, far above the understandings of

natural men. There are no footsteps of this thing in all the works

of creation; therefore the apostle calls it "The unsearchable riches

of Christ," Eph. 3: 8, "aneksichniaston plouton tou Christou": The

word signifies, that which has no footsteps to trace it by: yea, it

is so deep a mystery, that the angels themselves stoop down to look

into it, 1 Pet. 1: 12. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither

have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared

for them that love him: but God has revealed them unto us by his

Spirit," 1 Cor. 2: 9, 10.

Thirdly, and lastly, I shall, in a few particulars, spell the

dignity and excellency of this fruit of our union with Christ, and

show you, that a greater glory and honour cannot be put upon man,

than to be thus in fellowship with Jesus Christ, John 17: 22. "The

glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one,

as we are one:" And therefore, more particularly, let it be

considered,

First, With whom we are associated, even the Son of God; with

him that is over all, God blessed for ever. Our association with

angels is an high advancement, for angels and saints are

fellowservants in the same family, Rev. 19: 10. and through Christ

we are come to an innumerable company of angels, Heb. 12: 22. But

what is all this to our fellowship with Jesus Christ himself; and

that in another manner than angels have? Nor though Christ be to

then an head of dominion, yet not an head of vital influences, as he

is to his mystical body the church; this therefore is to them a

great mystery, which they greatly affect to study and pry into.

Secondly, What we are that are dignified with this title, the

fellows or co-partners with Jesus Christ: not only dust by nature,

(Dust thou art), but sinful dust; such wretched sinners, as, by

nature, and the sentence of the law, ought to be associated with

devils, and partakers with them of the wrath the Almighty God to all

eternity.

Thirdly, The benefits we are partakers of, in and with the Lord

Jesus Christ; and, indeed, they are wonderful and astonishing

things, so far as they do already appear, but yet we see but little

of them comparatively, to what we shall see, 1 John 3: 1, 2. "Now

are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be,

but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we

shall see him as he is." O, what will that be! to see him as he is,

and to be transformed into his likeness!

Fourthly, The way and manner in which we are brought into this

fellowship with Christ; which is yet more admirable. The apostle

gives us a strange account of it in 2 Cor. 8: 9. "For you know the

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for

your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be

rich:" he empties himself of his glory, that we might be filled; he

is made a curse, that we might enjoy the blessing, he submits to be

crowned with thorns, that us might be crowned with glory and honour;

he puts himself into the number of worms, Psal. 22: 6. that we might

be made equal to the angels. O, the inconceivable grace of Christ!

Fifthly, The reciprocal nature of that communion which is

betwixt Christ and believers; we do not only partake of what is his,

but he partakes of what is ours: he has fellowship with us in all

our wants, sorrows, miseries and afflictions; and we have communion

with him in his righteousness, grace, sonship and glory: he takes

part of our misery, and we take part of his blessedness; our

sufferings are his sufferings, Col. 1: 24. O, what an honour is it

to thee, poor wretch, to whom a great many would not turn aside to

ask how thou dost; to have a King, yea, the Prince of all the kings

of the earth, to pity, relieve, sympathise, groan and bleed with

thee, to sit by thee in all thy troubles, and give thee his

cordials; to say thy troubles are my troubles, and thy afflictions

are my afflictions: whatever toucheth thee, toucheth me also. O what

name shall we give unto such grace as this is!

Sixthly, and lastly, Consider the perpetuity of this privilege:

Your fellowship with Christ is interminable, and abides for ever.

Christ and the saints shall be glorified together, Rom. 8: 17. While

he has any glory they shall partake with him. It is said indeed, 1

Cor. 15: 24. that there shall be a time when Christ will deliver up

the kingdom to his Father but the meaning is not that ever he will

cease to be the Head of his saints, or they from being his members:

No, the relation never ceases; justification, sanctification and

adoptions are everlasting things, and we can never be divested of

them.

Inference 1. Are the saints Christ's fellows? What honourable

persons then are they! And how should they be esteemed and valued in

the world! If a king, who is the fountain of honour, do but raise a

man by his favour, and dignify him by bestowing some honourable

title upon him, what respect and observance is presently paid him by

all persons? But what are all the vain and empty titles of honour,

to the glorious and substantial privileges with which believers are

dignified, and raised above all other men by Jesus Christ? He is the

Son of God, and they are the sons of God also: he is the Heir of all

things, and they are joint heirs with Christ; he reigns in glory,

and they shall retort with him: he sits upon the throne, and they

shall sit with him in his throne. O that this vile world did but

know the dignity of believers, they would never slight, hate, abuse,

and persecute them as they do! And O that believers did but

understand their own happiness and privileges by Christ, they would

never droop and sink under every small trouble at that rate they do!

Inf. 2. How abundantly has God provided for all the necessities

and wants of believers! Christ is a storehouse filled with blessings

and mercies, and it is all for them: from him they "receive

abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness<" Rom 5: 17.

"Of his fulness they all receive grace for grace," John 1: 16. All

the fulness of Christ is made over to them for the supply of their

wants: "My God shall supply all your needs, (saith the apostle)

according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ," Phil. 4: 19. If

all the riches of God can supply your needs, then they shall be

supplied. Say not, Christ is in the possession of consummate glory,

and I am a poor creature, struggling with many difficulties, and

toiling in the midst of many cares and fears in the world; for care

is taken for all thy wants, and orders given from heaven for their

supply: My God shall supply all your need. O say with a melting

heart, I have a full Christ, and he is filled for me: I have his

pure and perfect righteousness to justify me, his holiness to

sanctify me, his wisdom to guide me, his comforts to refresh me, his

power to protect me, and his all-sufficiency to supply me. O be

cheerful, be thankful, you have all your hearts can wish; and yet be

humble; it is all from free-grace to empty and unworthy creatures

Inf. 3. How absurd, disingenuous, and unworthy of a Christian,

is it to deny, or withhold from Christ any thing he has, or by which

he may be served or honoured? Does Christ communicate all he has to

you, and can you withhold any thing from Christ? On Christ's part it

is not mine, and thine, but ours, or mine and yours; John 20: 17 "I

ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God." But

O this cursed idol self! which appropriates all to its own designs

and uses. How liberal is Christ! and how penurious are we to him!

Some will not part with their credit for Christ, when yet Christ

abased himself unspeakably for them. Some will not part with a drop

of blood for Christ, when Christ spent the whole treasure of his

blood freely for us; yea, how loth are we to part with a shilling

for Christ, to relieve him in his distressed members, when as yet

"we know the grace of out Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was

rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty

might be rich!" O ungrateful return! O base and disingenuous

spirits!" The things Christ gives us are great, and the things we

deny to him are small: he parts with the greatest, and yet is denied

the least. The things he communicates to us are none of ours, we

have no right nor title by nature, or any desert of ours to them;

the things we deny or grudge to Christ are by all titles his own,

and he has the fullest and most unquestionable title to them all;

what he gives to us, he gives to them that never deserved it; what

we withhold from him, we withhold from one that has deserved that,

and infinitely more from us than we have or are.

He interested you freely in all his riches when you were

enemies; you stand upon trifles with him, and yet call him your best

and dearest friend: he gave himself and all he has to you, when you

could claim nothing from him; you deny to part with these thing to

Christ, who may not only claim them upon the highest title, his own

sovereignty, and absolute property, but by your own act, who profess

to have given all in covenant to him: what he gives you return no

profit to him, but what you give or part with for him is your

greatest advantage. O that the consideration of these things might

shame and humble your souls!

Inf. 4. Then certainly no man is or can be supposed to be a

loser by conversion, seeing from that day, whatever Christ is or has

becomes his.

O what an inheritance are men possessed of by their new birth!

Some men cry out, Religion will undo you; but with what eyes do

these men see? Surely, you could never so reckon, except your souls

were so incarnated, as to reckons pardon. Peace, adoption, holiness,

and heaven, for nothing; that invisibles a non-entities, and

temporals the only realities. It is true, the converted soul may

lose his estate, his liberty, yea, his life for Christ but what

then? Are they losers that exchange brass for gold? or part with

their present comforts for an hundred-fold advantage? Mark 10: 29.

So that none need be frightened at religion, for the losses that

attend it, whilst Christ and heaven are gained by it: they that

count religion their loss have their portion in this life.

Inf. 5. How securely is the saints inheritance settled upon

them, seeing they are in common with Jesus Christ? Christ and his

saints are joint-heirs, and the inheritance cannot be alienated but

by his consent: he must lose his interest, if you lose yours. Indeed

Adam's inheritance was by a single title, and moreover, it was in

his own hand, and so he might, (as indeed he soon did) divest

himself and his posterity of it; but it is not so betwixt Christ and

believers; we are secured in our inheritance by Christ our co-heir,

who will never alienate it: and therefore it was truly observed by

the father, Faelicior Job in sterquilinio, quam Adamus in paradiso:

Job was happier upon the dunghill, than Adam was in paradise. The

covenant of grace is certainly the best tenure; as it has the best

mercies, so it gives the fullest security top enjoy them.

Inf. 6. How rich and full is Jesus Christ, who communicates

abundantly to all the saints, and yet has infinitely still more in

himself, than has ever been received by them all.

Take all the faith of Abraham all the meekness of Moses, all

the patience of Job, all the wisdom of Solomon, all the zeal of

David, all the industry of Paul, and all the tender-heartedness of

Josiah; and to this all the grace that is poured (though in lesser

measure) into all the elect vessels. in the world, yet still it is

short of that which remains in Christ; "He is anointed with oil of

gladness above his fellows:" And in all things he has and must ever

have the pre-eminence. There are many thousand stars glittering

above your head, and one star differs from another star in glory,

yet there is more light and glory in one sun, than in many thousand

stars. Grace beautifies the children of men exceedingly, but still

that is true of Christ, Psal. 45: 2. "Thou art fairer than the

children of men, grace is poured into thy lips". Yet all grace is

secondarily, and derivatively in the saints, but it is primitively

and originally in Christ, John 5: 16. Grace is imperfect and

defective in them, but in him it is in its most absolute perfection

and fulness, Col 1: 19. In the saint. it is mixed with abundance of

corruption, but in Christ it is altogether unmixed, and exclusive of

its opposite, Heb. 7: 26. So that as the Heathen said of moral

virtue, I may much more say of Christ, That were he to be such with

mortal eyes, he would compel love and admiration from all men, for

"he is altogether lovely," Cant. 5: l6.

Inf. 7. What delight and singular advantage must needs be in

the communion of the saints, who have communion with Jesus Christ in

all his races and benefits.

"That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that

ye also may have fellowship with us: And truly our fellowship is

with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ", 1 John 1: 3. O it

is sweet to have fellowship with those that have fellowship with God

in Jesus Christ. Christ has communicated to the saints varieties of

graces, in different measures and degrees; And as they all receive

from Christ the fountain, so it is sweet and most delightful to be

improving themselves by spiritual communion one with another: Yea,

for that end one is furnished with one grace more eminently than

another, that the weak may be assisted by the strong, as a modern

divine well observes. Athanasius was prudent and active, Basil of an

heavenly, sweet temper, Chrysostom laborious, without affection,

Ambrose resolved and grave, Luther courageous, and Calvin acute and

judicious. Thus every one has his proper gift from Christ, the

fountain of gifts and graces, 1 Cor 7: 7. One has quickness of

parts, another solidity of judgement, but not ready and presential;

one is zealous, but ungrounded; another well principled, but

timorous; one is wary and prudent; another open and plain; one is

trembling and melting; another cheerful and joyous; one must impart

his light, another his heat: The eye, the knowing man, cannot say to

the hand, the active man, I have no need of thee. And O how sweet

would it be, if gifts, graces, and experiences were frequently and

humbly imparted: But idle notions earthly mindedness, self-

interests, and want of more communion with Christ, have almost

destroyed the comfort of Christian fellowship everywhere in the

world.

Inf. 8. In a word, those only have ground to claim interest in

Christ, who do really participate of his graces, and in whom are

found the effects and fruits of their union and communion with him.

If you have interest in Christ, you have communion in his

graces and benefits; and if you have such communion, it will appear

in your maintaining daily actual communion with God in duties;

whereby will be produced,

First, The increase of your sanctification, by fresh

participations from the fountain; as cloth which is often dipt into

the vat receives the deeper dye, and livelier tincture; so will your

souls by assiduous communion with God. It will also be discerned,

Secondly, In your deeper humiliation, and spiritual sense of

your own vileness: The more any man partakes of God, and is

acquainted with him, and assimilated to him, the more base and vile

in his own sight he still grows, Job 42: 5, 6. Isa. 6: 5.

Thirdly, It will appear in your more vehement longings after

the full enjoyment of God in heaven, 1 Pet 1: 8. and Rom. 8: 23. You

that have the first fruits will groan within yourselves after the

full harvest, and satisfying fruition; you will not be so taken with

things below, as to be content with the best lot on earth for your

everlasting, portion. O! if these communicated drops be so sweet,

what is there in Christ the fountain?

And thus I have opened the method of grace in bringing home

Christ and his benefits to God's elect by union, in order to

communion with him.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

Sermon 9.

Containing the first general Use of Exhortation, inviting all Men to

apply Jesus Christ.

Matth. 11:28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will

give you rest.

The impetration of our redemption by Jesus Christ, being

finished in the first part, and the way and means by which Christ is

applied to sinners in the foregoing part of this treatise; I am now

orderly come to the general use of the whole; which in the first

place shall be by way of exhortation, to invite and persuade all men

to come to Christ; who, in all the former sermons, had been

represented in his garments of salvations, and in his apparel,

prepared and offered to sinners as their all-sufficient and only

remedy: and in the following sermons, will be represented in his

perfumed garments coming out of his ivory palaces, Psalm 45: 8, to

allure and draw all men unto him.

For a general head to this use, which will be large, I have

chosen this scripture, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are

heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

These words are the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, in

which there is a vital, ravishing sound: It is your mercy to have

such a joyful sound in your ears this day. And in them I will

consider their dependence, parts, and scope.

As to their dependence, it is manifest they have an immediate

relation to the foregoing verse, wherein Christ opens his

commission, and declares the fulness of this authority and saving

power, and the impossibility of comings to God any other way. "All

things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son

but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and

he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him," ver. 27.

The 28th verse is brought in proleptically to obviate the

discouragements of any poor, convinced, and humbled soul, who might

thus object: Lord, I am fully satisfied of the fulness of thy saving

power, but greatly doubt whether ever I shall have the benefit

thereof; for I see so much sin and guilt in myself, so great

vileness and utter unworthiness, that I am over weighed, and even

sink under the burden of it: My soul is discouraged because of sin.

This objection is prevented in the words of my text, "Come unto me,

all ye that labour, and are heavy laden", q. d. Let not the sense of

your sin and misery drive you from your only remedy: Be your sins

never so many, and the sense and burden of them never so heavy, yet,

for all that, Come unto me: You are the persons whom I invite and

call. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

In the words, three things are especially remarkable.

1. The soul's spiritual distress and burthen: Weary and heavy

laden.

2. Its invitations to Christ under that burthen: Come unto me.

3. Its encouragement to that great duty: I will give you rest.

First, The soul's spiritual distress and burthen expressed in

two very emphatical words, "hoi kopiontes kai pefortismenoi", "You

that labour and are heavy laden." The word which we translate

labour, signifies a labouring even to faintness and tiring, to the

consumption and waste of the spirits; and the other word signifies

such a pressure by a burthen that is too heavy to be borne, that we

do even sink down under it.

There is some difference among expositors about the quality of

this burthen. Chrysostom, and some others after him, expound it of

the burthen of the legal rites and ceremonies, which was a heavy

burthen indeed, such as neither they, nor their fathers could bear.

Under the task and burthen of these legal observances, they did

sweat and toil to obtain a righteousness to justify them before God,

and all in vain: and this is a pious sense: But others expound it of

the burthen of sin in general; the corruption of nature, and evils

of practice, which souls convinced have brought them under the

curse, anti will bring them to hell, and therefore labour and

strive, all that in them lies, by repentance and reformation, to

clear themselves from it; but all in vain, whilst they strive in

their own strength. Such are they that are here called to come to

Christ, which is the second thing; namely,

Secondly, The invitation of burthened souls to Christ: "Come

unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden: Come unto me," i.e.

believe in me, lean and rest your burthened souls upon me. I am able

to ease all your burthens; in me are that righteousness and peace -

which you seek in vain in all the legal rites and ceremonies; or in

your repentance, reformations, and duties; but it will give you no

ease, it will be no benefit to you, except you come unto me. Faith

is often expressed under this notion, see John 6: 37. and John 7:

37. and it is to be further noted, that all burthened souls are

invited to come, "All ye that labour. What ever your sin or guilt

have been, whatever your fears or discouragements are, yet come,

i.e. believe in me.

Thirdly, Here is the encouragement Christ gives to this duty,

And I will give you rest: "anapauso mas". I will refresh you, I will

give you rest from your labour, your consciences shall be pacified,

your hearts at rest and quiet in that pardon, peace and favour of -

God which I will procure for you by my death. But here it must be

heedfully noted, that this promise of rest in Christ is not made to

men simply as they are sinners, nor yet as they are burthened and

heavy laden sinners, but as they come to Christ, i.e. as they are

believers. For let a man break his heart for sin, let him weep out

his eyes, let him mourn as a dove, and shed as many tears for sin

(if it were possible) as ever there fell drops of rain upon the

ground, yet if he come not to Christ by faith, his repentance shall

not save him, nor all his sorrows bring him to true rest. Hence

note,

Doct. 1. That some souls are heavy laden with the burthensome

sense of sin.

Doct. 2. That all burthened souls are solemnly invited to cone

to Christ.

Doct. 3. That there is rest in Christ for all that come to him

under the heavy burthen of sin.

Doct. 1. Some souls are heavy laden with the burthensome sense

of sin.

I do not say all are so, for "fools make a mock at sin," Pro.

14: 9. It is so far from being burthensome to some, that it is a

sport to them, Prov. 10: 23. But when a man's eyes are opened to see

the evil that is in sin, and the eternal misery that follows it,

(sin and hell being linked together with such strong chains as

nothing but the blood of Christ can loose) then no burden is like

that of sin. "A wounded conscience who can bear?" Prov. 18: 14. For

let us but consider the efficacy that the law of God has upon the

consciences of men, when it comes in the spirituality and power of

it, to convince and humble the soul of a sinner. For then,

First, The memory of sin long since committed, is refreshed and

revived, as if it had been but yesterday: There are fresh

recognitions of sin long since acted and forgotten, as if they had

never been: What was done in our youth is fetched back again, and by

a new impression of fear and horror set home upon the trembling

conscience, Job 13. 26. "Thou writest bitter things against me, and

makest me to possess the sins of my youth." Conscience can call back

the days that are past, and draw up a new charge upon the score of

old sins, Gen. 42: 21. All that ever we did is recorded and entered

into the book of conscience, and now is the time to open that book,

when the Lord will convince and awaken sinners. We read in Job 14:

17 of sealing up iniquities in a bag, which is an allusion to the

Clerk of the assizes, that takes all the indictments that are made

against persons at the assizes and seals them up in a bag, in order

to a trial. This is the first office and work of conscience; upon

which

The second, namely, its accusations, do depend. These

accusations of conscience are terrible things; who can stand before

them? They are full, they are clear, and all of them referring to

the approaching judgement of the great and terrible God.

Conscience dives into all sins, secret as well as open, and

into all the circumstances and aggravations of sin, as being

committed against light, against mercy, against the strivings,

warnings, and regrets of conscience. So that we may say of the

efficacy of conscience, as it is said, Psal. 19: 6. of the influence

of the sun, "nothing is hid from the heat and power thereof." "Come

(saith the woman of Samaria) see a man that has told me all that

ever I did," John 4: 29. Christ convinced her but of one sin by his

discourse, but conscience, by that one, fetched in, and charged all

the rest upon her. And as the accusations of conscience are full, so

they are clear and undeniable. A man becomes self convinced, and

there remains no shift, excuse, or plea, to defend himself. A

thousand witnesses cannot prove any point more clearly than one

testimony of conscience does. Mat. 22: 12. "The man was speechless,

a mute; muzzled (as the word signifies) by the clear testimony of

his own conscience. These accusations are the second work of

conscience, and they make way for the third, namely,

Thirdly, The sentence and condemnation of conscience: And truly

this is an insupportable burthen: The condemnation of conscience is

nothing else but its application of the condemning sentence of the

law to a man's person: The law curseth every one that transgresseth

it, Gal. 3: 10. Conscience applies this curse to the guilty sinner.

So that it sentences the sinner in God's name and authority, from

whence there is no appeal: The voice of conscience is the voice of

God, and what it pronounces in God's name and authority, he will

confirm and ratify, 1 John 3: 20. "If our hearts, (i. e.) our

consciences condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth

all things. This is that torment which no man cam endure. See the

effects of it in Cain, in Judas, and in Spira; it is a real

foretaste of hell-torments: This is that worm that never dies, Mark

9: 44. For look, as a worm in the body is bred of the corruption

that is there, so the accusations and condemnations of conscience

are bred in the soul by the corruption and guilt that are there. As

the worm in the body preys and bites upon the tender, sensible,

inward parts, so does conscience touch the very quick. This is the

third enact, or work, to sentence and condemn; and this also makes

way for a fourth, namely,

Fourthly, To upbraid and reproach the sinner under his misery:

and this makes a man a very terror to himself: To be pitied in

misery is some relief, but to be upbraided and reproached, doubles

our affliction. You know it was one of the aggravations of Christ's

sufferings to be reproached by the tongues of his enemies, whilst he

hanged in torments upon the cursed tree; but all the scoffs and

reproaches, the bitter jeers and sarcasms in the world, are nothing

to those of a man's own conscience, which will cut to the very bone.

O! when a man's conscience shall say to him in a day of

trouble, as Reuben to his afflicted brethren, (Gen. 43:22. "Spake I

not unto you, saying, do not sin against the child, and ye would not

hear; therefore behold also his blood is required." So conscience,

did I not warn you, threaten you, persuade you in time against these

evils, but you would not hearken to me, therefore behold now you

must suffer to all eternity for it. The wrath of God is kindled

against thy soul for it: This is the fruit of thy own wilful madness

and obstinacy. Now thou shalt know the price of sinning against God,

against light and conscience. O, this is terrible! Every bite of

conscience makes a poor soul to startle, and in a terrible fright to

cry, O the worm! O. the bitter foretaste of hell! A wounded spirit

who can bear?

This is a fourth wound of conscience, and it makes way for a

fifth; for here it is as the pouring out of the vials, and the

sounding of those woe-trumpets in Revelations; one woe is past, and

another cometh. After all these deadly blows of conscience upon the

very heart of a sinner, comes another as dreadful as any that is yet

named; and that is,

Fifthly, The fearful expectation of wrath to come, which it

begets in the soul of a guilty sinner: Of this you read, Heb. 10:

27. "A fearful looking for of Judgement, and fiery indignation." And

this makes the stoutest sinner faint and sink under the burthen of

sin. For the tongue of man cannot declare what it is to lie down and

rise with those fearful expectations. The case of such sinners is

somewhat like that which is described in Deut. 28: 65, 66, 67. "The

Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and

sorrow of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and

thou shalt fear day and night, and shall have no assurance of thy

life. In the morning thou shalt say, would to God it were even: And

at even thou shalt say, would to God it were morning: For the fear

of thine heart, wherewith thou shalt fear,- &c. Only in this it

differs, in this scripture you have the terror of those described,

whose temporal life hangs in doubtful suspense, but in the persons I

am speaking of, it is a trembling under the apprehensions and

expectations of the vengeance of eternal fire.

Believe it, friends, words cannot express what those poor

creatures feel, that lie down, and rise up under these fears, and

frights of conscience. Lord, what will become of me! I am free among

the dead, yea, among the damned. I hang by the frail thread of a

momentary life, which will, and must, break shortly, and may break

the next moment, over the everlasting burnings: No pleasant bread is

to be eaten in these days, but what is like the bread of condemned

men.

And thus you see what the burden of sin is, when God makes it

to bear upon the consciences of men, no burden of affliction is like

it: losses of dearest relations, sorrows for an only son, are not so

pungent and penetrating as these: For,

First, to creature-enjoyment is pleasant under these inward

troubles: In other troubles they may signify something to a man's

relief; but here they are nothing; the wound is too deep to be

healed by any thing but the blood of Jesus Christ; conscience

requires as much to satisfy it, as God requires to satisfy him. When

God is at peace with thee, (saith conscience) then will I be at

peace with thee too; but, till then, expect no rest nor peace from

me. All the pleasures and diversions in the world shall never stop

my mouth: go where thou wilt, I will follow thee like thy shadow: be

thy portion in the world as sweet as it will, I will drop in gall

and wormwood into thy cup, that thou shalt taste no sweetness in any

thing, till thou hast got thy pardon.

These inward troubles for sin alienate the mind from all former

pleasures and delights; there is no more taste or savour in them,

than in the white of an egg. Music is out of tune; all instruments

jar and groan. Ornaments have no beauty; what heart has a poor

creature to deck that body, in which dwells such a miserable soul!

to feed and pamper that carcase that has been the soul's inducement

to, and instrument in sin, and must be its companion in everlasting

misery!

Secondly, These inward troubles for sin put a dread into death,

beyond whatever the soul saw in it before. Now it looks like the

King of terrors indeed. You read in Heb. 2: 15. of some that through

fear of death are all their life long subject to bondage. O what a

lively comment is a soul in this case able to make upon such a text!

They would not scare at the pale horse, nor at him that sits on him,

though his name be called Death, if it were not for what follows

him, Rev. 6: 8. but when they consider that hell follows, they

tremble at the very name or thoughts of death.

Thirdly, Such is the nature of these inward troubles of spirit,

that they swallow up the sense of all outward troubles. Alas! these

are all lost in the deeps of soul sorrows, as the little rivulets

are in the vast sea; he that is wounded at the heart will not cry

Oh, at the bite of the smallest insect. And surely no greater is the

proportion betwixt outward and inward sorrows. A small matter

formerly would discompose a man, and put him into a fret; now ten

thousand outward troubles are lighter than a feather: For, saith he,

"why doth the living man complain?" Am I yet on this side of eternal

burnings! O let me not complain then whatever my condition be. Have

I losses in the world, or pains upon my body? Alas! these are not to

be named with the loss of God, and the feeling of his wrath and

indignation for evermore. Thus you see what troubles, inward

troubles for sin be.

Secondly, If you ask, in the second place, how it comes to pass

that any soul is supported under such strong troubles of spirit,

that all that feel them do not sink under them; that all that go

down into these deep waters of sorrow, are not drowned in them? The

answer is,

First, Though this be a very sad time with the soul (much like

that of Adam, betwixt the breach of the first covenant, and the

first promise of Christ made to him) yet the souls that are thus

heavy laden, do not sink, because God has a most tender care over

them, and regard to them; underneath them are the everlasting arms,

and thence it is they sink not: were they left to grapple with these

troubles in their own strength, they could never stand. But God

takes care of these mourners, that their spirits do not fail before

him, and the souls that he has made; I mean those of his elect, whom

he is this way preparing for, and bringing unto Christ.

Secondly, The Lord is pleased to nourish still some hope in the

soul under the greatest fears and troubles of spirit. Though it have

no comfort or joy, yet it has some hope, and that keeps up the

heart. The afflicted soul does, in this case, as the afflicted

church, Lam. 3: 29. "He putteth his mouth in the dust, if yet there

may be hope:" He saith, "It is good for a man to hope, and quietly

to wait for the salvation of God." There are usually some

glimmerings or downings of mercy through Christ, in the midnight

darkness of inward troubles; non dantur purae, tenabrae. In hell,

indeed, there is no hope to enlighten the darkness, but it is not so

upon earth.

Thirdly, The experiences of others, who have been in the same

deeps of trouble, are also of great use to keep up the soul above

water. The experience of another is of great use to prop up a

desponding mind, whilst as yet it has none of its own; and, in deed,

for the support of souls in such cases, they were recorded. 1 Tim.

1: 16. "For this cause I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus

Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern "to them

which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." For an

encouraging Pattern, an eminent precedent to all poor sinners that

were to come after him, that none might absolutely despair of

finding mercy through Christ. You know if a man be taken sick, and

none can tell what the disease is, none can say that ever they heard

of such a disease before, it is exceeding frightful; but if one and

another, it may be twenty, come to the sick man's bed side, and tell

him, sir, be not afraid, I have been in the very same case that you

now are in, and so have many more, and all did well at last; why

this is half a cure to the sick man. So it is here a great support

to hear the experiences of other saints.

Fourthly, As the experiences of others support the soul under

these burdens, so the riches of free grace through Jesus Christ

uphold it. It is rich and abundant, Psal. 130: 7, 8. plenteous

redemption; and it is free, and to the worst of sinners, Isa. 1: 18.

And under these troubles it finds itself in the way and proper

method of mercy, for so my text (a text that has upheld many

thousand drooping hearts) states it. All this gives hope and

encouragement under trouble.

Fifthly, and lastly, Though the state of the soul be sad and

sinking, yet Jesus Christ usually makes haste in the extremity of

trouble to relieve it by sweet and seasonable discoveries of his

grace; cum duplicantur lateris, venit Moses, in the mount of the

Lord it shall be seen. It is with Christ as it was with Joseph,

whose bowels yearned towards his brethren, and he was in pain till

he had told them, "I am Joseph your brother." This is sweetly

exhibited to us in that excellent parable of the prodigal, Luke 15,

when his father saw him, being yet a great way off, he ran and fell

upon his neck, and kissed him. Mercy runs nimbly to help, when souls

are ready to fall under the pressure of sin. And thus you see both

how they are burdened, and how upheld under the burden.

Thirdly, If it be enquired, in the last place, why God makes

the burden of sin press so heavy upon the hearts of poor sinners? It

is answered,

First, He does it to divorce their hearts from sin, by giving

them an experimental taste of the bitterness and evil that is in

sin. Men's hearts are naturally glued with delight to their sinful

courses; all the persuasions and arguments in the world are too weak

to separate them from their beloved lusts. The morsels of sin go

down smoothly and sweetly, they roll them with much delectation

under their tongues, and it is but need that such bitter potions as

these should be administered "to make their stomachs rise against

sin", as that word used by the apostle in 2 Cor. 7: 11. signifies,

in that ye sorrowed after a Godly sort, what indignation it wrought?

It notes the rising of the stomach with rage, a being angry even

unto sickness; and this is the way, the best and most effectual way

to separate the soul of a sinner from his lusts; for, in these

troubles, conscience saith, as it is in Jer. 4: 18. "Thy way and thy

doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness,

because it is great, because it reacheth unto thy heart."

Secondly, The Lord does this to make Jesus Christ most welcome

and desirable to the soul. Christ is not sweet till sin be made

bitter to us. Matth. 9: 12. "They that be whole need not a

physician, but they that are sick." If once God wounds the heart of

a sinner, with the stinging sense of sin, then nothing in the world

is so precious, so necessary, so vehemently desired and panted for

as Jesus Christ! O that I had Christ, if I did go in rags, if I did

feed upon no other food all my days, but the bread and water of

affliction! This is the language of a soul filled with the sense of

the evil of sin.

Thirdly, The Lord does this to advance the riches of his free

grace in the eyes of sinners. Grace never appears grace till sin

appear to be sin. The deeper our sense of the evil of sin is, the

deeper our apprehensions of the free grace of God in Christ will be.

The louder our groan have been under the burden of sin, the louder

will our acclamations and praises be for our salvation from it by

Jesus Christ. "To me (saith Paul) the chiefest of sinners, was this

grace given," 1 Tim. 1: 15. Never does the grace of a prince so melt

the heart of a traitor, as when trial, sentence, and all

preparations for his execution have passed, before his unexpected

pardon comes.

Fourthly, The Lord does this to prevent relapses into sin: "In

that you sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought!"

2 Cor. 2:7. The burnt child dreads the fire, the bird that is de of

the talons of the hawk, trembles afterwards at the noise of his

bells. "After such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy

commandments?" Ezra 9: 13, 14. Ask poor penitent soul, that has been

in the deeps of sorrow for sin, Will you return to your former

course of sin again? And it sounds in his ears, as if you should ask

him, Will you run into the fire? Will you go to the rack again? O

no, it has cost him dear already.

Fifthly, Lastly, This the Lord does, to make them both skilful

and compassionate in relieving others that are under like inward

troubles. None can speak so judiciously, so pertinently, so

feelingly to another's case, as he that has been in the same case

himself; this furnishes them with the tongue of the learned, to

speak a word in season to the weary soul; by this means they are

able to "comfort others with the same comforts wherewith they

themselves have been comforted of God," 2 Cor. 1: 4.

Thus you have had a brief account, what the burden of sin is,

how souls are supported under that burden, and why the Lord causes

sin to lie so heavy upon the souls of some sinners. The improvement

of all will be in a double use, viz.

Of information and direction.

First use for information.

Inference 1. Is there such a load and burden in sin? What then

was the burden that our Lord Jesus Christ felt and bare for us, upon

whom the whole weight of all the sins of all God's elect lay! Isa.

53: 6. "He has made the iniquities of us all to meet on him." Our

burden is heavy, but nothing to Christ's. O there is a vast

difference betwixt that which Christ bare, and that which we bear.

We feel but the single weight of our own sins; Christ felt the whole

weight of all our sins. You do not feel the whole weight that is in

any one sin; alas, it would sink you, if God should let it bear in

all its aggravations and effects upon you. Psal. 130: 2, 3. "If

thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand!" You

would sink presently, you can no more stand under it, than under the

weight of a mighty mountain. But Christ bare all the burden upon

himself; his understanding was deep and large; he knew the extent of

its evil, which we do not: we have many reliefs and helps under our

burden, he had none; we have friends to counsel, comfort, and pity

us; all his friends and familiars forsook him, and fled in the day

of his trouble: we have comforts from heaven, he had frowns from

heaven: "My God, my God, (saith he in that doleful day) why hast

thou forsaken me?" There is no comparison betwixt our load and

Christ's.

Inf. 2. If there be such a burden in sin, then certainly

sinners will pay dear for all the pleasure they find in sin in the

days of their vanity. "What one saith of crafty counsels, we may say

of all sins; though they seem pleasant in their first appearance,

they would be found sad in the event:" they are honey in the mouth,

but the gall of asps in the belly; they tickle the fancy, but rend

the conscience. O sinner, thy mirth will certainly be turned into

mourning, as sure as thou livest; that vain and frothy breast of

thine shall be wounded; thou shalt feel the sting and pain, as well

as relish the sweet and pleasure of sin. O that thou wouldst but

give thyself the leisure seriously to ponder those scriptures in the

margin; methinks they should have the same effect that the

handwriting upon the plaister of the wall had upon that jovial king

in the height of a frolic, Daniel 5: 5. Reason thus with thine own

heart, and thou wilt find the conclusion unavoidable; either I shall

repent for sin, or I shall not: If I shall not, then must I howl

under the wrath of God for sin, in the lowest hell for evermore. If

I shall, then by what I have now read of the throbs and wounds of

conscience, I see what this heart of mine, this vain heart of mine,

must feel in this world. O how much wiser was the choice that Moses

made, Heb. 11: 25. the worst of sufferings rather than the best of

sin, the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season!

Inf. 3. Is there such a burden in sin, then the most tender

compassion is a debt due to souls addicted and heavy laden with sin.

Their condition cries for pity, whatever their tongues do; they seem

to call upon you, as Job upon his friends; "Have pity, have pity

upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God has touched me", Job

19: 21. And O let all that have felt the wounds and anguish of an

afflicted conscience themselves, learn from their own experience

tenderly to pity and help others. Gal. 6: 1. "You that are

spiritual, restore (it or set him in joint again) in the spirit of

meekness, considering thyself."

Israel was commanded to be kind to strangers, for, saith God,

you know the heart of a stranger. And surely if any case in the

world require help, pity, and all compassionate tenderness, this

does; and yet how do some slight spiritual troubles upon others?

Parents slight them in their own children, masters in their

servants; the more brutish and wicked they! O had you but felt

yourselves what they feel, you would never treat them as you do. But

let this comfort such poor creatures, Christ has felt them, and will

pity and help them; yea, he therefore would feel them himself, that

he might have compassion upon you. If men will not, God will pity

you; if men be so cruel to persecute him whom God has smitten, God

will be so kind to pour balm into the grounds that sin has made: if

they pull away the shoulder from you, and will not be concerned

about your troubles, except it be to aggravate them, God will not

serve you so: but certainly you that have passed through the same

difficulties, you cannot be without compassion to them that are now

grappling with them.

Inf. 4. How inexpressible dreadful is the state of the damned,

who must bear the burden of all their sins upon themselves, without

relief, or hope of deliverance! Mark 9: 49. "where their worm dies

not, and the fire is not quenched."

O! If sin upon the soul that is coming to Christ for

deliverance, be so burdensome, what is it upon the soul that is shut

out from Christ, and all hopes of deliverance for ever! For, do but

ponder these differences betwixt these two burdens.

First, No soul is so capacious now, to take in the fulness of

the evil and misery of sin, as they are who are gone down to the

place of torments. Even as the joys of God's face above are as much

unknown to them that have the fore-tastes and first fruits of them

here by faith, so the misery of the damned is much unknown, even to

them that have in their consciences now, the bitterest taste and

sense of sin in this world: as we have the visions of heaven, so we

have the visions of hell also, but darkly through a glass.

Secondly, No burden of sin presseth so continually upon the

soul here as it does there. Afflicted souls, on earth, have

intermissions, and breathing times; but in hell there are no lucid

intervals, the wrath of God there is still flowing; it is in fluxu

continuo, Isa. 30: 33. a stream of brimstone.

Thirdly, No burden of sin lies upon any of God's elect so long

as on the damned, who do, and must bear it: our troubles about sin

are but short, though they should run parallel with the line of

life; but the troubles of the damned are parallel with the endless

line of eternity.

Fourthly, Under these troubles, the soul has hope, but there,

all hope is cut off: all the gospel is full of hope, it breathes

nothing but hope to sinners that are moving Christ-ward under their

troubles; but in hell the pangs of desperation rend their

consciences for ever. So that, upon all accounts, the state of the

damned is inexpressibly dreadful.

Inf. 5. If the burden of sin be so heavy, how sweet then must

the pardon of sin be to a sin burdened soul! Is it a refreshment to

a prisoner to have his chains knocked off? A comfort to a debtor to

have his debts paid, and obligations cancelled? What joy must it

then be to a sin-burthened soul, to hear the voice of pardon and

peace in his trembling conscience! Is the light of the morning

pleasant to a man after a weary, tiresome night? the spring of the

year pleasant after a hard and tedious winter? They are so indeed;

but nothing so sweet as the favour, peace, and pardon of God, to a

soul that has been long restless, and anxious, under the terrors and

fears of conscience. For, though after pardon and peace a man

remembers sin still, yet it is as one that remembers the dangerous

pits, and deep waters, from which he has been wonderfully delivered,

and had a narrow escape. O the inconceivable sweetness of a pardon!

Who can read it without tears of joy? Are we glad when the grinding

pain of the stone, or racking fits of the cholic are over? And shall

we not be transported, when the accusations and condemnations of

conscience are over? Tongue cannot express what these things are;

his joy is something that no words can convey to the understanding

of another, that never felt the anguish of sin.

Inf. 6. Lastly, In how sad a case are those that never felt any

burden in sin, that never were kept waking and restless one night

for sin?

There is a burdened conscience, and there is a benumbed

conscience. The first is more painful, but the last more dangerous.

O it is a fearful blow of God upon a man's soul, to strike it

senseless and stupid, so that though mountains of guilt lie upon it,

it feels no pain or pressure: and this is so much more sad, because

it incapacitates the soul for Christ, and is a presage and fore

runner of hell. It would grieve the heart of a man, to see a

delirious person in the rage and height of a fever, to laugh at

those that are weeping for him, call them fools, and telling them he

is as well as any of them: much so is the case of many thousand

souls; the God of mercy pity them.

Second use for counsel.

The only further use I shall make of this point here, shall be

to direct and counsel souls that are weary and heavy laden with the

burden of sin, in order to their obtaining true rest and peace. And

first,

First counsel.

Satisfy not yourselves in fruitless complaints to men. Many do

so, but they are never the nearer. I grant it is lawful in spiritual

distresses to complain to men, yea, and it is a great mercy if we

have any near us in times of trouble that are judicious, tender and

faithful, into whose bosoms we may pour out our troubles; but to

rest in this, short of Christ, is no better than a snare of the

devil to destroy us. Is there not a god to go to in trouble? The

best of men, in the neglect of Christ, are but physicians of no

value. Be wise and wary in your choice of Christian friends, to whom

you open your complaints; some are not clear themselves in the

doctrine of Christ and faith, others are of a dark and troubled

spirit, as you are, and will but entangle you more. "As for me

(saith Job) is my complaint to mans and if it were so, why should

not my spirit be troubled?" Job 21: 4. One hour betwixt Christ and

thy soul in secret, will do more to thy true relief than all other

counsellors and comforters in the world can do.

Second counsel.

Beware of a false peace, which is more dangerous than your

trouble for sin can be. Many men are afraid of their troubles, but I

think they have more cause to fear their peace a great deal. There

is a twofold peace that ruins most men, peace in sin, and peace with

sin: O how glad are some persons when their troubles are gone; but I

dare not rejoice with them. It is like him that rejoices his ague is

gone, that it has left him in a deep consumption. You are got rid of

your troubles, but God knows how you have left them; your wounds are

skinned over, better they were kept open. Surely they have much to

answer for, that help on these delusions, healing the hurt of souls

slightly, by crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. The false

peace you beget in them, will be a real trouble to yourselves in the

issue, Jer. 6: 14.

Third counsel.

Let all that are under inward troubles for sin, take heed of

drawing desperate conclusions against themselves, and the final

state of their own souls. Though your case be sad, it is not

desperate; though the night be troublesome and tedious, keep on in

the way to Christ, and light will spring up. To mourn for sin is

your duty; to conclude there is no hope for you in Christ, is your

sin. You have wronged God enough already, do not add a further and

greater abuse to all the rest, by an absolute despair of mercy. It

was your sin formerly to presume beyond any granite, it is your sin

now to despair against many commands. I would say as the apostle in

another case, I would not have you mourn as men that have no hope:

your condition is sad as it is, but yet it is much better than once

it was. You were once full of sin and void of sense, now you have

the sense of sin, which is no small mercy. You were once quite out

of the way and method of mercy, now you are in that very path

wherein mercy meets the elect of God. Keep hope, therefore, at the

bottom of all your troubles.

Fourth counsel.

Observe whether your troubles for sin produce ouch fruits and

effects in your souls as theirs do, which end at last in Christ and

everlasting peace.

First, One that is truly burdened with sin, will not allow

himself to live in the secret practice of sin; either your trouble

will put an end to your course of sinning, or your sinning will put

an end to your troubles. Consult 2 Cor. 7: 11.

Secondly, True sorrow for sin, will give you very low and vile

thoughts of yourselves; as you were covered with pride before, so

you will be covered with shame after God has convinced and humbled

you, Rom. 6: 21.

Thirdly, A soul really burdened with sin will never stand in

his own justification before God, nor extenuate and mince it in his

confessions to him, Psal. 2: 8, 4.

Fourthly, The burdens of sin will make a man set light by all

other burdens of affliction, Lam. 3: 22. Micah 7: 9. The more you

feel sin, the less you feel affliction.

Fifthly, A soul truly burdened for sin will take no hearty joy

or comfort in any outward enjoyment of this world, till Christ come

and seek peace to the soul, Lam. 3: 28. Just so the soul sits alone

and keepeth silence; merry company is a burden, and music is but

howling to him.

Fifth counsel.

Beware of those things that make your troubles longer than they

ought to be. There be several errors and mistakes that hold poor

souls much longer in their fears and terrors than else they might

be; and such are,

First, Ignorance of the nature of saving faith, and the

necessity of it. Till you come to believe, you cannot have peace;

and while you mistake the nature, or apprehend not the necessity of

faith, you are not like to find that path at peace.

Secondly, Labouring to heal the wounds that the law has made

upon your consciences, by a more strict obedience to it for the

future, in the neglect of Christ and his righteousness.

Thirdly, In observance of what God has already done for you, in

these preparatory works of the law, in order to your salvation by

Jesus Christ. O! if you would but compare what you now are, with

what you lately were, it would give some relief. But the last and

principal thing is this:

Sixth counsel.

Hasten to Christ in the way of faith, and you shall find rest;

and till then all the world cannot give you rest. The sooner you

transact with Christ, in the way of faith, the sooner you shall be

at peace and enter into his rest; for those that believe do now

enter into rest. You may labour and strive, look this way and that,

but all in vain; Christ and peace come together. No sooner do you

come to him, and roll your burden on him, receive him as he offers

himself; but the soul feels itself eased on a sudden; "being

justified by faith, we have peace with God", Rom. 5: 1. And thus in

finishing the first, we are brought home to the second observation.

Doct. 2. That sin-burdened souls are solemnly invited to come

to Christ.

This point sounds sweetly in the ear of a distressed sinner; it

is the most joyful voice that ever the soul heard: the voice of

blessing from mount Gerizim, the ravishing voice from mount Zion,

"Ye are come to Jesus the Mediator." In opening of it I will shew,

1. What it is to come to Christ.

2. How Christ invites men to come to him.

3. Why his invitation is directed to burdened souls.

First, We will enquire what it is to come to Christ, and how

many things are included in it.

In general, to come to Christ, is a phrase equipollent, or of

tile same amount with believing in Christ. It is an expression that

carries the nature and necessity of faith in it, and is reciprocated

with believing. John 6: 35. "He that cometh to me shall never

hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." Coming to

Christ, is believing in Christ; and believing in Christ, is coming

to Christ; they are synonyma's, and import the self same thing. Only

in this notion of faith, there are many rich and excellent things

hinted to us, which no other word can so aptly convey to our minds.

As,

First, It hints this to us, That the souls of convinced and

burdened sinners do not only discern the reality of Christ, or that

he is, but also the necessity of applying Christ, and that their

eternal life is in their union with him: for this is most certain,

that the object of faith must be determinate and fixed; the soul

must believe that Christ is, or else there can be no emotions of the

soul after him: all coming pre-supposes a fixed term to which we

come, Heb. 11: 6. "He that cometh to God, must believe that God is."

Take away this, and all motions after Christ presently stop. No

wonder then that souls, in their first motions to Christ, find

themselves clogged with so many atheistical temptations, shaking

their assent to the truth of the gospel at the very root and

foundation of it; but they that come to Christ, do see that he is,

and that their life and happiness lie in their union with him, else

they would never come to him upon such terms as they do.

Secondly, Coming to Christ implies the soul's despair of

salvation any other way. The way of faith is a supernatural way, and

souls will not attempt it until they have tried all natural ways to

help and save themselves, and find it all in vain; therefore the

text describes these comers to Christ as weary persons, that have

been labouring and striving all other ways for rest, but can find

none; and so are forced to relinquish all their fond expectations of

salvation in any other way, and come to Christ as their last and

only remedy.

Thirdly, Coming to Christ notes a supernatural and almighty

power, acting the soul quite above its own natural abilities in this

motion. John 6: 44. "No man can come unto me, except my Father which

has sent me draw him." It is as possible for the ponderous mountains

to start from their bases and centres, mount themselves aloft into

the air, and there fly like wandering atoms hither and thither, as

it is for any man, of himself, i.e. by a pure natural power of his

own, to come to Christ. It was not a stranger thing for Peter to

come to Christ, walking upon the waves of the sea, than for his, or

any man's soul, to come to Christ in the way of faith.

Fourthly, Coming to Christ notes the voluntariness of the soul

in its motion to Christ. It is true, there is no coming without the

Father's drawing; but that drawing has nothing of coaction in it; it

does not destroy, but powerfully, and with an overcoming sweetness,

persuade the will. It is not forced or driven, but it comes; being

made "willing in the day of God's power," Psal. 110: 3. Ask a poor

distressed sinner in that season, Are you willing to come to Christ?

O rather than live! life is not so necessary as Christ is! O! with

all my heart, ten thousand worlds for Jesus Christ, if he could be

purchased, were nothing answerable to his value in mine eyes! The

soul's motion to Christ is free and voluntary, it is coming.

Fifthly, It implies this in it, That no duties, or ordinances,

(which are but the ways and means by which we come to Christ), are,

or ought to be central and terminative to the soul: i.e. the soul of

a believer is not to sit down, and rest in them, but to come by them

or through them to Jesus Christ, and take up his rent in him only.

No duties, no reformations, no ordinances of God, how excellent

soever these things are in themselves, and how necessary soever they

are in their proper place and use, can give rest to the weary and

heavy laden soul: it cannot centre in any of them, and you may see

it cannot, because it still gravitates, and inclines to another

thing, even Christ, and cannot terminate its motion till it be come

to him. Christ is the term to which a believer moves; and therefore

he cannot sit down by the way, or be as well satisfied as if he were

at his journey's end. Ordinances and duties have the nature and use

of means to bring us to Christ, but not to be to any man instead of

Christ.

Sixthly, Coming to Christ, implies an hope or expectation from

Christ in the coming soul. If he has no hope, why does it move

forward? As good sit still, and resolve to perish where it is, as to

come to Christ, if there is no ground to expect salvation by him.

Hope is the spring of motion and industry; if you cut off hope, you

hinder faith: it cannot move to Christ, except it be satisfied, at

least, of the possibility of mercy and salvation by him. Hence it

is, that when comers to Christ are struggling with the doubts and

fears of the issue, the Lord is pleased to enliven their faint

hopes, by setting home such scriptures as these, John 6: 87. "He

that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." And Heb. 7: 25. "He

is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him."

This puts life into hope, and hope puts life into industry and

motion.

Seventhly, Coming to Christ for rest implies, that believers

have, and lawfully may have an eye to their own happiness, in

closing with the Lord Jesus Christ. The poor soul comes for rest; it

comes for salvation; its eye and aim are upon it; and this aim of

the soul at its own good, is legitimated, and allowed by that

expression of Christ, John 5: 40. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye

may have life." If Christ blame them for not coming to him, that

they might have life, sure he would not blame them, had they come to

him for life.

Eighthly, but Lastly, and which is the principal thing in this

expression; Coming to Christ, notes the all-sufficiency of Christ,

to answer all the needs and wants of distressed souls, and their

betaking themselves accordingly to him only for relief, being

content to come to Christ for whatever they need, and live upon that

fulness that is in him. If there were not an all-sufficiency in

Christ, no soul would come to him; for this is the very ground upon

which men come. Heb. 7: 25. "He is able to save to the uttermost,

all that come to God by him:" "Eis to panteles", to the uttermost:

In the greatest plunges, difficulties, and dangers. He has a fulness

of saving power in him, and this encourages souls to come unto him.

One beggar uses not to wait at the door of another, but all at the

doors of them they conceive able to relieve them. And as this notes

the fulness of Christ as our Saviour, so it must needs note the

emptiness and humility of the soul as a comer to him. This is called

submission, in Rom. 10: 8. Proud nature must be deeply distressed,

humbled, and moulded into another temper, before it will be

persuaded to live upon those terms, to come to Christ for every

thing it wants, to live upon Christ's fulness in the way of grace

and favour, and have no stock of its own to live upon. O! this is

hard, but it is the way of faith.

Secondly, In the next place, let us see how Christ invites men

to come to him, and you shall find the means employed in this work,

are either internal, and principal, namely, the Spirit of God, who

is Christ's vicegerent, and comes to us in his name and room, to

persuade us to believe, John 15: 26; or external, namely, the

preaching of the gospel by commissioned ambassadors, who, in

Christ's stead, beseech men to be reconciled to God, i.e. to come to

Christ by faith, in order to their reconciliation and peace with

God. But an means and instruments employed in this work of bringing

men to Christ, entirely depend upon the blessing and concurrence of

the Spirit of God, without whom they signify nothing. How long may

ministers preach, before one soul comes to Christ, except the Spirit

co-operate in that work! Now as to the manner in which men are

persuaded, and their wills wrought upon to come to Christ, I will

briefly note several acts of the Spirit, in order there unto.

First, There is an illustrating work of the Spirit upon the

minds of sinners, opening their eyes to see their danger and misery;

till these be discovered, no man stirs from his place: It is sense

of danger that rouses the secure sinner, that distresses him, and

makes him look about for deliverance, crying, What shall I do to be

saved? And it is the discovery of Christ's ability to save, which is

the ground and reason, (as was observed above,) of its motion to

Christ. Hence, seeing the Son, is joined with believing, or coming

to him, in John 6: 40.

Secondly, There is the authoritative call, or commanding voice

of the Spirit in the word; a voice that is full of awful majesty and

power. 1 John 3: 23. "This is his commandment, that we should

believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ". This call of the

Spirit to come to Christ, removes one great obstruction, namely, the

fear of presumption out of the soul's way to Christ, and, instead of

presumption in coming, makes it rebellion, and inexcusable

obstinacy, to refuse to come. This answers all pleas against coming

to Christ from our unworthiness and deep guilt; and mightily

encourages the soul to come to Christ, what ever it has been, or

done.

Thirdly, There are soul-encouraging, conditional promises, to

all that do come to Christ in obedience to the command. Such is that

in my text, I mill give you rest: And that in John 6: 37. "Him that

cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out". And these breathe life

and encouragement into poor souls that fear, and are daunted through

their own unworthiness.

Fourthly, There are dreadful threatenings denounced by the

Spirit in the word, against all that refuse or neglect to come to

Christ, which are of great use to engage and quicken souls in their

way to Christ. Mark 16: 16. "He that believes not shall be damned:

Die in his sins," John 8: 14. "The wrath of God shall remain on

him," John 3: ult. Which is as if the Lord had said, Sinners, do not

dally with Christ, do not be always treating, and never concluding,

or resolving: for if there be justice in heaven, or fire in hell,

every soul that comes not to Christ, must, and shall perish to all

eternity. Upon your own heads let the blood and destruction of your

own souls be for ever, if you will not come unto him.

Fifthly, There are moving examples set before souls in the

word, to prevail with them to come, alluring and encouraging

examples of such as have come to Christ, under the deepest guilt and

discouragement, and yet found mercy. 1 Tim. 1: 15, 16. "This is a

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ

came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief: howbeit,

(or nevertheless) for this cause I have obtained mercy, that in me

first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a

pattern to them which should hereafter believe in him to life

everlasting." Who would not come to Christ after such an example as

this? And if this will not prevail, there are dreadful examples

recorded in the word, setting before us the miserable condition of

all such as refuse the calls of the word to come to Christ. 1 Pet.

3: 19, 20. "By which also he went and preached to the spirits which

are in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the

longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah." The meaning is,

the sinners that lived before the flood, but now are in hell, clapt

up in that prison, had the offers of grace made them, but despised

them, and now lie for their disobedience in prison, under the wrath

of God for it, in the lowest hell.

Sixthly, and lastly, There is an effectual persuading,

overcoming and victorious work of the Spirit upon the hearts and

wills of sinners, under which they come to Jesus Christ. Of this I

have spoken at large before, in the fourth sermon and therefore

shall not add any thing more here. This is the way and manner in

which souls are prevailed with to come to Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, In the last place, if you enquire why Christ makes his

invitations to weary and heavy laden souls and to no other, the

answer is briefly this:

First, Because in so doing, he follows the commission which he

received from his Father: so you will find it runs, in Isa. 61: 1.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me

to preach good tidings to the meek, he has sent me to bind up the

broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening

of the prison to them that are bound. You see here how Christ's

commission directs him: his Father sent him to poor broken hearted

sinners, and he will keep close to his commission. "He came not to

call the righteous, but sinners, (i. e. sensible burdened sinners)

to repentance." Matth. 9: 13. "I am not sent (saith he,) but unto

the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Thus his instructions and

commission from the Father limit him only to sensible and burdened

souls, and he will be faithful to his commission.

Secondly, The very order of the Spirit's work in bringing men

to Christ, shows us to whom the invitation and offers of grace in

Christ are to be made. For none are convinced of righteousness, i.e.

of complete and perfect righteousness, which is in Christ for their

justification, until first they be convinced of sin; and,

consequently, no man will, or can come to Christ by faith, till

convictions of sin have awakened and distressed him, John 16: 8, 9.

This being the due order of the Spirit's operation, the same order

must be observed in gospel-offers and invitations.

Thirdly, It behoves that Christ should provide for his own

glory, as well as for our safety; and not to expose one to secure

the other; but save us in that way which will bring him most honour

and praise. And certainly such a way as this, by first convincing,

humbling, and burdening the souls of men, and then bringing them

home to rest in himself.

Alas! let those that never saw, or felt the evil of sin, be

told of rest, peace, and pardon in Christ, they will but despise it

as a thing of no value, Luke 5: 31. "The whole need not a physician,

but those that are sick." Bid a man that thinks himself sound and

whole go to a physician and he will but laugh at the motion; if you

offer him the richest composition, he will refuse it, slight it, and

it may be, spill it upon the ground. Ay, but if the same man did

once feel an acute disease, and were made to sweat and groan under

strong pains, if ever he come to know what sick days and restless

nights are, and to apprehend his life to be in imminent hazard; then

messengers are sent, one after another, in post-haste to the

physician; then he begs him with tears to do what in him lies for

his relief: he thankfully takes the bitterest potions, and praises

the care and skill of his physician with tears of joy. And so the

patient's safety and the physician's honour are both secured. So is

it in this method of grace. The uses follow.

Infer. 1. If sin-burdened souls are solemnly invited to come to

Christ, Then it follows, that whatever guilt lies upon the

conscience of a poor humbled sinner, it is no presumption, but his

duty to come to Christ, notwithstanding his own apprehended vileness

and great unworthiness.

Let it be carefully observed, how happily that universal

particle "all", is inserted in Christ's invitation, for the

encouragement of sinners; "Come unto me, [all] ye that labour;" q.d.

Let no broken hearted sinner exclude himself, when he is not by me

excluded from mercy: my grace is my own, I may bestow it where I

will, and upon whom I will. It is not I, but Satan that impales and

incloses my mercy from humbled souls that are made willing to come

unto me; he calls that your presumption, which invitation makes your

duty.

Objec. 1. But I doubt my case is excepted by Christ himself, in

Mat. 12: 31. where blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is exempted from

pardon, and I have had many horrid blasphemous thoughts injected

into my soul.

Sol. Art thou a burdened and heavy laden soul? If so, thy case

is not in that, or any other scripture exempted from mercy; for the

unpardonable sin is always found in an impenitent heart: as that sin

finds no pardon with God, so neither is it followed with contrition

and sorrow in the soul that commits it.

Objec. 2. But if I am not guilty of that sin, I am certainly

guiltier of many great and heinous abominations of another kind, too

great for me to expect mercy for; and therefore I dare not go to

Christ.

Sol. The greater your sins have been, the more need you have to

go to Jesus Christ. Let not a motive to go to Christ be made an

obstacle in your way to him. Great sinners are expressly called,

Isa. 1: 18. Great sinners have come to Christ and found mercy, 1

Cor. 6: 7. and to conclude, it is an high reproach and dishonour to

the blood of Christ, and mercy of God, which flows so freely through

him, to object the greatness of sin to either of them. Certainly you

have not sinned beyond the extent of mercy, or beyond the efficacy

of the blood of Christ: but pardon and peace may be had, if you will

thus come to Christ for it.

Objec. 3. Oh! but it is now too late; I have had many thousand

calls by the gospel, and refused them; many purposes in my heart to

go to Christ, and quenched them; my time therefore is past, and now

it is to no purpose.

Sol. If the time of grace be past, and God intends no mercy for

thee, how comes it to pass thy soul is now filled with trouble and

distress for sin? Is this the frame of a man's heart that is past

hope. Do such signs as these appear in men that are hopeless?

Beside, the time of grace is a secret hid in the breast of God; but

coming to Christ is a duty plainly revealed in the text: And why

will you object a thing that is secret and uncertain, against a duty

that is so plain and evident? Nor do you yourselves believe what you

object; for at the same time that you say your seasons are over, it

is too late, you are, notwithstanding, found repenting, mourning,

praying, and striving to come to Christ. Certainly, if you knew it

were too late, you would not be found labouring in the use of means.

Go on, therefore, and the Lord be with you. It is not presumption,

but obedience, to come when Christ calls, as he here does, "Come

unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden."

Infer. A. Hence it follows, That none have cause to be

troubled, when God makes the souls of their friends or relation sick

with the sense of sin. It was the saying (as I remember) of Hieron

to Sabinian, Nothing (said he) makes my heart sadder, than that

nothing can make my heart sad. It is matter of joy to all that

rightly understand the matter, when God smites the heart of any man

with the painful sense of sin; of such sickness it may be said,

"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." Yet how

do many carnal relations lament and bewail this as a misery, as an

undoing to their friends and acquaintances; as if then they must be

reckoned lost, and never till then, that Christ is finding and

saving them. O! if your hearts were spiritual and wise, their groans

for sin would be as music in your ears. When they go alone to bewail

their sin, you would go alone also to bless God for such a mercy,

that ever you should live to such a happy day: You would say, Now is

my friend in the blessed pangs of the new birth; now is he in the

very way of mercy; never in so hopeful a condition as now. I had

rather he should groan now at the feet of Christ, than groan

hereafter under the wrath of God for ever. O! parents, beware, as

you love the souls of your children, that you do not damp and

discourage them, tempt or threaten them, divert or hinder them in

such cases as this, lest you bring the blood of their souls upon

your own heads.

Inf. 3. It also follows from hence, That those to whom sin was

never any burthen, are not yet come to Christ, nor have any interest

in him. We may as well suppose a child to be born without any pangs,

as a soul to be born again, and united to Christ, without any sense

or sorrow for sin. I know many have great frights of conscience,

that never were made duly sensible of the evil of sin; many are

afraid of burning, that never were afraid of sinning. Slight and

transient troubles some have had, but they vanished like au early

cloud, or morning dew. Few men are without checks and throbs of

conscience at one time or other; but instead of going to the closet,

they run to the alehouse or tavern for cure. If their sorrow for sin

had been right, nothing but the sprinkling of the blood of Christ

could have appeased their consciences, Heb. 10: 22. How cold should

the consideration of this thing strike to the hearts of such

persons! Methinks, reader, if this be thy case, it should send thee

away with an aking heart; thou hast not yet tasted the bitterness of

sin, and if thou do not, thou shalt never taste the sweetness of

Christ, his pardons and peace.

Inf. 4. How great a mercy is it for sin-burthened souls to be

within the sound and call of Christ in the gospel!

There be many thousands in the Pagan and Popish parts of the

world, that labour under distresses of conscience as well as we, but

have no such reliefs, no such means of peace and comfort as we have

that live within the joyful sound of the gospel. If the conscience

of a Papist be burdened with guilt, all the relief he has, is to

afflict his body to quiet his soul; a penance, or pilgrimage, is all

the relief they have. If a Pagan be in trouble for sin, he has no

knowledge of Christ, nor notion of a satisfaction made by him; the

voice of nature is, Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,

the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? The damned endure the

terrible blows and wounds of conscience for sin, they roar under

that terrible lash, but no voice of peace or pardon is heard among

them. It is not, "Come unto me, ye that labour, and are heavy

laden,", but "depart from me, ye cursed."

Blessed are your ears, for you hear the voice of peace; you are

come to Jesus the Mediator, and to the blood of sprinkling. O. you

can never set a due value upon this privilege.

Inf. 5. How sweet and unspeakably relieving is the closing of a

burthened soul with Jesus Christ, by faith! It is rest to the weary

soul.

Soul-troubles are spending, wasting troubles; the pains of a

distressed conscience are the most acute pains. A poor soul would

fain be at rest, but knows not where; he tries this duty and that,

but finds none. At last, in a way of believing, he casts himself,

with his burthen of guilt and fear, upon Christ, and there is the

rest his soul desires. Christ and rest come together; till faith

brings you to the bosom of Jesus, you can find no true rest: The

soul is rolling and tossing, sick and weary, upon the billows of its

own guilt and fears. Now the soul is come like a ship tossed with

storms and tempests, out of a raging ocean into the quiet harbour!

or like a lost sheep that has been wandering in weariness, hunger,

and danger, into the fold. Is a soft bed in a quiet chamber sweet to

one that is spent and tired with travel? Is the sight of a shore

sweet to the shipwrecked mariner, who looked for nothing but death?

Much more sweet is Christ to a soul that comes to him pressed in

conscience, and broken in spirit under the sinking weight of sin.

How did the Italians rejoice, after a long and dangerous

voyage, to see Italy again! crying, with loud and united voices

which made the very heavens ring again, Italy! Italy! But no shore

is so sweet to the weather beaten passenger, as Christ is to a

broken-hearted sinner: This brings the soul to a sweet repose. Heb.

4: 3. "We, which have believed, to enter into rest." And this

endears the way of faith to their souls ever after.

Inf. 6. Learn hence the usefulness of the law to bring souls to

Jesus Christ. It is utterly useless, as a covenant, to justify us;

but exceeding useful to convince and humble us; it cannot relieve

nor ease us, but it can and does awaken and rouse us. It is a fair

glass to shew us the face of sin, and till we have seen that we

cannot see the face of Jesus Christ.

The law, like the fiery serpent, smites, stings, and torments

the conscience; this drives us to the Lord Jesus, lifted up in the

gospel, like the brazen serpent in the wilderness, to heal us. The

use of the law is to make us feel our sickness; this makes us look

out for a Physician: "I was alive once, without the law, (saith

Paul) but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," Rom.

7: 9. The hard, vain, proud hearts of men require such an hammer to

break them to pieces.

Inf. 7. It is the immediate duty of weary and heavy laden

sinners to come to Christ by faith, and not stand off from Christ,

or delay to accept him upon any terms whatsoever.

Christ invites and commands such to come unto him; it is

therefore your sin to neglect, draw back, or defer whatever seeming

reasons and pretences there may be to the contrary. When the gaoler

was brought (where I suppose thee now to be) to a pinching distress,

that made him cry, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The very next

counsel the apostles gave him was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ, and thou shalt be saved," Acts 16: 30, 31. And, for your

encouragement, know, that he who calleth you to come, knows your

burden, what your sins have been and troubles are, yet he calls you:

if your sin hinder not Christ from calling, neither should it hinder

you from coming. He that calls you, is able to ease you, "to save to

the uttermost, all that cone to God by him," Heb. 7: 25. Whatever

fulness of sin be in you, there is a greater fulness of saving power

in Christ. Moreover, he that calls you to come, never yet rejected

any poor burdened soul that came to him; and has said he never will.

John 6: 37. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

Fear not, therefore, he will not begin with thee, or make thee the

first instance and example of the feared rejection.

And, Lastly, Bethink thyself, what wilt thou do, and whither

wilt thou go, in this case, If not to Jesus Christ? Nothing shall

ease or relieve thee till thou dost come to him. Thou art under an

happy necessity to go to him; with him only is found rest for the

weary soul; which brings us to the third and last observation,

Doct. 3. That there is rest in Christ, for all that come unto

him under the heavy burden of sin.

Rest is a sweet word to a weary soul; all seek it, but none but

believers find it. We which have believed, (saith the apostle) do

enter into rest, Heb. 4: 3. "He does not say, they shall, but they

do enter into rest; noting their spiritual rest to be already begun

by faith on earth in the tranquillity of conscience, and shall be

consummated in heaven, in the full enjoyment of God." There is a

sweet calm upon the troubled soul after believing, an ease, or rest

of the mind, which is an unspeakable mercy to a poor weary soul.

Christ is to it as the ark was to the dove, when she wandered over

the watery world, and found no place to rest the sole of her foot.

Faith centres the unquiet spirit of man in Christ, brings it to

repose itself and its burden on him. It is the soul's dropping

anchor in a storm, which stays and settles it.

The great debate which cost so many anxious thoughts is now

issued into this resolution; I will venture my all upon Christ, let

him do with me as seemeth him good. It was impossible for the soul

to find rest, whilst it knew not where to bestow itself, or how to

be secured from the wrath to come; but when all is embarked in

Christ for eternity, and the soul fully resolved to lean upon him,

and to trust to him, now it feels the very initials of eternal rest

in itself: it finds an heavy burden unloaded from its shoulders; it

is come, as it were, into a new world; the case is strangely

altered. The word rest, in this place, notes, (and is so rendered by

some) a recreation; it is restored, renewed, and recreated, as it

were, by that sweet repose it has upon Christ. Believers, know that

faith is the sweetest recreation you can take. Others seek to divert

and lose their troubles, by sinful recreations, vain company, and

the like; but they little know what the recreation and sweet

restoring rest that faith gives the soul is. You find, in Christ,

what they seek in vain among the creatures. Believing is the highest

recreation known in this world. But to prevent mistakes, three

cautions need to be premised, lest we do, in ipso limine impingere,

stumble at the threshold, and so lose our way all along afterward.

Caution 1.

You are not to conceive, that all the soul's fears, troubles

and sorrows are presently over end at an end, as soon an it is come

to Christ by faith. They will have many troubles in the world after

that, it may be, more than ever they had in their lives: "Our flesh

(saith Paul) had no rest," 2 Cor. 7: 5. They will be infested with

many temptations after that; that, it may be, the assaults of Satan

may be more violent upon their souls than ever. Horribilia de Deo,

terribilia de fide: injections that make the very bones to quake,

and the belly to tremble. They will not be wholly freed from sin;

that rest remains for the people of God; nor from inward trouble and

grief of soul about sin. These things are not to be expected

presently.

Caution 2.

We may not think all believers do immediately enter into the

full, actual sense of rest and comport, but they presently enter

into the state of rest. "Being justified by faith, we have peace

with God," Rom. 5: 1. i.e. we enter into the state of peace

immediately. "Peace is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the

upright in heart," Psal. 117: 1l. And he is a rich man that has a

thousand acres of corn in the ground, as well as he that has so much

in his barn, or the money in his purse. They have rest and peace in

the seed of it, when they have it not in the fruit; they have rest

in the promise, when they have it not in possession; and he is a

rich man that has good bonds and bills for a great sum of money, if

he have not twelve-pence in his pocket. All believers have the

promise, have rest and peace granted them under God's own hand, in

many promises which faith brings them under; and we know that the

truth and faithfulness of God stands engaged to make good every line

and word of the promise to them. So that though they have not a full

and clear actual sense and feeling of rest, they are, nevertheless

by faith come into the state of rest.

Caution 3.

We may not conceive that faith itself is the soul's rest, but

the means and instruments of it only. We cannot find rest in any

work or duty of our own, but we may find it in Christ, whom faith

apprehends for justification and salvation.

Waving thus guarded the point against misapprehensions, by

these needful cautions, I shall next show you how our coming to

Christ by faith brings us to rest in him. And here let it be

considered what those things are that burden, grieve and disquiet

the soul before its coming to Christ; and how it is relieved and

eased in all those respects, by its coming to die Lord Jesus; and

you shall find,

First, That one principal ground of trouble is the guilt of sin

upon the conscience, of which I spoke in the former point. The curse

of the law lies heavy upon the soul, so heavy that nothing is found

in all the world able to relieve it under that burden; as you see in

a condemned man, spread a table in prison with the greatest

dainties, and send for the rarest musicians, all will not charm his

sorrow: but if you can produce an authentic pardon, you ease him

presently. Just so it is here, faith plucks the thorn out of the

conscience, which so grieved it, unites the soul with Christ, and

then that ground of trouble is removed: for "there is no

condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. 8: 1. The same

moment the soul comes to Christ, it has passed from death to life,

is no more under the law, but grace. If a man's debt be paid by his

surety, he need not fear to show his face boldly abroad; he may

freely meet the sergeant at the prison-door.

Secondly, The soul of a convinced sinner is exceedingly

burdened with the uncleanness and filthiness wherewith sin has

defiled and polluted it. Conviction discovers the universal

pollution of heart and life, so that a man loathes and abhors

himself by reason thereof: if he do not look into his own

corruptions, he cannot be safe; and if he do, he cannot bear the

sight of them; he has no quiet; nothing can give rest, but what

gives relief against this evil; and this only is done by faith

uniting the soul with Jesus Christ. For though it be true that the

pollution of sin be not presently and perfectly taken away by coming

to Christ, yet the burden thereof is exceedingly eased; {or, upon

our believing, there is an heart purifying principle planted in the

soul, which does, by degrees, cleanse that fountain of corruption,

and will at last perfectly free the soul from it. Acts 15: 9.

"Purifying their hearts by faith;" and being once in Christ, he is

concerned for the soul as a member now of his own mystical body, to

purify and cleanse it, that at last he may present it perfect to the

Father, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, Eph. 5: 26. The

reigning power of it is gone immediately upon believing, and the

very existence and being of it shall at last be destroyed. 0, what

rest must this give under those troubles for sin:

Thirdly, It was an intolerable burden to the soul to be under

the continual fears, alarms, and frights of death and damnation; its

life has been a life of bondage, upon this account, ever since the

Lord opened his eyes to see his condition. Poor souls lie down with

tremblings, for fear what a night may bring forth. It is a sad life

indeed to live in continual bondage of such fears; but faith sweetly

relieves the trembling conscience, by removing the guilt which

breeds its fears. The sting of death is sin. When guilt is removed,

fears vanquish. "Smite, Lord, smite, said Luther, for my sins are

forgiven." Now, if sickness come, it is another thing than it was

wont to be. Isa. 33: 24. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick,

the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities" A

man scarce feels his sickness, in comparison to what lie did, whilst

he was without Christ and hope of pardon.

Fourthly, A convinced sinner, out of Christ, sees every thing

against him; nothing yields any comfort, yea, every thing increases

and aggravates his burden, when he looks to things past, present, or

to come. If he reflect upon things past, his soul is filled with

anguish, to remember the sins committed and the seasons neglected,

and the precious mercies that have been abused; if he look upon

things present, the case is doleful end miserable; nothing but

trouble and danger, Christless and comfortless; and if he looks

forward to things to come, that gives him a deeper cut to the heart

than any thing else; for though it be sad and miserable for the

present, yet he fears it will be much worse hereafter; all these are

but the beginning of sorrows. And thus the poor, awakened sinner

becomes a Magor Missabib; fear round about.

But, upon his coming to Christ, all things are marvellously

altered; a quite contrary face of things appears to him; every thing

gives him hope and comfort, which way soever he looks. So speaks the

apostle, 1 Cor. 3: 22, 23. "All things are yours, (saith he) whether

life or death, or things present, or things to come; all is yours,

and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's:" They are ours, i.e. for

our advantage, benefit, and comfort. More particularly upon our

coming to Christ,

First, Things past are ours, they conduce to our advantage and

comfort. Now the soul can begin to read the gracious end and design

of God, in all its preservations and deliverances; whereby it has

been reserved for such a day as this. O! it melts his heart to

consider his companions in sin and vanity are cut off, and he

spared; and that for a day of such mercy, as the day of his

espousals with Christ is. Now all his past sorrows, and deep

troubles of spirit, which God has exercised him with, begin to

appear the greatest mercies that ever he received; being all

necessary and introductive to this blessed union with Christ.

Secondly, Things present are ours, though it be not yet with us

as we would have it; Christ is not sure enough, the heart is not

pure enough; sin is too strong, and grace is too weak; many things

are yet out of order; yet can the soul bless God for this, with

tears of joy and praise, being full of admiration and holy

astonishment, that it is as it is; and that be is where he is,

though he be not yet where he would be. O! it is a blessed life to

Live as a poor recumbent, by acts of trust and affiance, though, as

yet, he have but little evidence; that he is resolved to trust all

with Christ, though he be not yet certain of the issue. O this it a

comfortable station, a sweet condition to what it was, either when

the soul wallowed in sin, in the days before conviction, or was

swallowed up in fears and troubles for sin after conviction; now it

has hope, though it want assurance; and hope is sweet to a soul

coming out of such deep distresses. Now it sees the remedy, and is

applying it; whereas before the wound seemed desperate. Now all

hesitations and debates are at an end in the soul; it is no longer

unresolved what to do; all things have been deeply considered, and

after consideration, issued into this resolve, or decree of the

will: I will go to Christ; I will venture all upon his command and

call; I will embark my eternal interests in that bottom; here I fix,

and here I resolve to live and die. O! how much better is this than

that floating life it lived before, rolling upon the billows of

inward fears and troubles, not able to drop anchor anywhere, nor

knowing where to find an harbour?

Thirdly, Things to come are ours; and this is the best and

sweetest of all: Man is a prospecting creature, his eye is much upon

things to come, and it will not satisfy him that it is well at

present, except he have a prospect that it shall be so hereafter.

But now the soul has committed itself and all its concernments to

Christ for eternity, and this being done, it is greatly relieved

against evils to come.

I cannot (saith the believer) think all my troubles over, and

that I shall never meet any more afflictions; It were a fond vanity

to dream of that: but I leave all these things where I have left my

soul: he that has supported me under inward, will carry me through

outward troubles also. I cannot think all my temptations to sin

past; O! I may yet meet with sore assaults from Satan, yet it is

infinitely better to be watching, praying, and striving against sin,

than it was when I was obeying it in the lusts of it. God, that has

delivered me from the love of sin, will, I trust, preserve me from

ruin by sin. I know also death is to come; I must feel the pangs and

agonies of it: but yet the aspect of death is much more pleasant

than it was. I come, Lord Jesus to thee, who art the death of death,

whose death has disowned death of its sting: for I fear not its dart

if I feel not its sting. And thus you see briefly, how by faith

believers enter into rest; how Christ gives rest, even at present,

to them that come to him, and all this but as a beginning of their

everlasting rest.

Inference 1. Is there rest in Christ for weary souls that come

unto him? Then, certainty it is a design of Satan against the peace

and welfare of men's souls, to discourage them from coming to Christ

in the way of faith.

He is a restless spirit himself, and would make us so too; it

is an excellent note of Minutius Felix, "Those desperate and

restless spirits (saith he) have no other peace but in bringing us

to the same misery themselves are in:" He goes about as a roaring

lion, seeking whom he may devour. It frets and grates his proud and

envious mind, to see others find rest when he can find none; an

effectual plaister applied to heal our wound, when his own must

bleed to eternity: And he obtains his end fully, if he can but keep

off souls from Christ. Look therefore, upon all those objections and

discouragements raised in your hearts against coming to Christ, as

so many artifices and cunning devices of the devil, to destroy and

ruin your souls. It is true they have a very specious and colourable

appearance; they are gilded over with pretences of the justice of

God, the heinous nature of sin, the want of due and befitting

qualifications for so holy and pure a God, the lapsing of the season

of mercy, and an hundred others of like nature: but I beseech you,

lay down this as a sure conclusion, and hold it fast; that whatever

it be that discourages and hinders you from coming to Christ, is

directly against the interest of your souls, and the hand of the

devil is certainly in it.

Infer. 2. Hence also it follows that unbelief is the true

reason of all that disquietness and trouble, by which the minds of

poor dinners are so racked and tortured.

If you will not believe, you cannot be established; till you

come to Christ, peace cannot cone to you: Christ and peace are

undivided. Good souls, consider this; you have tried all other ways,

you have tried duties, and no rest comes; you have tried

reformation, restitution, and a stricter course of life; yet your

wounds are still open, and fresh bleeding: these things, I grant,

are in their places both good and necessary; but, of themselves,

without Christ, utterly insufficient to give what you expect from

them: why will you not try the way of faith? Why will you not carry

your burthen to Christ? O! that you would be persuaded to it, how

soon would you find what so long you have been seeking in vain! How

long will you thus oppose your own good? How long will you keep

yourselves upon the rack of conscience? Is it easy to go under the

throbs and wounds of an accusing and condemning conscience? You know

it is not: you look for peace, but no good comes; for a time of

healing, and behold trouble. Alas! it must and will be so still,

until you are in the way of faith, which is the true and only method

to obtain rest.

Inf. 3. What cause have we all to admire the goodness of God,

in providing for us a Christ, in whom we may find rest to our souls!

How has the Lord filled and furnished Jesus Christ with all

that is suitable to a believer's wants! Does the guilt of sin

terrify his conscience? Lo, in him is perfect righteousness to

remove that guilt, so that it shall neither be imputed to his

person, nor reflected by his conscience, in the way of condemnation

as it was before. In him also is a fountain opened, for washing and

for cleansing the filth of sin from our souls; in him is the

fullness both of merit, and of spirit, two sweet springs of peace to

the souls of men: well might the apostle say, "Christ the wisdom of

God," 1 Cor. 1: 30. and well might the Church say, "He is altogether

lovely," Cant. 5: 16. Had not God provided Jesus Christ for us, we

had never known one hour's rest to all eternity.

Inf. 4. How unreasonable, and wholly inexcusable, in believers,

is the sin of backsliding from Christ! Have you found rest in him,

when you could not find it in any other! Did he receive, and ease

your souls, when all other persons and things were physicians of no

value? And will you, after this, backslide from him again? O what

madness is this! "Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon, which cometh

from the rock of the field? Or shall the cold, flowing waters, that

come from another place, be forsaken?" No man that is in his wits

would leave the pure, cold, refreshing stream off a crystal

fountain, to go to a filthy puddle, lake, or an empty cistern; such

the best enjoyments of this world are, in comparison with Jesus

Christ.

That was a melting expostulation of Christ's with the

disciples, John 6: 67, 68. when some had forsaken him, "Will ye also

go away?" And it was a very suitable return they made, Lord, whither

away from thee should we go! q. d. From thee, Lord! No, where can we

mend ourselves? be sure of it, whenever you go from Christ, you go

from rest to trouble. Had Judas rest? Had Spira rest? and do you

think you shall have rest? No, no, "The backslider in heart shall be

filled with his own ways," Prov. 14: 14. "Cursed be the man that

departeth from him, he shall be as the heath in the desert, that

sees not when good cometh, and shall inhabit the parched places of

the wilderness," Jer. 17: 5. If fear of sufferings, and worldly

temptations, ever draw you off from Christ, you may come to those

straits and terrors of conscience that will make you wish yourselves

back again with Christ in a prison, with Christ at a stake.

Infer. 5. Let all that come to Christ learn to improve him to

the rest and peace of their own souls, in the midst of all the

troubles and outward distresses they meet with in the world.

Surely rest may be found in Christ in any condition; he is able

to give you peace in the midst of all your troubles here. So he

tells you in John 16: 33. "These things have I spoken to you, that

in me you might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation."

By peace he means not a deliverance from troubles, by taking off

affliction from them, or taking them away by death from all

afflictions; but it is something they enjoy from Christ in the very

midst of troubles, and amidst all their addictions, that quiets and

gives them rest, so that troubles cannot hurt them. Certainly,

believers, you have peace in Christ, when there is little in your

own hearts; and your hearts might be filled with peace too, if you

would exercise faith upon Christ for that end. It is your own fault

if you be without rest in any condition in this world. Set

yourselves to study the fulness of Christ, and to clear your

interest in him; believe what the scriptures reveal of him, and live

as you believe, and you will quickly find the peace of God filling

your hearts and minds.

Sermon 10.

Wherein the general Exhortation is enforced by one Motive drawn from

the first Title of Christ.

Matth. 9: 12.

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole

need not a physician, but they that are sick.

Having opened, in the former discourses, the nature and method

of the application of Christ to sinners; it remains now that I press

it upon every soul, as it expects peace and pardon from God, to

apply and put on Jesus Christ, i.e. to get union with him by faith,

whilst he is yet held forth in the free and gracious tenders of the

gospel. To which purpose I shall now labour in this general use of

exhortation, in which my last subject engaged me; wherein divers

arguments will be further urged, both from

1. The titles, and

2. The privileges of Jesus Christ.

The titles of Christ are so many motives or arguments fitted to

persuade men to come unto him. Amongst which, Christ, as the

Physician of souls, comes under our first consideration, in the text

before us.

The occasion of these words of Christ, was the call of Matthew

the publican, who, having first opened his heart, next opened his

house to Christ, and entertains him there. This strange and

unexpected change, wrought upon Matthew, quickly brings in all the

neighbourhood, and many publicans and sinners resorted thither; at

which the stomachs of the proud Pharisees began to swell. From this

occasion they took offence at Christ, and, in this verse, Christ

takes off the offence, by such an answer as was fitted both for

their conviction and his own vindication. But when Jesus heard that,

he said unto them, "The whole have no need of a physician, but they

that are sick".

He gives it, saith one, as a reason why he conversed so much

with Publicans and sinners, and so little among the Pharisees,

because there was more work for him; Christ came to be a physician

to sick souls; Pharisees were so well in their own conceit, that

Christ saw that they would have little to do with him, and so he

applied himself to those who were more sensible of their sickness.

In the words, we have an account of the temper and state both

of,

1. The secure and unconvinced sinner,

2. The humbled and convinced sinner. And,

3. Of the carriage of Christ, and his different respect to

both.

First, The secure sinner is here described, both with respect

to his own apprehensions of himself, as one that is whole, and also

by his low value and esteem for Christ, he sees no need of him; "The

whole have no need of a physician."

Secondly, The convinced and humbled sinner is here also

described, and that both by his state and condition, he is sick; and

by his valuation of Jesus Christ, he greatly needs him: they that

are sick need the physician.

Thirdly, We have here Christ's carriage, and different respect

to both; the former he rejects and passeth by, as those with whom he

has no concernment; the latter he converseth with in order to their

cure.

The words thus opened, are fruitful in observations. I shall

neither note nor insist upon any beside this one, which suits the

scope of my discourse, viz.

Doct. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the only physician for sick

souls.

The world is a great hospital, full of sick and dying souls,

all wounded by one and the same mortal weapon, sin. Some are

senseless of their misery, feel not their pains, value not a

physician; others are full of sense, as well as danger: mourn under

the apprehension of their condition, and sadly bewail it. The

merciful God has, in his abundant compassion to the perishing world,

sent a physician from heaven, and given him his orders under the

great seal of heaven, for his office, Isa. 61: 1,2. which he opened

and read in the audience of the people, Luke 4: 18. "The Spirit of

the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach; good

tidings unto the meek, he has sent me to bind up the broken-

hearted," &c. He is the tree of life, whose leaves are for the

healing of the nations: he is Jehovah Rophe, the Lord that healeth

us; and that as he is Jehovah Tzidkenu, the Lord our righteousness.

The brazen serpent that healed the Israelites in the wilderness, was

an excellent type of our great physician, Christ, and is expressly

applied to him, John 3: 14. He rejects none that come, and heals all

whom he undertakes; but more particularly, I will,

First, Point at those diseases which Christ heals in sick

souls, and by what means he heals them.

Secondly, The excellency of this physician above all others:

there is none like Christ, he is the only physician for wounded

souls.

First, We will enquire into the diseases which Christ the

physician cures, and they are reducible to two heads, viz.

1. Sin, and,

2. Sorrow.

First, The diocese of sin; in which three things are found

exceeding burdensome to sick souls.

1. The guilt,

2. The dominion,

3. The inherence of sin; all cured by this physician, and how.

First, The guilt of sin; this is a mortal wound, a stab in the

very heart of a poor sinner. It is a fond and groundless distinction

that Papists make of sins mortal and venial; all sin, in its own

nature is mortal, Rom. 6: 25. "The wages of sin is death." Yet

though it be so in its own nature, Christ can and does cure it by

the sovereign balsam of his own precious blood, Eph. 1: 7. "In whom

we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,

according to the riches of his grace." This is the deepest and

deadliest wound the soul of man feels in this world. What is guilt

but the obligation of the soul to everlasting punishment and misery?

It puts the soul under the sentence of God to eternal wrath; the

condemning sentence of the great and terrible God; than which,

nothing is found more dreadful and insupportable: put all pains, all

poverty, all afflictions, all miseries, in one scale, and God's

condemnation in the other, and you weigh but so many feathers

against a talent of lead.

This disease, our great physicians Christ, cures, by remission,

which is the dissolving of the obligation to punishment; the loosing

of the soul that was bound over to the wrath and condemnation of

God, Col. 1: 13, 14. Heb. 6: 12. Micah 7: 17, 18, 19. This remission

being made, the soul is immediately cleared from all its obligations

to punishment. Rom. 8: 1. "There is no condemnation." All bonds are

cancelled, the guilt of all sins is hewed or removed, original and

actual, great and small. This cure is performed upon souls by the

blood of Christ; nothing is found in heaven or earth, besides his

blood that is able to heal this disease. Heb. 9: 22. "Without

shedding of blood there is no remission;" nor is it any blood that

will do it, but that only which dropped from the wounds of Christ.

Isa. 53: 5. "By his stripes we are healed. His blood only is

innocent and precious blood, 1 Pet. 1: 19. blood of infinite worth

and value; blood of God, Acts 20:18 blood prepared for this very

purpose, Heb. 10: 5. This is the blood that performs the cure, and

how great a cure is it! for this cure, the souls of believers shall

be praising and magnifying their great Physician in heaven to all

eternity, Rev. 1: 5, 6. "To him that loved us, and washed us from

our sins in his own blood, &c. to him be glory and dominion, for

ever and ever."

Secondly, The next evil in sin cured by Christ, is the dominion

of it over the souls of poor sinners. Where sin is in dominion, the

soul is in a very sad condition; for it darkens the understanding,

depraves the conscience, stiffens the will, hardens the heart,

misplaces and disorders all the affections; and thus every faculty

is wounded by the power and dominion of sin over the soul. How

difficult is the cure of this disease! It passes the skill of angels

or men to heal it; but Christ undertakes it, and makes a perfect

cure of it at last, and this he does by his Spirit. As he cures the

guilt of sin by pouring out his blood for us; so he cures the

dominion of sin by pouring out his Spirit upon us. Justification is

the cure of guilt, sanctification the cure of the dominion of sin.

For,

First, As the dominion of sin darkens the understanding, 1 Cor.

2: 14. so the Spirit of holiness which Christ sheds upon his people,

cures the darkness and blindness of that noble faculty, and restores

it again, Eph. 5: 8. They that were darkness are hereby light in the

Lord; the anointing of the Spirit teacheth them all things, 1 John

2: 27.

Secondly, As the dominion of sin depraved and defiled the

conscience, Tit. 1: 15. wounded it to that degree, as to disable it

to the performance of all its offices and functions; so that it was

neither able to apply, convince, or tremble at the word: So, when

the Spirit of holiness is shed forth, O what a tender sense fills

the renewed conscience! For what small things will it check, smite,

and rebuke! How strongly will it bind to duty, and bar against sin.

Thirdly, As the dominion of sin stiffened the will and made it

stubborn and rebellious, so Christ, by sanctifying it, brings it to

be pliant and obedient to the will of God. "Lord, (saith the sinner)

what wilt thou have me to do!" Acts 9: 6.

Fourthly, As the power of sin hardeneth the heart so that

nothing could affect it, or make any impression upon it; when

sanctification comes upon the soul, it thaws and breaks it, as hard

as it was, and makes it to dissolve in the breast of a sinner in

godly sorrow, Ezek. 36: 26. "I will take away the heart of stone out

of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." It will now

melt ingenuously under the threatenings of the word, 2 Kings 22: 19.

or the strokes of the rod, Jer. 31: 18. or the manifestations of

grace and mercy, Luke 7: 88.

Fifthly, As the power of sin misplaced and disordered all the

affections, so sanctification reduces them again and sets them

right, Psal. 4: 6, 7. And thus you see how sanctification becomes

the rectitude, health, and due temper of the soul, so far as it

prevails, curing the diseases that sin in its dominion filled the

soul with. True it is, this cure is not perfected in this life;

there are still some remains of the old diseases in the holiest

souls, notwithstanding sin be dethroned from its dominion over them:

but the cure is begun, and daily advances towards perfection, and at

last will be complete, as will appear in the cure of the next evil

of sin; namely,

Thirdly, The inherence of sin in the soul: this is a sore

disease, the very core and root of all our other complaints and

ailes. This made the holy apostle bemoan himself and wail so

bitterly, Rom. 7: 17. because of "sin that dwelt in him." And the

same misery is bewailed by all sanctified persons all the world

over.

It is a wonderful mercy to have the guilt and dominion of sin

cured, but we shall never be perfectly sound and well, till the

existence or indwelling of sin in our natures be cured too: when

once that is done, then we shall feel no more pain nor sorrows for

sin: and this our great Physician will at last perform for us and

upon us. But as the cure of guilt was by our justification, the cure

of the dominion of sin by our sanctification: so the third and last,

which perfects the whole cure, will be by our glorification: and

till then, it is not to be expected. For it is a clear case, that

sill like ivy in the old walls, will never be gotten out till the

walls be pulled down, and then it is pulled up by the roots. This

cure Christ will perform in a moment, upon our dissolution. For it

is plain,

First, That none but perfected souls, freed from all sin, are

admitted into heaven, Eph. 5: 27. Heb. 12: 23. Rev. 21: 27.

Secondly, It is as plain, that no such personal perfection and

freedom is found in any man on this side death and the grave, 1 John

1: 8. 1 Kings 8: 46. Phil. 3: 12. a truth sealed by the sad

experience of all the saints on earth.

Thirdly, If such freedom and perfection must be before we can

be perfectly happy, and no such thing be done in this life, it

remains that it must be done immediately upon their dissolution, and

at the very time of their glorification. As sin came in at the time

of the union of their souls and bodies in the womb, will go out at

the time of their separation by death; then will Christ put the last

hand to this glorious work, and perfect that cure which has been so

long under his hand, in this world; and thenceforth sin shall have

no power upon them, it shall never tempt them more, it shall never

defile them more, it shall never grieve and sadden their hearts any

more: henceforth it shall never cloud their evidences, darken their

understandings, or give the least interruption to their communion

with God. When sin is gone, all these, its mischievous effects, are

gone with it. So that I may speak it to the comfort of all gracious

hearts, according to what the Lord told the Israelites, in Deut. 12:

8, 9. (to which I allude for illustration of this most comfortable

truth) "Ye shall not do after all the things that ye do here this

day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes, for ye are not

as yet come to the rest, and to the inheritance which the Lord your

God giveth you." Whilst you are under Christ's cure upon earth, but

not perfectly healed, your understandings mistake, your thoughts

wander, your affections are dead, and your communion with God is

daily interrupted; but it shall not be so in heaven, where the cure

is perfect: you shall not there know, love, or delight in God in the

manner you do this day; for you are not as yet come to the rest, and

to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you. And so much

as to the diseases of sin, and Christ's method of curing them.

Secondly, As sin is the disease of the saints, so also is

sorrow: the best saints must pass through the valley of Bacha, to

heaven. How many tears fall from the eyes of the saints, upon the

account of outward as well as inward troubles, even after their

reconciliation with God? Through much tribulation we must enter into

the "kingdom of God;' Acts 14: 22. It would be too great a

digression in this place, to note but the more general heads under

which almost infinite particulars of troubles and afflictions are

found; it shall suffice only to show, that whatever distress or

trouble any poor soul is in, upon any account whatsoever, if that

soul belongs to Jesus Christ, he will take care of it for the

present, and deliver it at last by a complete cure.

First, Christ cures troubles, by sanctifying them to the souls

of his that are wider affliction, and makes their very troubles

medicinal and healing to them. Trouble is a scorpion, and has a

deadly sting, but Christ is a wise physician, and extracts a

sovereign oil out of this scorpion, that heals the wound it makes.

By afflictions, our wise Physician purges our corruptions, and so

prevents or cures greater troubles by lesser; inward sorrows by

outward ones. Isa 27: 9. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of

Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin."

Secondly, Christ cures outward troubles by inward consolations,

which are made to rise in the inner man as high as the waters of

affliction do upon the outward man, 2 Cor. 1: 5. One drop of

spiritual comfort is sufficient to sweeten a whole ocean of outward

trouble. It was an high expression of an afflicted father, whom God

comforted, just upon the death of his dear and only son, with some

clearer manifestations of his love than was usual: "O (said he)

might I but have such consolations as these, I could be willing

(were it possible) to lay an only son into the grave every day I

have to live in this world." Thus all the troubles of the world are

cured by Christ. John 16: 33. "In the world ye shall have trouble,

but in me ye shall have peace.

Thirdly, Christ cures all outward sorrows and troubles in his

people by death, which is their removal from the place of sorrows to

peace and rest for evermore. Now God wipes all tears from their

eyes, and the days of their mourning are at an end; they then put

off the garments and spirit of mourning, and enter into peace, Isa.

57: 2. They come to that place and state where tears and sighs are

things unknown to the inhabitants; one step beyond the state of this

mortality, brings us quite out of the sight and hearing of all

troubles and lamentations. These are the diseases of souls; sin, and

sorrow; and thus they are cured by Christ, the Physician.

Secondly, Next I shall shew you that Jesus Christ is the only

Physician of souls, none like him for a sick sinner; and this will

be evident in divers respects.

First, None so wise and judicious as Jesus Christ, to

understand and comprehend the nature, depth and danger of soul-

diseases. O how ignorant and unacquainted are men with the state and

case of afflicted souls! But "Christ has the tongue of the learned,

that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is

weary," Isa. 50: 4. He only understands the weight of sin, and depth

of inward troubles of sin.

Secondly, None so able to cure and heal the wounds of afflicted

souls as Christ is; he only has those medicines that can cure a sick

soul. The blood of Christ, and nothing else, in heaven or earth, is

able to cure the mortal wounds which guilt inflicts upon a trembling

conscience; let men try all other receipts and costly experience

shall convince them of their insufficiency. Conscience may be

benumbed by stupefactive medicines, prepared by the devil, for that

end; but pacified it can never be but by the blood of Christ, Heb.

16: 22.

Thirdly, None so tender-hearted and sympathising with sick

souls as Jesus Christ; he is full of bowels and tender compassions

to afflicted souls; he is one that can have compassion, because he

has had experience, Heb. 5: 2. If I must come unto the surgeon's

hands with broken bones, give me such an one to chose whose own

bones have been broken, who has felt the anguish in himself. Christ

knows what it is by experience, having felt the anguish of inward

troubles, the weight of God's wrath, and the terrors of a forsaking

God, more than any or all the sons of men: this makes him tender

over distressed souls. Isa. 42: 3. "A bruised reed he will not

break, and smoking flax he will not quench."

Fourthly, None cures in so wonderful a method as Christ does;

he heals us by his stripes, Isa. 53: 5. The Physician dies that the

patient may live: his wounds must bleed, that ours may be cured; he

feels the smart and pain, that we might have ease and comfort. No

physician but Christ will cure others at this rate.

Fifthly, None so ready to relieve a sick soul as Christ; he is

within the call of a distressed soul at all times. Art thou sick for

sin, weary of sin, and made truly willing to part with sin? lift up

but thy sincere cry to the Lord Jesus for help, and he will quickly

be with thee. When the prodigal, the emblem of a convinced, humbled

sinner, said, in himself; I will return to my father, the father ran

to meet him, Luke 15: 20. He can be with thee in a moment.

Sixthly, None so willing to receive and undertake all

distressed and afflicted souls as Jesus Christ is, he refuses none

that come to him. John 6: 37. "He that cometh unto me, I will in no

wise cast out." Whatever their sins have been, or their sorrows are

however they have wounded their own souls with the deepest gashes of

guilt; how desperate and helpless soever their case appears in their

own or others eyes, he never puts them off, or discourages them, if

they be but willing to come, Isa. 1: 18, 19.

Seventhly, None so happy and successful as Christ; he never

fails of performing a perfect cure upon those he undertakes; never

was it known that any soul miscarried in his hands, John 3: 15, 16.

Other physicians, by mistakes, by ignorance, or carelessness, fill

church yards, and cast away the lives of men; but Christ suffers

none to perish that commit themselves to him.

Eighthly, None so free and generous as Christ; he does all

gratis; he sells not his medicines, though they be of infinite

value; but freely gives them; Isa. 55: 1. "He that has no money, let

him come." If any be sent away, it is the rich, Luke 1: 53. not the

poor and needy: those that will not accept the remedy as a free

gift, but will needs purchase it at a price.

Ninthly, and lastly, None rejoice in the recovery of souls more

than Christ does. O! it is unspeakably delightful to him to see the

efficacy of his blood upon our souls; Isa 53: 11. "He shall see the

travail of his soul, (i. e. the success of his death and sufferings)

and shall be satisfied." When he foresaw the success of the gospel

upon the world, it is said, Luke 10: 21. "In that hour Jesus

rejoiced in Spirit". And thus you see there is no physician like

Christ for sick souls

The uses of this point are,

For information and direction

First, From whence we are informed of many great and necessary

truths deducible from this: As,

Inference 1. How inexpressible id the grace of God, in

providing such a physician as Christ, for the sick and dying souls

of sinners! O blessed be God that there is a balm in Gilead, and a

Physician there! that their case is not desperate, forlorn and

remediless, as that the devils and damned is. There is but one case

exempted from cure, and that, such as is not incident to any

sensible, afflicted soul, Matth. 12:31. and this only excepted, all

manner of sins and diseases are capable of a cure. Though there be

such a disease as is incurable, yet take this for thy comfort, never

any soul was sick, i.e. sensibly burdened with it, and willing to

come to Jesus Christ for healing; for under that sin the will is so

wounded, that they have no desire to Christ. O inestimable mercy!

that the sickest sinner is capable of a perfect cure! There be

thousands, and ten thousands now in heaven and earth, who said once,

Never was any case like theirs; so dangerous, so hopeless. The

greatest of sinners have been perfectly recovered by Christ, 1 Tim.

1: 15. 1 Cor. 6: 11. O mercy, never to be duly estimated!

Infer. 2. What a powerful restraint from sin is the very method

ordained by God, for the cure of it! Isa 53: 5. "By his stripes we

are healed." The Physician must die, that the patient might live; no

other thing but the blood, the precious blood of Christ, is found in

heaven or earth able to heal us, Heb. 9: 22, 26. This blood of

Christ must be freshly applied to every new wound sin makes upon our

souls, 1 John 2: 1, 2. every new sin wounds him afresh, opens the

wounds of Christ anew. O think of this again and again, you that so

easily yield to the solicitations of Satan. Is it so easy and so

cheap to sin as you seem to make it? Does the cure of souls cost

nothing? True, it is free to us, but was it so to Christ? No, it was

not; he knows the price of it, though you do not. Has Christ healed

you by his stripes, and can you put him under fresh sufferings for

you so easily? Have you forgot also your own sick days and nights

for sin, that you are careless in resisting and preventing it? Sure

it is not easy for saints to wound Christ, and their own souls, at

one stroke. If you renew your sins, you must also renew your sorrows

and repentance, Psal. 51 title. 2 Sam. 12: 13. you must feel the

anguish and pain of a troubled spirit again, things with which the

saints are not unacquainted; of which they may say, as the church,

"Remembering my affliction, the wormwood and the gal], my soul has

them still in remembrance," Lam. 3: 19. Yea, and if you will be

remiss in your watch, and so easily incur new guilt, though a pardon

in the blood of Christ may heal your souls, yet some rod or other,

in the hand of a displeased father, shall afflict your bodies, or

smite you in your outward comforts, Psal. 89: 23.

Inf. 3. If Christ be the only physician of sick souls, what sin

and folly is it for me, to take Christ's work out of his hands, and

attempt to be their own physician.

Thus do those that superstitiously endeavour to heal their

souls by afflicting their bodies; not Christ's blood, but their own,

must be the plaister: and as blind Papists, so many carnal and

ignorant Protestants strive, by confession, restitution,

reformation, and stricter course of life, to heal those moulds that

sin has made upon their souls, without any respect to the blood of

Christ: but this course shall not profit them at all. It may, for a

time divert, but can never heal them: the wounds so skinned over,

will open and bleed again. God grant it be not when our souls shall

be out of the reach of the true and only remedy.

Inf. 4. How sad is tile case of those souls, to whom Christ has

not yet been a physician? They are mortally wounded by sin, and are

like to die of their sickness, no saving, healing applications have

hitherto been made unto their souls: and this is the case of the

greatest part of mankind, yea, of them that live under the

discoveries of Christ in the gospel. Which appears by these sad

symptoms.

First, In that their eyes have not yet been opened, to see

their sin and misery; in which illumination the cure of souls begin,

Acts 26: 18. To this day he has not given them eyes to see, Deut.

29: 4. but that terrible stroke of God which blinds and hardens

them, is too visibly upon them, mentioned in Isa. 6: 9, 10. No hope

of healing, till the sinner's eyes be opened to see his sin and

misery.

Secondly, In that nothing will divorce and separate them from

their lusts; a sure sign they are not under Christ's cure, nor were

ever made sick of sin. O if ever Christ be a physician to thy soul,

he will make thee loathe what now thou lovest, and say to thy most

pleasant and most profitable lusts, Get ye hence, Isa. 30: 22. Till

then, there is no ground to think that Christ is a physician to you.

Thirdly, In that they have no sensible and pressing need of

Christ, nor make any earnest enquiry after him, as most certainly

you would do, if you were in the way of healing and recovery. These,

and many other sad symptoms, do too plainly discover the disease of

sin, to be in its full strength upon your souls; and if it so

continue, how dreadful will the issue be? See Isa. 6: 9, 10.

Inf. 5.. What cause have they to be glad, that are under the

hand and care of Christ, in order to a cure, and who do find, or

may, upon due examination, find their souls are in a very hopeful

way of recovery! Can we rejoice when the strength of a natural

disease is broken, and nature begins to recover ease and vigour

again? And shall we not much more rejoice, when our souls begin to

mend, and recover sensibly, and all comfortable signs of health and

life appear upon them? particularly, when the understanding, which

was ignorant and dark, has the light of life beginning to dawn into

it; such is that in 1 John 2: 27. When the will which was rebellious

and inflexible to the will of God, is brought to comply with that

holy will, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9: 6.

When the heart, which was harder than an adamant, is now brought to

contrition for sin, and can mourn as heartily over it, as ever a

father did for a dead son, a beloved and only son; when its

aversations from God are gone, at least have no such power as once

they had; but the thoughts are now fixed much upon God, and

spiritual things begin to grow pleasant to the soul; when times of

duty come to be longed for, and the soul never better pleased than

in such seasons: when the hypocrisy of the heart is purged out, so

that we begin to do all that we do heartily, as unto the Lord, and

not unto men, Col. 3: 28. 1 Thess. 2: 4. when we begin to make

conscience of secret sins, Psal. 119: 118. and of secret duties,

Matth. 6: 5, 6. when we have an equal respect to all God's

commandments, Psal. 119: 8. and our hearts are under the holy and

awful eye of God, which does indeed over-awe our souls, Gen. 17: 1.

O what sweet signs of a recovering soul are these! Surely such are

in the skilful hand of the great Physician, who will perfect what

yet remains to be done.

Second use for direction.

In the last place, this point yields matter of advice and

direction to poor souls that are under the disease of sin; and they

are of two sorts, which I will distinctly speak to: viz. First, Such

as are under their first sickness of spiritual sorrow for sin, and

know not what course to take: or, Secondly, Such as have been longer

in the hands of Christ the Physician, but are troubled to see the

cure advance so slowly upon them, and fear the issue.

First, As to those that are in their first troubles for sin,

and know not what course to take for ease and safety; I would

address to them these following counsels.

First, Shut your ears against the dangerous counsels of carnal

persons, or relations; for as they themselves are unacquainted with

these troubles, so also are they with all proper remedies: and it is

very usual with the devil to convex his temptations to distressed

souls, by such hands; because, by them, he can do it with least

suspicion. It was Augustine's complaint, that his own father took

little care for his soul; and many parents act, in this case, as if

they were employed by Satan.

Secondly, Be not too eager to get out of trouble, but be

content to take God's way, and wait his time. No woman that is wise,

would desire to have her travail hastened one day before the due

time; nor will it be your interest to hasten too soon out of

trouble. It is true, times of trouble are apt to seem tedious; but a

false peace will endanger you more than a long trouble: a man may

lengthen is own troubles to the loss of his own peace, and may

shorten them to the hazard of his own soul.

Thirdly, Open your case to wise, judicious, and experienced

Christians, and especially the ministers of Christ, whose office it

is to counsel and direct you in these difficulties; and let not your

troubles lie, like a secret, smothering fire, always in your own

breasts. I know men are more ashamed to open their sins under

convictions, than they were to commit them before conviction: but

this is your interest, and the true way to your rest and peace. If

there be with you, or near you, an interpreter, one of a thousand,

to shew you your righteousness, and remedy, as it lies in Christ;

neglect not your own souls, in a sinful concealment of your case: it

will be the joy of their hearts to be employed in such work as this.

Fourthly, Be much with God in secret, open your hearts to him,

and pour out your complaints into his bosom. The 102 Psalm bears a

title very suitable to your case and duty; yea, you will find in

Your troubles work kindly, and God intend a cure upon your souls,

that nothing will be able to keep God and your souls asunder:

whatever your incumbrances in the world be, some time will be daily

redeemed, to be spent betwixt God and you.

Fifthly, Plead hard with God in prayer for help and healing.

"Heal my soul, (saith David) for I have sinned against thee," Psal.

41: 4. Tell him Christ has his commission sealed for such as you

are: he was sent to "bind up the broken hearted," Isa. 61: 1. Tell

him he came into the world, "to seek and save that which was lost,"

and so are you now, in your own account and apprehensions. Lord,

what profit is there in my blood? Wilt thou pursue a dried leaf? And

why is my heart wounded with the sense of sin, and mine eyes open to

see my danger and misery; Are not these the first dawnings of mercy

upon sinners? O let it appear, that the time of mercy, even the set

time, is now come.

Sixthly, Understand your peace to be in Christ only, and faith

to be the only way to Christ and rest; let the great enquiry of your

souls be after Christ and faith; study the nature and necessity of

these, and cry to God day and night for strength to carry you to

Christ in the way of faith.

Secondly, As to those that have been longer under the hands of

Christ, and yet are still in troubles, and cannot obtain peace, but

their wounds bleed still, and all they hear in sermons, or do in the

way of duty, will not bring them to rest; to such I only add two or

three words for a close.

First, Consider whether you have rightly closed with Christ

since your first awakening, and whether there be not some way of

sin, in which you still live: if so, no wonder your wounds are kept

open, and your souls are strangers to peace.

Secondly, If you be conscious of no such flaw in the

foundation, consider how much of this trouble may arise from your

constitution and natural temper, which being melancholy, will be

doubtful and suspicious; you may find it so in other cases of less

moment, and be sure Satan will not be wanting to improve it.

Thirdly, Acquaint yourselves more with the nature of true

justifying faith; a mistake in that has prolonged the troubles of

many; if you look for it in no other act but assurance, you may

easily overlook it as it lies, in the mean time, in your affiance or

acceptance. A true and proper conception of saving faith would go

far in the cure of many troubled souls.

Fourthly, Be more thankful to shun sin, than to get yourselves

clear of trouble: it is sad to walk in darkness, but worse to lie

under guilt. Say, Lord, I would rather be grieved myself, than be a

grief to thy Spirit. O keep me from sin, how long soever thou keep

me under sorrow. Wait on God in the way of faith, and in a tender

spirit towards sin, and thy wounds shall be healed at last by thy

great Physician.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

Sermon 11.

Containing the Second Motive to enforce the general Exhortation,

from a second Title of Christ.

Luxe 1: 72.

To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and remember his

holy covenant.

This scripture is part of Zechariah's prophecy, at the rising

of that bright star, John, the harbinger and fore-runner of Christ:

They are some of the first words he spake after Gad had loosed his

tongue, which, for a time, was struck dumb for his unbelief. His

tongue is now unbound, and at liberty to proclaim to all the world,

the unspeakable riches of mercy through Jesus Christ, in a song of

praise. Wherein note,

The mercy celebrated, viz. redemption by Christ, ver. 68.

The description of Christ by place and property, ver. 69.

The faithfulness of God in our redemption this way, ver. 70.

The benefit of being so redeemed by Christ, ver. 71.

The exact accomplishment of all the promises made to the

fathers in sending Christ, the mercy promised, into the world, ver.

72. "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers," &t. In these

words we find two parts, viz.

1. A mercy freely promised.

2. The promised mercy faithfully performed.

First, You have a mercy freely promised, viz. by God the

Father, from the beginning of the world, and often repeated and

confirmed in several succeeding ages, to the fathers, in his

covenant-transactions.

This mercy is Jesus Christ, of whom he speaks in this prophecy

the same which he stilts "An horn of salvation in the house of

David," ver. 69.

The mercy of God in scripture, is put either for,

1. His free favour to the creature. Or,

2. The effects and fruits of that favour.

It is put for the free and undeserved favour of God to the

creature, and this favour of God may respect the creature two ways,

either as undeserving, or as ill-deserving.

It respected innocent man, as undeserving, for Adam could put

no obligation upon his benefactor. It respecteth fallen man, as ills

deserving. Innocent man could not merit favour, and fallen man did

merit wrath: the favour or mercy of God to both is every way free;

and that is the first acceptation of the word mercy: but then it is

also taken for the effects and fruits of God's favour, and they are

either,

1. Principal and primary: or,

2. Subordinate and secondary.

Of secondary and subordinate mercies, there are multitudes,

both temporal, respecting the body, and spiritual, respecting the

soul; but the principal and primary mercy is but one, and that is

Christ, the first-born of mercy; the capital mercy, the

comprehensive root-mercy, from whom are all other mercies; and

therefore called by a singular emphasis in my text, The mercy; i.e.

the mercy of all mercies; without whom no drop of saving mercy can

flow to any of the sons of men; and in whom are all the tender

bowels of divine mercy yearning upon poor sinners. 'The mercy, and

the mercy Promised. The first promise of Christ was made to Adam,

Gen. 3: 15. and was frequently renewed afterwards to Abraham, to

David, and as the text speaks, unto the fathers, in their respective

generations.

Secondly, We find here also the promised mercy faithfully

performed; "To perform the mercy promised." What mercy soever the

love of God engaged him to promise, the faithfulness of God stands

engaged for the performance thereof. Christ, the promised mercy, is

not only performed truly, but he is also performed according to the

promise in all the circumstances thereof, exactly. So he was

promised to the fathers, and just so performed to us their children:

Hence the note is,

Doct. That Jesus Christ, the mercy of mercies, was graciously

promised and faithfully performed by God to his people.

Three things are here to be opened.

First, Why Christ is stiled the mercy.

Secondly, What kind of mercy Christ is to his people.

Thirdly, How this mercy was performed.

First, Christ is the mercy, emphatically so called: the

peerless, invaluable, and matchless mercy: Because he is the prime

fruit of the mercy of God to sinners. The mercies of God are

infinite; mercy gave the world and us our being; all our protection,

provision, and comforts in this world are the fruits of mercy, the

free gifts of divine favour: but Christ is the first end chief; all

other mercies, compared with him, are but fruits from that mot, and

streams from that fountain of mercy; the very bowels of divine mercy

are in Christ, as in ver. 78. according to the tender mercies, or as

the Greek, the yearning bowels of the mercy of God.

Secondly, Christ is the mercy, because all the mercy of God to

sinners is dispensed and conveyed through Christ to them, John 1:

16. Col. 2: 3. Eph. 4: 7. Christ is the medium of all divine

communications, the channel of grace, through him are both the

decursus et recursus gratiarum; the flows of mercy from God to us,

and the returns of praise from us to God. Fond and vain therefore

are all the expectations of mercy out of Christ; no drop of saving

mercy runs beside this channel.

Thirdly, Christ is the mercy, because all inferior mercies

derive both their nature, value, sweetness, and duration from

Christ, the fountain mercy of all other mercies.

First, They derive their nature from Christ; for out of him,

those things which men call mercies, are rather traps and snares,

than mercies to them, Prov. 1: 32. The time will come when the rich

that are christless, will wish, O that we had been poor! And nobles,

that are now ennobled by the new birth, O that we had been among the

low rank of men! All these things that pass for valuable mercies,

like cyphers, signify much when such an important figure as Christ

stands before them, else they signify nothing to any man s comfort

or benefit.

Secondly, They derive their value as well as nature from

Christ: For how little, I pray you, does it signify to any man to be

rich, honourable, politic, and successful in all his designs in this

world, if after all he must lie down in hell?

Thirdly, All other mercies derive their sweetness from Christ,

and are but insipid things without him. There is a twofold sweetness

in things; one natural, another spiritual: Those that are out of

Christ can relish the first, believers only relish both. They have

the natural sweetness that is in mercy itself, and a sweetness

supernatural from Christ and the covenant, the way in which they

receive them. Hence it is, that some men taste more spiritual

sweetness in their daily bread, than others do in the Lord's supper;

and the same mercy, by this means, becomes a feast to soul and body

at once.

Fourthly, All mercies have their duration and perpetuity from

Christ; all christless persons hold their mercies upon the greatest

contingencies and terms of uncertainty; if they be continued during

this life, that is all: there is not one drop of mercy after death.

But the mercies of the saints are continued to eternity; the end of

their mercies on earth, is the beginning of their better mercies in

heaven. There is a twofold end of mercies, one perfective, another

destructive; the death of the saints perfects and completes their

mercies; the death of the wicked destroys and cuts off their

mercies. For these reasons, Christ is called the mercy.

Secondly, In the next place, let us enquire what kind of mercy

Christ is; and we shall find many lovely and transcendent properties

to commend him to our souls.

First, He is free and undeserved mercy, called upon that

account, The gift of God, John 4: 10. And to shew how free this gift

was, God gave him to us when we were enemies, Rom. 5: 8. Needs must

that mercy be free, which is given, not only to the undeserving, but

to the ill deserving; the benevolence of God was the sole, impulsive

cause of this gift, John 3: 16.

Secondly, Christ is a full mercy, replenished with all that

answers to the wishes, or wants of sinners; in him alone is found

whatever the justice of an angry God requires for satisfaction, or

the necessities of souls require for their supply. Christ is full of

mercy, both extensively, and intensively; in him are all kinds and

sorts of mercies; and in him are the highest and most perfect

degrees of mercy; "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all

fulness dwell," Col. 1: 19.

Thirdly, Christ is the seasonable mercy, given by the Father to

us in due time, Rom. 5: 6. In the fulness of time, Gal. 4: 4. a

seasonable mercy in his exhibition to the world in general, and a

seasonable mercy in his application to the soul in particular; the

wisdom of God pitched upon the best time for his incarnation, and it

takes the very properest for its application. When a poor soul is

distressed, lost, at its wits end, and ready to perish, then comes

Christ. All God's works are done in season, but none more seasonable

than this great work of salvation by Christ.

Fourthly, Christ is the necessary mercy, there is an absolute

necessity of Jesus Christ; hence in scripture he is called the

"bread of life," John 6: 41. he is bread to the hungry; he is the

"water of life," John 7: 37. as cold water to the thirsty soul. He

is a ransom for captives, Mat. 20: 28. a garment to the naked, Rom.

13. ult. Bread is not so necessary to the hungry, nor water to the

thirsty, nor a ransom to the captive, nor a garment to the naked, as

Christ is to the soul of a sinner: The breath of our nostrils, the

life of our souls is in Jesus Christ.

Fifthly, Christ is a fountain-mercy, and all other mercies flow

from him: A believer may say with Christ, "All my springs are in

thee;" from his merit, and from his spirit, flow our redemption,

justification, sanctification, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, and

blessedness in the world to come: "In that day shall there be a

fountain opened," Zech. 13: 1.

Sixthly, Christ is a satisfying mercy; he that is full of

Christ, can feel the want of nothing. "I desire to know nothing but

Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. 2: 2. Christ bounds and

terminates the vast desires of the soul: He is the very sabbath of

the soul. How hungry, empty, and straitened on every side is the

soul of man in the abundance end fulness of all outward things, till

it come to Christ? the weary motions of a restless soul, like those

of a river, cannot be at rest till they pour themselves into Christ,

the ocean of blessedness.

Seventhly, Christ is a peculiar mercy, intended for, and

applied to a remnant among men; some would extend redemption as

large as the world, but the gospel limits it to those only that

believe; and those believers are upon that account called a peculiar

people, 1 Pet. 2: 9. The offers of Christ indeed are large and

general, but the application of Christ is but to few, Isa. 53: 1.

The greater cause have they to whom Christ comes, to lie with their

mouths in the dust, astonished and overwhelmed with the sense of so

peculiar and distinguished a mercy.

Eighthly, Jesus Christ is a table mercy, suited in every

respect to all our needs and wants, 1 Cor. 1: 20. wherein the

admirable wisdom of God is illustriously displayed; "Ye are complete

in him," (saith the apostle) Col. 2: 20. Are we enemies? He is

reconciliation: Are we sold to sin and Satan? He is redemption: Are

we condemned by the law? He is the Lord our righteousness: Has sin

polluted us? He is a fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness:

Are we lost by departing from God? He is the way to the Father. Rest

is not so suitable to the weary, nor bread to the hungry, as Christ

is to the sensible sinner.

Ninthly, Christ is an astonishing and wonderful mercy; his Name

is called wonderful, Isa 9: 6. and as his name is, so is he; a

wonderful Christ: His Person is a wonder, 1 Tim. 3: 16. "Great is

the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh.\*

His abasement is wonderful, Phil. 2: 6. His love is a wonderful

love; his redemption full of wonders; angels desire to look into it.

He is, and will be admired by angels and saints to all eternity.

Tenthly, Jesus Christ is an incomparable and matchless mercy;

"as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved

among the sons," (saith the enamoured spouse) Cant. 2: 8. Draw the

comparison how you will betwixt Christ and all other enjoyments, you

will find none in heaven nor on earth to equal him: He is more than

all externals, as the light of the sun is more than that of a

curdle: Nay, even the worst of Christ is better than the best of the

world; his reproaches are better than the world's pleasures, Heb.

11: 25. He is more than all spirituals, as the fountain is more than

the stream. He is more than justification, as the cause is more than

the effect; more than sanctification, as the person him self is more

than the image or picture. He is more than all peace, all comfort,

all joy, as the tree is more than the fruit. Nay, draw the

comparison betwixt Christ and things eternal, and you will find him

better than they; for what is in heaven without Christ, Psal. 73:

25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" If Christ should say to the

saints, take heaven among you, but as for me I will withdraw myself

from you; the saints would weep, even in heaven itself, and say,

Lord, heaven will be no more heaven to us, except thou be there, who

art by far the better half of heaven.

Eleventhly, Christ is an unsearchable mercy; who can fully

express his wonderful name? Prov. 30: 4. Who can tell over his

unsearchable riches, Eph. 3: 8. Hence it is that souls never tire in

the study or love of Christ, because new wonders are eternally

rising out of him. He is a deep which no line of any created

understanding, angelical or human, can fathom.

Twelfthly, and lastly, Christ is an everlasting mercy; "the

same yesterday, to day, and for ever," Heb. 13: 8. All other

enjoyments are perishable, time-eaten things; time, like a moth,

will fret them out; But the riches of Christ are durable riches,

Prov. 8: 18. The graces of Christ are durable graces, John 4: 14.

All the creatures are flowers, that appear and fade in their month;

but this Rose of Sharon, this Lily of the Valley never withers. Thus

you see the mercy performed with its desirable properties.

Thirdly, The last thing to be opened is the manner of God's

performing his mercy to his people; which the Lord did,

1. Realty and truly, as he had promised him.

2. Exactly agreeable to the promises and predictions of him.

First, Really and truly; as he had promised, so he made good

the promise. Acts 2: 36. "Let all the house of Israel know

assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified,

both Lord and Christ."

The manifestation of Christ in the flesh was no phantasm or

delusion, but a most evident and palpable truth. 1 John 1: 1. "That

which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have

looked upon, and our hands have handled." A truth so certain, that

the assertors of it appealed to the very enemies of Christ for the

certainty thereof, Acts 2: 22. Yea, not only the sacred, but profane

writers, witness to it; not only the evangelists and apostles, but

even the heathen writers of those times, both Roman and Jewish, as

Suetonius, Tacitus, Plinius the younger, and Josephus the Jewish

antiquary, do all acknowledge it.

Secondly, As God did really and truly perform Christ the

promised mercy, so he performed this promised mercy exactly

agreeable to the promises, types, and predictions made of him to the

fathers, even the most minute circumstances thereof. This is a great

truth for our faith to be established in: let us, therefore, cast

our eyes both upon the promises and performances God, with respect

to Christ, the mercy of mercies. See how he was represented to the

fathers long before his manifestation in the flesh; and what an one

he appeared to be when he was really exhibited in the flesh.

First; As to his person and qualifications, as it was foretold,

so it was fulfilled. His original was said to be unsearchable and

eternal, Micah 5: 2. and so he affirmed himself to be, Rev. 1: 11.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." John 6: 31, 32.

"Before Abraham was, I am." His two natures, united into one person,

were plainly foretold, Zech. 13: 7. The man my Fellow; and such a

one God performed, Rom. 9: 5. His immaculate purity and holiness

were foretold, Dan. 9: 24. "To anoint the most Holy;" some render

it, the great Saint, the Prince of Saints; and such an one he was

indeed, when he lived in this world. John 8: 46. "Which of you

convinceth me of sin?" His Offices were foretold, the prophetical

Office predicted, Deut. 18: 15. and fulfilled in him, John 1: 18.

His priestly office foretold, Psal. 110: 4. fulfilled, Heb. 9: 14.

his kingly Office foretold, Micah 5: 2. and in him fulfilled; his

very enemies being judges, Matth; 27: 37.

Secondly, As to his birth, the time, place, and manner thereof

were foretold to the fathers, and exactly performed to a little.

First, The time prefixed, more generally in Jacob's prophecy,

Gen. 44: 10. When the sceptre should depart from Judah, as, indeed,

it did in Herod the Idumean: More particularly in Daniel's seventy

weeks, from the decree of Darius, Dan. 9: 24. answering exactly to

the time of his birth; so cogent and full of proof, that Porphyry,

the great enemy of Christians, had no other evasion, but that this

prophecy was devised after the event: Which yet the Jews (as bitter

enemies to Christ as himself) will by no means allow to be true.

And, lastly, the time of his birth was exactly pointed at in

Haggai's prophecy, Hag. 2: 7, 9. compared with Mal 3: 1. He must

come while the second temple stood; at that time was a general

expectation of him, John 1: 19. and at that very time he came, Luke

2: 38.

Secondly, The place of his birth was foretold to be Bethlehem

Ephrata, Micah 5: 2. and so it was, Matth. 2: 5, 6. to be brought up

in Nazareth, Zech. 6: 12. "Behold the man whose name is the Branch."

The word is Netzer, whence is the word Nazarite. And there indeed

was our Lord brought up, Mat. 2: 23.

Thirdly, His parent was to be a virgin, Isa. 7: 14. punctually

fulfilled, Matth. 50: 20, 21, 22, 23.

Fourthly, His stock, or tribe, was foretold to be Judah, Gen.

49: 10. and it is evident, saith the apostle, "that our Lord sprang

out of Judah," Heb. 7: 14.

Fifthly, His harbinger, or forerunner was foretold, Mal 4: 5,

6. fulfilled in John the Baptist, Luke 1: 16, 17.

Sixthly, The obscurity and meanness of his birth were

predicted, Isa. 53: 2. Zech. 9: 9. to which the event answered, Luke

2: 12.

Thirdly, His doctrine and miracles were foretold, Isa. 16: 1,

2. 35: 4, 5. the accomplishment whereof in Christ is evident in the

history of all the evangelism.

Fourthly, His death for us was foretold by the prophets, Dan.

9: 26. "The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself:" Isa. 53:

5. "He was wounded for our transgressions." And so he was, John 11:

50. The very kind and manner of his death was prefigured in the

brazen serpent, his type; and answered in his death upon the cross,

John 3: 14.

Fifthly, His burial in the tomb of a rich man was foretold,

Isa. 53: 9. and accomplished most exactly, Matth. 27: 59, 60.

Sixthly, His resurrection from the dead was typed out in Jonah,

and fulfilled in Christ's abode three days and nights in the grave,

Matth. 12: 49.

Seventhly, The wonderful spreading of the gospel in the world,

even to the Isles of the Gentiles, was prophesied of, Isa. 49: 6. to

the truth whereof we are not only the witnesses, but the happy

instances and examples of it. Thus the promised mercy was performed.

Inference 1. If Christ be the mercy of mercies, the medium of

conveying all other mercies from God to men; then in vain do men

expect and hope for mercy of God out of Jesus Christ.

I know many poor sinners comfort themselves with this, when

they come upon a bed of sickness; I am sinful, but God is merciful:

and it is very true God is merciful; plenteous in mercy; his mercy

is great above the heavens; mercy pleaseth him; and all this they

that are in Christ shall find experimentally, to their comfort and

salvation. But what is all this to thee, if thou art christless?

There is not one drop of saving mercy that comes in any other

channel than Christ to the soul of any man.

But must I then expect no mercy out of Christ? This is a hard

case, very uncomfortable doctrine. Yes, thou mayest be a Christless,

and covenantless soul, and yet have variety of temporal mercies, as

Ishmael had, Gen. 17: 20, 21. God may give thee the fatness of the

earth, riches, honours, pleasures, a numerous and prosperous

posterity; will that content thee? Yes, yes, if I may have heaven

too: No, neither heaven, nor pardon, nor any other spiritual or

eternal mercy may be expected out of Christ. Jude, ver. 21. 0

deceive not yourselves in this point; there are two bars betwixt you

and all spiritual mercies, viz. the guilt of sin, and the filth of

sin; and nothing but your own union with Christ can remove these,

and so open the passage for spiritual mercies to your souls.

Why, but I will repent of sin, strive to obey the commands of

God, make restitution for the wrongs I have done, cry to God for

mercy, bind my soul with vows and strong resolutions against sin for

time to come: will not all this lay a ground work for hope of mercy

to my soul? No, this will not, this cannot do.

First, All your sorrows, tears and mournings for sin cannot

obtain mercy; could you shed as many tears for any sin that ever you

committed, as all the children of Adam have shed upon any account

whatsoever, since the creation of the world; they will not purchase

the pardon of that one sin; for the law accepts no short payment; it

requires plenary satisfaction, and will not discharge any soul

without it; nor can it acknowledge or own your souls to be such. The

repentance of a soul finds, through Christ, acceptance with God, but

out of him it is nothing.

Secondly, All your strivings to obey the commands of God, and

live more strictly for time to come, will not obtain mercy. Matth 5:

20. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the

Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of

heaven."

Thirdly, Your restitution, and reparation of wrongs you have

done, cannot obtain mercy. Judas restored, and yet was damned. Man

is repaired, but God is not. Remission is the act of God, it is he

must loose your consciences from the bond of guilt, or they can

never be loosed.

Fourthly, All your cries to God for mercy will not prevail for

mercy, if you be out of Christ, Matth. 7: 22. Job 27: 29. A

righteous judge will not reverse the just sentence of the law,

though the prisoner at the bar fall upon his knees, and cry, Mercy.

mercy.

Fifthly, Your vows and engagements to God for time to come

cannot obtain mercy; for they being made in your own strength, it is

impossible you should keep them; and if you could, yet it is

impossible they should obtain remission and mercy: should you never

sin more for time to come, yet how shall God be satisfied for sins

past? Justice must have satisfaction, or you can never have

remission, Rom. 3: 25, 26. and no work wrought by man can satisfy

divine justice; nor is the satisfaction of Christ made over to any

for their discharge, but to such only as are in him: therefore never

expect mercy out of Christ.

Inf. 2. Is Christ, the mercy of mercies, greater, better, and

more necessary than all other mercies: then let no inferior mercy

satisfy you for your portion.

God has mercies of all sorts to give, but Christ is the chief,

the prime mercy of all mercies; O be not satisfied without that

mercy. When Luther had a rich present sent him, "he protested God

should not put him off so:" and David was of the same mind, Psal.

17: 14. If the Lord should give any of you the desires of your

hearts in the good things of this life, let not that satisfy you,

whilst you are Christless. For,

First, What is there in these earthly enjoyments, whereof the

vilest men have not a greater fulness than you? Job 21: 7, 8, 9, 10,

11. Psal. 17: 10. and 73: 3, 12.

Secondly, What comfort can all these things give to a soul

already condemned as thou art; John 3: 18.

Thirdly, What sweetness can be in them, whilst they are all

unsanctified things to you? enjoyments and sanctification are two

distinct things, Psal. 37: 16. Prov. 10: 22. Thousands of

unsanctified enjoyments will not yield your souls one drop of solid

spiritual comfort.

Fourthly, What pleasure can you take in these things, of which

death must shortly strip you naked? You must die, you must die; and

whose then shall all those things be, for which you have laboured?

Be not so fond, to think of leaving a great name behind you: it is

but a poor felicity (as Chrysostom well observes) to be tormented

where thou art, and praised where thou art not: the sweeter your

portion has been on earth, the more intolerable will your condition

be in hell; yea, these earthly delights do not only increase the

torments of the damned, but also prepare (as they are instruments of

sin) the souls of men for damnation, Prov. 1: 32. "Surely the

prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Be restless, therefore,

till Christ, the mercy of mercies, be the root and fountain,

yielding and sanctifying all other mercies to you.

Inf. 3. Is Christ, the mercy of mercies, infinitely better than

all other mercies? Then let all that be in Christ be content, and

well satisfied, whatever other inferior mercies the wisdom of God

sees fit to deny them. You have a Benjamin s portion, a plentiful

inheritance in Christ; will you yet complain? Others have houses,

splendid and magnificent upon earth; but you have "an house made

without hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. 5: 1. Others are

clothed with rich and costly apparel, your souls are clothed with

the white, pure robes of Christ's righteousness. Isa. 61: 10. "I

will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God:

for he has clothed me with the garment of salvation, he has covered

me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself

with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." Let

those that have full tables, heavy purses, rich lands, but no

Christ, be rather objects of your pity, than envy: it is better,

like store cattle, to be kept lean and hungry, than with the fatted

ox; to tumble in flowry meadows, thence to be lead away to the

shambles. God has not a better mercy to give than Christ, thy

portion; in him all necessary mercies are secured to thee, and thy

wants and straits sanctified to thy good. O! therefore, never open

thy mouth to complain against the bountiful God.

Inf. 4. Is Christ the mercy, i.e. he in whom all the tender

mercies of God towards poor sinners are, then let none be

discouraged in going to Christ, by reason of the sin and

unworthiness that are in him: his very name is mercy, and as his

name is, so is he. Poor drooping sinner, encourage thyself in the

way of faith; the Christ to whom thou art going, is mercy itself to

broken hearted sinners moving towards him in the way of faith; doubt

not that mercy will repulse thee; it is against both its name and

nature so to do. Jesus Christ is so merciful to poor souls that come

to him, that he has received and pardoned the chiefest of sinners;

men that stood as remote from mercy as any in the world, 1 Tim. 1:

15. 1 Cor. 6: 11. Those that shed the blood of Christ, have yet been

washed in that blood from their sin, Acts 2: 86, 87. Mercy receives

sinners, without exception of great and heinous ones. John 7: 37.

"If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." Gospel

invitations run, in general terms, to all sinners that are heavy

laden, Mat. 11: 28. When Mr. Bilney the martyr heard a minister

preaching at this rate, O thou old sinner, who hast been serving the

devil these fifty or sixty years; dost thou think that Christ will

receive thee now? O! said he, what a preaching of Christ is here?

Had Christ been thus preached to me in the day of my trouble for

sin, what had become of me? But, blessed be God there is a

sufficiency both of merit and mercy in Jesus Christ for all sinners,

for the vilest among sinners, whose hearts shall be made willing to

come unto him. So merciful is the Lord Jesus Christ, that he moves

first, Isa. 62: 1, 2. so merciful, that he upbraids none, Ezek. 18:

22. so merciful, that he will not despise the weakest, if sincere,

desires of souls, Isa. 13: 3. so merciful, that nothing more grieves

him than our unwillingness to come unto him for mercy, John 5: 40.

so merciful, that he waiteth to the last upon sinners to shew them

mercy, Rom. 10: 21. Mat. 23: 37. in a word, so merciful, that it is

his greatest joy when sinners come unto him, that he may show them

mercy, Luke 15: 5, 22.

Object. But yet it cannot enter into my thoughts that I should

obtain mercy.

Sol. First, thou measure God by yourselves, 1 Sam. 24:19. "If a

man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?" Man will not, but

the merciful God will, upon the submission of the enemies to him.

Secondly, You are discouraged, because you have not tried. Go

to Jesus Christ, poor distressed sinners; try him, and then report

what a Christ thou findest him to be.

Object. But I have neglected the time of mercy, and now it is

too late.

Sol. How know you that? Have you seen the book of life, or

turned over the records of eternity? Or do you not unwarrantably

intrude into the secrets of God, which belong not to you? Besides,

if the treaty were at an end, how is it that thy heart is now

distressed for sin, and solicitous after deliverance from it?

Object. But I have waited long, and yet see no mercy for me.

Sol. May not mercy be coming, and you not see it? Or have you

not waited at the wrong door? If you wait for the mercy of God

through Christ, in the way of humiliation and faith, and continue

waiting, assuredly mercy shall come at last.

Inf. 5. Has God performed the mercy promised to the Fathers,

the great mercy, the capital mercy, Jesus Christ; then let no man

distrust God for the performance of lesser mercies contained in any

other promises of the scripture. The performance of this mercy

secures the performance of all other mercies to us. For,

First, Christ is a greater mercy than any other which yet

remains to be performed, Rom. 8: 32.

Secondly, This mercy virtually comprehends all other mercies, 1

Cor. 3: 21, 22, 23.

Thirdly, The promises that contain all other mercies, are

ratified and confirmed to believers in Christ, 2 Cor. 1: 20.

Fourthly, It was much more improbable that God would bestow his

own Son upon the world, than that he should bestow any other mercy

upon it. Wait, therefore, in a comfortable expectation of the

fulfilling of all the rest of the promises in their seasons. Has he

given thee Christ? He will give thee bread to eat, raiment to put

on, support in troubles, and whatsoever else thy soul or body stands

in need of: The blessings contained in all other promises are fully

secured by the performance of this great promise; thy pardon, peace,

acceptance with God now, and enjoyment of him for ever shall be

fulfilled: The great mercy, Christ, makes way for all other mercies

to the souls of believers.

Inf. 6. Lastly, How mad are they that part with Christ, the

best of mercies, to secure and preserve any temporal lesser mercies

to themselves! Thus Demas and Judas gave up Christ to gain a little

of the world; O soul undoing bargain! How dear do they pay for the

world, that purchase it with the loss of Christ, and their own peace

for ever!

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the Mercy of mercies.

Sermon 12.

Containing a third Motive to enliven the general Exhortation from a

third Title of CHRIST.

Cant. 5. Part of Verse 16.

Yea, He is altogether lovely.

At the ninth verse of this chapter, you have a query propounded

to the spouse, by the daughters of Jerusalem, "What is thy beloved

more than another beloved?" To this question the spouse returns her

answers in the following verses, wherein she asserts his excellency

in general. Ver. 10. "He is the chiefest among ten thousands;"

confirms that general assertion, by an enumeration of his particular

excellencies, to ver. 16. where she closes up her character and

encomium of her beloved, with an elegant epiphonema, in the words

that I have read: "Yea, he is altogether lovely."

The words, you see, are an affirmative proposition, setting

forth the transcendent loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and

naturally resolve themselves into three parts, viz.

1. The subject.

2. The predicate.

S. The manner of predication.

First, The subject, He, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ, after whom

she had been seeking, for whom she was sick of love; concerning whom

these daughters of Jerusalem had enquired: whom she had endeavoured

so graphically to describe in his particular excellencies. This is

the great and excellent subject of whom she here speaks.

Secondly, The predicate, or what she affirmeth or saith of him,

viz. That he is a lovely one, Machamaddim, desires; according to the

import of the original, "which signifies earnestly to desire, covet,

or long after that which is most pleasant, grateful, delectable, and

admirable." The original word is both in the abstract, and of the

plural number, which speaks Christ to be the very essence of all

delights and pleasures, the very soul and substance of them. As all

the rivers are gathered into the ocean, which is the congregation or

meeting place of all the waters in the world: so Christ is that

ocean in which all true delights and pleasures meet.

Thirdly, The manner of predication; He is [altogether] lovely,

Totus, totus desiderabilis; lovely in all, and in every part; as if

she had said, Look on him in what respect or particular you will;

cast your eye upon this lovely object, and view him any way; turn

him in your serious thoughts which way you will; consider his

person, his offices, his works, or any other thing belonging to him;

you will find him altogether lovely, There is nothing ungrateful in

him, there is nothing lovely without him. Hence note,

Doct. That Jesuit Christ is the loveliest person souls can set

their eyes upon, Psal. 14: 2. "Thou art fairer than the

children of men."

That is said of Jesus Christ, which cannot be said of any

creature; that he is "altogether lovely." In opening this lovely

point I shall,

1. Weigh the importance of this phrase "altogether lovely."

2. Shew you in what respect Christ is so.

First, Let us weigh this excellent expression, and particularly

consider what is contained in it, and you shall find this expression

"altogether lovely."

First, That it excludes all unloveliness and distastefulness

from Jesus Christ. So Vatablus; "there is nothing in him which is

not amiable." The excellencies of Jesus Christ are perfectly

exclusives of all their opposites; there is nothing of a contrary

nature or quality found in him to alloy or debase his excellency.

And in this respect Christ infinitely transcends the most excellent

and loveliest creatures. For whatsoever loveliness is found in them,

it is not without a distasteful tang; the fairest pictures must have

their shadows: The most orient and transplendent stones must have

their foils to set off their beauty; the best creature is but a

bitter street at best: If there be somewhat pleasing, there is also

somewhat distasting; if there be gracious and natural excellencies

in the same person to delight us, yet there is also some natural

corruption intermixed with it to distaste us: But it is not so in

our altogether lovely Christ, his excellencies are pure and unmixed;

he is a sea of sweetness without one drop of gall.

Secondly, Altogether lovely, i.e. as there is nothing unlovely

found in him, so all that is in him is wholly lovely; as every ray

of God is precious, so every thing that is in Christ is precious:

Who can weigh Christ in a pair of balances, and tell you what his

worth is? "His price is above rubies, and all that thou canst desire

is not to be compared with him," Prov. 8: 11.

Thirdly, Altogether lovely, i.e. He is comprehensive of all

things that are lovely: he seals up the sum of all loveliness: Quae

faciunt divisa beatum, in hoc mixta fluunt: Things that shine as

single stars with a particular glory, all meet in Christ as a

glorious constellation. Col. 1: 19. "It pleased the Father that in

him should all fulness dwell." Cast your eyes among all created

beings, survey the universe, observe strength in one, beauty in a

second, faithfulness in a third, wisdom in a fourth; but you shall

find none excelling in them all as Christ does. Bread has one

quality, water another, raiment another, physic another; but none

has all in itself as Christ has: He is bread to the hungry, water to

the thirsty, a garment to the naked, healing to the wounded; and

whatever a soul can desire is found in him, 1 Cor. 1: 30.

Fourthly, Altogether lovely, i.e. Nothing is lovely in

opposition to him, or in separation from him. If he be altogether

lovely, then whatsoever is opposite to, or separate from him can

have no loveliness in it; take away Christ, and where is the

loveliness of any enjoyment? The best creature-comfort out of

Christ, is but a broken cistern; it cannot hold one drop of true

comfort, Psal. 73: 26. It is with the creature, the sweetest and

loveliest creature, as with a beautiful image in the glass: turn

away the face and where is the image? Riches, honours, and

comfortable relations are sweet when the face of Christ smiles upon

us through them; but without him, what empty trifles are they all?

Fifthly, Altogether lovely, i.e. Transcending all created

excellencies in beauty and loveliness; so much it speaks. If you

compare Christ and other things, be they never so lovely, never so

excellent and desirable; Christ carries away all loveliness from

them; "He is (saith the apostle) before all things," Col. 1: 17. Not

only before all things in time, nature, and order; but before all

things in dignity, glory, and true excellency: In all things he must

have the pre-eminence. For let us but compare Christ's excellency

with the creature's in a few particulars, and how evidently will the

transcendent loveliness of Jesus Christ appear! For,

First, All other loveliness is derivative and secondary; but

the loveliness of Christ original and primary. Angels and men, the

world and all the desirables in it, receive what excellency they

have from him; they are streams from the fountain. But as the waters

in the fountain itself are more abundant, so more pure and pleasant

than in the streams. And the farther any thing departs, and is

removed from its fountain and original, the less excellency there is

in it.

Secondly, The loveliness and excellency of all other things, is

but relative and respective, consisting in its reference to Christ,

and subserviency to his glory; but Christ is lovely, considered

absolutely in himself: He is desirable for himself, other things are

so for him.

Thirdly, The beauty and loveliness of all other things is

fading and perishing; but the loveliness of Christ is fresh to all

eternity: the sweetness of the best creatures is a fading flower; if

not before, yet certainly at death it must fade away. Job 4: 21.

"Does not their excellency, which is in them, go away?" Yes, yes,

whether natural excellencies of the body, or acquired endowments of

the mind, lovely features, amiable qualities, attracting

excellencies; all these like pleasant flowers are withered, faded,

and destroyed by death; "but Christ is still the same, yesterday,

today, and for ever," Heb. 13: 8.

Fourthly, The beauty and holiness of creatures are endearing

and dangerous; a man may make an idol thereof; and dote beyond the

bounds of moderation upon them, but there is no danger of excess in

the love of Christ. The soul is then in the healthiest frame and

temper when it is most sick of love to Christ, Cant. 5: 8.

Fifthly, The loveliness of every creature is of a cloying and

glutting nature; our estimation of it abates and sinks by our nearer

approach to it, or longer enjoyment of it: creatures, like pictures,

are fairest at a due distance, but it is not so with Christ; the

nearer the soul approacheth him, and the longer it lives in the

enjoyment of him, still the more sweet and desirable is he.

Sixthly, and lastly, All other loveliness is unsatisfying and

straitening to the soul of man; there is not room enough in any one,

or in all the creatures for the soul of man to dilate and expatiate

itself; but it still feels itself confined and narrowed within those

strait limits: And this comes to pass from the inadequateness and

unsuitableness of the creature, to the nobler and more excellent

soul of man, which like a ship in a narrow liver has not room to

turn; and besides, is ever told anon striking ground and foundering

in those shallows. But Jesus Christ is every way adequate to the

vast desires of the soul; in him it has see-room enough; there it

may spread all its sails, no fear of touching the bottom. And thus

you see what is the importance of this phrase, Altogether lovely.

Secondly, Next I promised to shew you in what respects Jesus

Christ is altogether lovely. And,

First, He is altogether lovely in his person: a Deity dwelling

in flesh, John 1: 14. The wonderful union and perfection of the

divine and human nature in Christ, render him an object of

admiration and adoration to angels and men, 1 Tim. 3: 16. God never

presented to the world such a vision of glory before: And then

consider how the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ is

replenished with all the graces of the Spirit, so as never any of

all the saints was filled; O how lovely does this render him! John

3: 34. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." This makes

him fairer than the children of men, grace being poured into his

lips, Psal. 45: 2. If a small measure of grace in the saints make

them such sweet and desirable companions, what must the riches and

fulness of the Spirit of grace filling Jesus Christ without measure,

make him in the eyes of believers? O what a glory and lustre must it

stamp upon him!

Secondly, He is altogether lovely in his offices: for let us

but consider the suitableness, fulness, and comfortableness of them.

First, The suitableness of the offices of Christ to the

miseries and wants of men; and we cannot but adore the infinite

wisdom of God in his investiture with them; we are, by nature, blind

and ignorant, at best but groping in the dim light of nature after

God, Acts 17: 27. Jesus Christ is a light to lighten the Gentiles,

Isa. 49: 6. When this great prophet came into the world, then did

the day-spring from on high visit us, Luke 1: 78. The state of

nature is a state of alienation from, and enmity against God; Christ

comes into the world an atoning sacrifice, making peace by the blood

of his cross, Col. 1: 20. All the world, by nature, are in bondage

and captivity to Satan, a lamentable thraldom; Christ comes with

kingly power, to rescue sinners, as a prey from the mouth of the

terrible one.

Secondly, Let the fulness of his offices be also considered, by

reason whereof he is able "to save to the uttermost, all that come

to God by him," Heb. 7: 25. The three offices, comprising in them

all that our souls do need, become an universal relief to all our

wants; and therefore,

Thirdly, Unspeakably comfortable must the offices of Christ be

to the souls of sinners. If light be pleasant to our eyes, how

pleasant is that light of life springing from the Sun of

righteousness! Ma1. 4: 2. If a pardon be sweet to a condemned

malefactor, how sweet must the sprinkling the blood of Jesus be to

the trembling conscience of a law condemned sinner? If a rescue from

a cruel tyrant be sweet to a poor captive, how sweet must it be to

the ears of enslaved sinners, to hear the voice of liberty and

deliverance proclaimed by Jesus Christ? Out of the several offices

of Christ, as out of so many fountains, all the promises of the new

covenant flow, as so many soul-refreshing streams of peace and joy:

all the promises of illumination, counsel and direction flow out of

the prophetical office; all the promises of reconciliation, peace,

pardon, and acceptation flow out of the priestly office, with the

sweet streams of joy, and spiritual comforts depending thereupon;

all the promises of converting, increasing, defending, directing,

and supplying grace, flow out of the kingly office of Christ;

indeed, all promises may be reduced to the three offices: so that

Jesus Christ must needs be altogether lovely in his offices.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ is altogether lovely in his relations.

First, He is a lovely Redeemer, Isa. 61: 1. He came to open the

prison-doors to them that are bound. Needs must this Redeemer be a

lovely one, if we consider the depth of misery from which he

redeemed us, even "from the wrath to come," 1 Thess. 1: 10. How

lovely was Titus, in the eyes of the poor enthralled Greeks, whom he

delivered from their bondage! this endeared him to them to that

degree, that when their liberty was proclaimed, they even trod one

another to death to see the herald that proclaimed It; and all the

night following, with instruments of music, danced about his tent,

crying with united voices, "a Saviour, a Saviour." Or, whether we

consider the numbers redeemed, and the means of their redemption.

Rev. 5: 9. And they sang a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to

take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain,

and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and

tongue, and people, and nation." He redeemed us not with silver and

gold, but with his own precious blood, by way of price, 1 Pet. 1:

18, 19. with his out-stretched and glorious arm, by way of power,

Col. 1: 13. he redeemed us freely, Eph. 1: 7. fully, Rom. 8: 1.

seasonably, Gal. 4: 4. and out of special and peculiar love, John

17: 9. In a word, he has redeemed us for ever, never more to come

into bondage, 1 Pet. 1: 5. John 10: 28. O how lovely is Jesus Christ

in the relation of a Redeemer to God's elect!

Secondly, He is a lovely bridegroom to all that he espouses to

himself. How does the church glory in him, in the words following my

text; "this is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of

Jerusalem!" q. d. Heaven and earth cannot show such another: which

needs no fuller proof than the following particulars.

First, That he espouses to himself, in mercy and in loving

kindness, such deformed, defiled, and altogether unworthy souls as

we are, who have no beauty, no excellency to make us desirable in

his eyes; all the springs of his love to us are in his own breast,

Deut. 7: 7. he chuseth us, not because we were, but that he might

make us lovely, Eph. 5: 27. he passed by us when we lay in our

blood, and said unto us, Live; and that was the time of love, Ezek.

16: 5.

Secondly, He expects nothing with us, and yet bestows himself,

and all that he has, upon us. Our poverty cannot enrich him, but he

made himself poor to enrich us, 2 Cor. 8: 9. 1 Cor. 3: 22.

Thirdly, No husband loves the wife of his bosom, as Christ

loved his people, Eph. 5: 25. He loved the church and gave himself

for it.

Fourthly, None bears with weaknesses and provocations as Christ

does; the church is stiled "the Lamb's wife," Rev. 19: 9.

Fifthly, No husband is so immortal and everlasting a husband as

Christ is; death separates all other relations, but the soul's union

with Christ is not dissolved in the grave; yea, the day of a

believer's death, is his marriage day, the day of his fullest

enjoyment of Christ. No husband can say to his wife, what Christ

saith to the believer, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,

Heb. 13: 5.

Sixthly, No bridegroom advanceth his bride to such honours by

marriage, as Christ does; he relates them to God as their father;

and from that day the mighty and glorious angels think it no

dishonour to be their servants, Heb. 1: 14. they are brought in

admiring the beauty and glory of the spouse of Christ, Rev. 21: 9.

Seventhly, and lastly, No marriage was ever consummated with

such triumphal solemnity, as the marriage of Christ and believers

shall be in heaven, Psal. 14: 14, 15. "She shall be brought to the

king in raiment of needle-work, the virgins, her companions that

follow her, shall be brought unto thee; with gladness and rejoicing

shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace."

Among the Jews the marriage house was called Bethillula, the house

of praise; there was joy upon all hands, but none like the joy that

will be in heaven, when believers, the spouse of Christ, shall be

brought thither: God the Father will rejoice, to behold the blessed

accomplishment and confirmation of those glorious designs of his

love. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, will rejoice to see the travail

of his soul, the blessed birth and issue of all his bitter pangs and

agonies, Isa. 53: 11. The Holy Spirit will rejoice to see the

completion and perfection of that sanctifying design which was

committed to his hand, 2 Cor. 5: 5. to see those souls whom he once

found as rough stones, now to shine as the bright, polished stones

of the spiritual temple. Angels will rejoice: great was the joy when

the foundation of this design was laid, in the incarnation of

Christ, Luke 2: 18. great therefore must their joy be, when the top-

stone is set up with shouting, crying, Grace, grace, The saints

themselves shall rejoice unspeakably, when they shall enter into the

King's palace, and be for ever with the Lord, 1 Thess. 4: 17. Indeed

there will be joy on all hands, except among the devils and damned,

who shall gnash their teeth with envy at the everlasting advancement

and glory of believers.

Thus Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of a

Bridegroom.

Thirdly, Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of an

Advocate. 1 John 2: 1. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the

Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the Propitiation;" it

is he that pleads the cause of believers in heaven; appears for them

in the presence of God, to prevent all new breaches, and continues

the state of friendship and peace betwixt God and us. In this

relation Christ is altogether lovely. For,

First, He makes our cause his own, and acts for us in heaven,

as for himself, Heb. 4: 15. He is touched with the tender sense of

our troubles and dangers, and is not only one with us, by way of

representation, but also one with us in respect of sympathy and

affection.

Secondly, Christ our Advocate, follows our suit and business in

heaven, as his great and main design and business) therefore, in

Heb. 7: 25. he is said to "live for ever to make intercession for

us;" as if our concernments were so minded by him there, as to give

up himself wholly to that work, as if all the glory and honour which

is paid him in heaven would not satisfy him, or divert him one

moment from our business.

Thirdly, He pleads the cause of believers by his blood; it

satisfies him not, as other advocates, to be at the expense of words

and oratory, which is a cheaper way of pleading; but he pleads for

us by the voice of his own blood, Heb. 12: 24. where we are said to

be come "to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things

than that of Abel:" Every wound he received for us on earth, is a

mouth opened to plead with God on our behalf in heaven; Quot

vulnera, tot ora. And hence it is, that in Rev. 5: 6. he is

represented standing before God, as a lamb that had been slain; as

it were, exhibiting and opening in heaven those deadly wounds

received on earth, from the justice of God, on our account. Other

advocates spend their breath, Christ his blood.

Fourthly, He pleads the cause of believers freely. Other

advocates plead for reward, and exhaust the purses, while they plead

the causes of their clients.

Fifthly, In a word, he obtaineth for us all the mercies for

which he pleads; no cause miscarries in his hand, which he

undertakes, Rom. 8: 33, 34. O what a lovely Advocate is Christ for

believers!

Fourthly, Christ is altogether lovely in the relation of a

friend, for in this relation he is pleased to own his people, Luke

12: 4, 5. There are certain things in which one friend manifests his

affection and friendship to another, but none like Christ. For,

First, No friend is so open hearted to his friend as Christ is

to his people: he reveals the very counsels and secrets of his heart

to them. John 15: 15. "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the

servant knoweth not what his Lord does; but I have called you

friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made

known unto you.

Secondly, No friend in the world is so generous and bountiful

to his friend, as Jesus Christ is to believers; John 15: 18. he

parts with his very blood for them; "Greater love (saith he) has no

man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He has

exhausted the precious treasures of his invaluable blood to pay our

debts. O what a lovely friend is Jesus Christ to believers!

Thirdly, No friend sympathises so tenderly with his friend in

affliction, as Jesus Christ does with his friends: "In all our

afflictions he is afflicted, Heb. 4: 15. He feels all our sorrows,

wants and burdens as his own. Whence it is that the sufferings of

believers are called the sufferings of Christ, Col. 1: 24.

Fourthly, No friend in the world takes that complacency in his

friend, as Jesus Christ does in believers. Cant. 4: 9. "Thou hast

ravished my heart, (saith he to the spouse) thou hast ravished my

heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. The

Hebrew, here rendered "ravished", signifies to puff up, or to make

one proud: how is the Lord Jesus pleased to glory in his people! how

is he taken and delighted with those gracious ornaments which

himself bestows upon them! No friend so lovely as Christ.

Fifthly, No friend in the world loves his friend with so

fervent and strong affection as Jesus Christ loves believers. Jacob

loved Rachel, and endured for her sake the parching heat of summer

and cold of winter; but Christ endured the storms of the wrath of

God, the heat of his indignation, for our sakes. David manifested

his love to Absalom, in wishing, "O that I had died for thee!"

Christ manifested his love to us, not in wishes that he had died,

but in death itself, in our stead, and for our sakes.

Sixthly, No friend in the world is so constant and unchangeable

in friendship as Christ is, John 13: 1. "Having loved his own which

were in the world, he loved them unto the end." He bears with

millions of provocations and injuries, and yet will not break

friendship with his people. Peter denied him, yet he will not disown

him; but after his resurrection he saith, "Go, tell the disciples,

and tell Peter," q. d. Let him not think he has forfeited, by that

sin of his, his interest in me; though he have denied me, I will not

disown him, Mark 16: 7. O how lovely is Christ in the relation of a

friend! I might farther shew you the loveliness of Christ in his

ordinances and in his providences, in his communion with us and

communications to us, but there is no end of the account of Christ's

loveliness: I will rather chuse to press believers to their duties

towards this altogether lovely Christ, which I shall briefly

dispatch in a few words.

Use. First, Is Jesus Christ altogether lovely, then I beseech

you set your souls upon this lovely Jesus. Methinks such an object

as has been here represented, should compel love from the coldest

breast and hardest heart. Away with those empty nothings, away with

this vain deceitful world, which deserves not the thousandth part of

the love you give it; let all stand aside and give way to Christ. O

did you but know his worth and excellency, what he is in himself,

what he has done for, and deserved from you, you would need no

arguments of mine to persuade you to love him.

Secondly, Esteem nothing lovely but as it is enjoyed in Christ,

or improved for Christ. Affect nothing for itself, love nothing

separate from Jesus Christ. In two things we all sin in love of

creatures, viz. in the excess of our affections, loving them above

the rate and value of creatures; and in the inordinacy of our

affections, i.e. in loving them out of their proper places.

Thirdly, Let us all be humbled for the baseness of our hearts,

that are so free of their affections to vanities and trifles, and so

hard to be persuaded to the love of Christ, who is altogether

lovely. O how many pour out streams of love and delight upon the

vain and empty creature; whilst no arguments can draw forth one drop

of love from their obdurate and unbelieving hearts to Jesus Christ!

I have read of one Joannes Mollius, who was observed to go often

alone, and weep bitterly; and being pressed by a friend to know the

cause of his troubles; O! said he, it grieves me that I cannot bring

this heart of mine to love Jesus Christ more fervently.

Fourthly, Represent Christ, as he is, to the world, by your

carriage towards him. Is he altogether lovely; let all the world see

and know that he is so, by your delights in him and communion with

him, zeal for him, and readiness to part with any other lovely thing

upon his account; proclaim his excellencies to the world, as the

spouse here did; convince them how much your beloved is better than

any other beloved; display his glorious excellencies in your

heavenly conversations; hold him forth to others, as he is in

himself, altogether lovely. See that you "walk worthy of him unto

all well pleasing," Col. 1: 10. "Shew forth the praises of Christ,"

1 Pet. 2: 19. Let not that "worthy name be blasphemed through you,"

James 2: 7. He is glorious in himself, and will put glory upon you;

take heed ye put not shame and dishonour upon him; he has committed

his honour to you, do not betray that trust.

First, Never be ashamed to own Christ: he is altogether lovely;

he can never be a shame to you; it will be your great sin to be

ashamed of him. Some men glory in their shame; be not you ashamed of

your glory: if you be ashamed of Christ now, he will be ashamed of

you when he shall appear in his own glory, and the glory of all his

holy angels. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; and among other sins, be

ashamed especially for this sin, that you have no more love for him

who is altogether lovely.

Sixthly, Be willing to leave every thing that is lovely upon

earth, that you may be with the altogether lovely Lord Jesus Christ

in heaven. Lift up your voices with the spouse, Rev. 20: 20. "Come

Lord Jesus, come quickly." It is true, you must pass through the

pangs of death into his bosom and enjoyment; but sure it is worth

suffering much more than that to be with this lovely Jesus. "The

Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient

waiting for Jesus Christ," 2 Thes. 3: 5.

Seventhly, Strive to be Christ-like, as ever you would be

lovely in the eyes of God and man. Certainly, my brethren, it is the

Spirit of Christ within you, and the beauty of Christ upon you,

which only can make you lovely persons; the more you resemble him in

holiness, the more will you discover of true excellency and

loveliness; and the more frequent and spiritual your converse and

communion with Christ is, the more of the beauty and loveliness of

Christ will be stamped upon your spirits, changing you into the same

image, from glory to glory.

Eighthly, Let the loveliness of Christ draw all men to him. Is

loveliness in the creature so attractive? And can the transcendent

loveliness of Christ draw none? O the blindness of man! If you see

no beauty in Christ why you should desire him, it is because the god

of this world has blinded your minds.

Sermon 13.

Alluring the Hearts of Men to come to Christ, by a fourth Motive

contained in another Title of Christ.

Haggai 2: 7.

-- And the desire of all nation shall come.

The former chapter is mainly spent, in reproving the negligence

of the Jews, who, being discouraged from time to time, had delayed

the rebuilding the temple: and, in the mean time, employed their

care and cost in building and adorning their own houses: but, at

last, beings persuaded to set about the work, they met with this

discouragement, that such was the poverty of the present time, that

the second structure would no way answer the magnificence and

splendour of the first. In Solomon's days the nation was wealthy,

now drained; so that there would be no proportion betwixt the second

and the first. To this grand discouragement the prophet applies this

relief; that whatsoever should be wanting in external pomp and

glory, should be more than recompensed by the presence of Jesus

Christ in this second temple. For Christ, "the desire of all

nations," saith he, shall come into it. Which, by the way, may give

us this useful note: That the presence of Jesus Christ gives a more

real and excellent glory to the places of his worship, than any

external beauty or outward ornaments whatsoever can bestow upon

them. Our eyes, like the disciples, are apt to be dazzled with the

goodly stones of the temple, and, in the mean time, to neglect and

overlook that which gives it the greatest honour and beauty.

But to return. In these words we have both the description of

Christ, and an index pointing at the time of his incarnation: he is

called "the desire of all nations;" and the time of his coming in

the flesh, is plainly intimated to be whilst the second temple

should be standing. Where, by the way, we find just cause to admire

at and bemoan the blindness that is happened to the Jews, who,

owning the truth of this prophecy, and not able to deny the

destruction of the second temple, many hundred years past, will not

yet be brought to acknowledge the incarnation of the true Messiah

notwithstanding.

But to the point. The character, or description of Christ,

stiled the desire of all nations, who was to come into the world in

the time of the second temple, Mal. 3: 12. and that, after grievous

concussions and shakings of the world, which were to make way for

his coming; for so our prophet here speaks, "I will shake all

nations, and the desire of all nations shall come," to which the

apostle alludes, in Heb. 12: 26. applying this prophecy to Jesus

Christ, here called the "desire of all nations:" putting the act for

the object, desire for the thing desired: as in Ezek. 24: 16. "The

desire of thine eyes," i.e. the desirable wife of thy bosom; so

here, the "desire of all nations," i.e. Christ, the object of the

desires of God's elect, in all nations of the world: a Saviour

infinitely desirable in himself, and actually desired by all the

people of God, dispersed among all kindreds, tongues, and nations of

the world. From whence this note is,

Doct. That the desires of God's elect in all kingdoms, and

among, all people of the earth, are, and shall be drawn out

after, and fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

The merciful God beholding the universal ruins of the world by

sin, has provided an universal remedy for his own elect, in every

part of the earth. Christ is not impropriated to any one kingdom or

nation in the world; but intended to be God's salvation to the ends

of the earth; and accordingly speaks the apostle, Col. 2: 11. "There

is neither Greek, nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but

Christ is all and in all." In the explication of this point two

things must be enquired into.

1. Why Christ is called the desire of all nations.

2. Upon what account the people of God, in all nations, desire

him.

First, Why he is called the desire of all nations, and what

that phrase may import; and there are divers things that are

supposed, or included in it.

First, That God the Father has appointed him as a common remedy

for the sins and miseries of his people, in all parts and quarters

of the world. So in the covenant of redemption, betwixt the Father

and the Son, the Lord expresseth himself, Isa. 49: 6. and he said,

"It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up

the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the presented of Israel: I will

also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my

salvation unto the end of the earth." Suitable thereunto is that

prophecy, Isa. 52: 15. "He shall sprinkle many nations." If God had

not appointed him for, he could not be desired by all nations.

And, indeed, herein the grace of God does admirably shine forth

in the freeness of it, that even the most barbarous nations are not

excluded from the benefits of redemption by Christ. This is what the

apostle admires, that Christ should be preached to the Gentiles, 1

Tim. 3: 16. a people that seemed to be lost in the darkness of

idolatry; yet even for them Christ was given by the Father, "Ask of

me (saith he) and I will give thee the Heathen for thine

inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy

possession.

Secondly, Christ, the desire of all nations, plainly notes the

sufficiency that is in him, to supply the wants of the whole world;

as the sun in the heavens suffices all nations for light and

influence, so does the Sun of righteousness suffice for the

redemption, justification, sanctification and salvation of the

people of God all over the world; Isa 14: 22. "Look unto me, and be

ye saved, all ye ends of the earth."

Thirdly, It implies the reality that is in godliness. It shews

you that religion is no fancy, as the atheistical world would

persuade us; and this evidently appears in the uniform effects of it

upon the hearts of all men, in all nations of the world, that are

truly religious: all their desires, like so many needles touched by

one and the same loadstone, move towards Jesus Christ, and all meet

together in one and the same blessed object, Christ. Were it

possible for the people of God to come out of all nations, kindreds

and languages in the world, into one place, and there confer and

compare the desires and workings of their hearts, though they never

saw each other's faces, nor heard of each other's names, yet, as

face answers to face in a glass, so would their desires after Christ

answer to each other. All hearts work after him in the same manner;

what one saith, all say: These are my troubles and burdens, these my

wants and miseries; the same things my desires and fears: one and

the same Spirit works in all believers throughout the world; which

could never be if religion were but a fancy, as some call it; or a

combination or confederacy, as others call it: fancies are as

various as faces; and confederacies presuppose mutual acquaintance

and conference.

Fourthly, Christ, the desire of all nations, implies the vast

extent his kingdom has, and shall have in the world; out of every

nation under heaven some shall be brought to Christ, and to heaven

by him; and though the number of God's elect, compared with the

multitudes of the ungodly in all nations, is but a remnant, a little

flock; and, in that comparative sense, there are few that shall be

saved; yet considered absolutely, and in themselves, they are a vast

number, which no man can number, Matth. 8: 11. "Many shall come from

the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and

Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven." In order whereunto, the

gospel, like the sun in the heavens, circuits the world. It arose in

the east, and takes its course towards the western world; rising, by

degrees, upon the remote, idolatrous nations of the earth: out of

all which a number is to be saved, even "Ethiopia shall stretch out

her hands to God," Psal. 68: 31. And this consideration should move

us to pray earnestly for the poor Heathens, who yet sit in darkness,

and the shadow of death; there is yet hope for them.

Fifthly, It holds forth this, that when God opens the eyes of

men to see their sin and danger by it, nothing but Christ can give

them satisfaction: it is not the amenity, fertility, riches and

pleasures, the inhabitants of any kingdom of the world do enjoy,

that can satisfy the desires of their souls: when once God touches

their hearts with the sense of sin and misery, then Christ, and none

but Christ is desirable and necessary, in the eyes of such persons.

Many kingdoms of the world abound with riches and pleasures; the

providence of God has carved liberal portions of the goody things of

this life to many of them, and scarce left any thing to their

desires that the world can afford. Yet all this can give no

satisfaction without Jesus Christ, the desire of all nations, the

one thing necessary, when once they come to see the necessity and

excellency of him: then take the world who will, so they may have

Christ, the desire of their souls. Thus we see upon what grounds and

reasons Christ is stiled the desire of all nations.

Object. But there lies one great objection against this truth,

which must be solved; viz. if Christ be the desire of all nations,

how comes it to pass, that Jesus Christ finds no entertainment in so

many nations of the world among whom Christianity is hissed at, and

Christians not tolerated to live among them? Who see no beauty in

him that they should desire him.

Sol. First, We must remember the nations of the world have

their times and seasons of conversion; those that once embraced

Christ, have now lost him, and idols are now set up in the places

where he once was sweetly worshipped. The sun of the gospel is gone

down upon them, and now shines in another Hemisphere; and so the

nations of the world are to have their distinct days and seasons of

illumination. The gospel, like the sea, gaineth in one place what it

loseth in another; and in the times and seasons appointed by the

Father, they come successively to be enlightened in the knowledge of

Christ; and then shall the promise be fulfilled, Isa. 49: 7. "Thus

saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his holy One, To him

whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant

of rulers; kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship,

because of the Lord that is faithful.

Secondly, Let it also be remembered, that although Christ be

rejected by the rulers and body of many nations; yet he is the

desire of all the elect of God dispersed and scattered among those

nations.

In the next place, Secondly, we are to enquire upon what

account Christ becomes the desire of all nations, i.e. of all those

in all the nations of the world, that belong to the election of

grace. And the true ground and reason thereof is, because Christ

only has that in himself which relieves their wants, and answers to

all their need. As.

First, They are all, by nature, under condemnation, Rom. 5: 16,

18. under the curse of the law; against which, nothing is found in

heaven or earth, able to relieve their consciences, but the blood of

sprinkling, the pure and perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus:

and hence it is, that Christ becomes so desirable in the eyes of

poor sinners, all the world over. If any thing in nature could be

found to pacify and purge the consciences of men from guilt and

fear, Christ would never be desirable in their eyes; but finding no

other remedy but the blood of Jesus, to him, therefore, shall all

the ends of the earth look for righteousness, and for peace.

Secondly, All nations of the world are polluted with the filth

of sin, both in nature and practice, which they shall see, and

bitterly bewail, when the light of the gospel shall shine amongst

them; and the same light, by which this shall be discovered, will

also discover the only remedy of this evil to lie in the spirit of

Christ, the only fountain opened to all nations for sanctification

and cleansing: and this will make the Lord Jesus incomparably

desirous in their eyes. O how welcome will he be that cometh unto

them, not by blood only, but by water also, John 1: 5, 6.

Thirdly, When the light of the gospel shall shine upon the

nations, they shall then see, that by reason of the guilt and filth

of sin, they are all barred out of heaven; those doors are chained

up against them, and that none but Christ can open an entrance for

them into that kingdom of God! that "no man cometh to the Father but

by him," John 14: 6. "Neither is there any name under heaven given

among men, whereby they must be saved, but the name of Christ," Acts

4: 12. Hence the hearts of sinners shall pant after him, as a hart

panteth for the water-brooks. And thus you see upon what grounds

Christ becomes the desire of all nations. The improvement of all

followeth, in five several uses of the point; viz.

1. For information.

2. For examination.

3. For consolation.

4. For exhortation.

5. For direction.

First use for information.

First, Is Christ the desire of all nations? how vile a sin is

it then in any nation, upon whom the light of the gospel has shined,

to reject Jesus Christ? And say, as those in Job 21: 14. "Depart

from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." To thrust away

his worship, government, and servants from amongst them; and in

effect to say, as it is Luke 19: 14. "We will not have this man to

reign over us." Thus did the Jews, Acts 13: 46. they put away Christ

from among them, and thereby judged themselves unworthy of eternal

life. This is at once a fearful sin, and a dreadful sign. How soon

did vengeance overtake them like the overthrow of Sodom? O. let it

be for a warning to all nations to the end of the world. He would

have gathered the children of Israel under his wings as a hen does

her brood, even when the Roman Eagle was hovering over them, but

they would not; therefore their houses were left unto them desolate,

their city and temple made an heap.

Secondly, If Jesus Christ be the desire of all nations, how

incomparably happy then must that nation be, that enjoys Christ in

the power and purity of his gospel-ordinances! If Christ, under a

vail made Canaan a glorious land, (as it is called) Dan. 11: 41.

what a glorious place must that nation be, that beholds him with

open face in the bright sun-shine of the gospel! O England, know thy

happiness and the day of thy visitation: what others desire, thou

enjoyest: provoke not the Lord Jesus to depart from thee, by

corrupting his worship, longing after idolatry, abusing his

messengers, and oppressing his people, lest his soul depart from

thee.

Second use for examination.

If Christ be the desire of all nations, examine whether he be

the desire of your souls in particular; else you shall have no

benefit by him. Are your desires after Christ true spiritual

desires? Reflect, I beseech you, upon the frames and tempers of your

heart. Can you say of your desires after Christ, as Peter did of his

love to Christ? Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I

desire thee. Try your desires as to their sincerity by the following

characters:

First, Are they vehement and ardent? Has Christ the supreme

place in your desires? Do you esteem all things to be but dross and

dung in comparison of the excellencies of Jesus Christ your Lord?

Phil. 3: 8. Is he to you as the refuge city to the man-slayer? Heb.

6: 18, 19. As a spring of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a

great rock in a weary land? Isa. 32: 2. Such vehement desires are

true desires.

Secondly, Are your desires after Christ universal; i.e. is

every thing in Christ desirable in your eyes? The hypocrite, like

the harlot, is for a divided Christ; they would be called by his

name, but live upon their own stock, Isa. 4: 1. If his holiness and

government, his cross and sufferings be desirable for his saints:

such universal desires are right desires.

Thirdly, Are your desires after Christ industrious desires,

using all the means of accomplishing what you desire! thou say you

desire Christ, but what will you do to obtain your desires? If you

seek him carefully and incessantly in all the ways of duty; if you

will strive in prayer, labour to believe, cut off right hands, and

pluck out right eyes, i.e. be content to part with the most

profitable and pleasant ways of sin that you may enjoy Christ, the

desire of your souls; then are your desires right desires.

Fourthly, Are your desires after Christ permanent desires, or

only a sudden motion or fit which goes off again without effect? If

your desires after Christ abide upon your hearts, if your longings

be after him at all times, though not in the same height and degree,

then are your desires right desires. Christ always dwells in the

desires of his people; they can feel him in their desires, when they

cannot discern him in their love or delight.

Fifthly, Will your desires after Christ admit no satisfaction,

nor find rest any where but in the enjoyment of Christ? then are

your desires right desires. The soul that desires Christ, can never

be at rest till it come home to Christ, 2 Cor. 5: 2, 6. Phil. 1: 23.

The devil can satisfy others with the riches and pleasure of this

world, as children are quieted with rattles; but if nothing but

Christ can rest and terminate your desires, surely such restless

desires are right desires.

Sixthly, Do your desires after Christ spring from a deep sense

of your need and want of Christ? Has conviction opened your eyes to

see your misery, to feel your burthens, and to make you sensible

that your remedy lies only in the Lord Jesus? then are your desires

right desires. Bread and water are made necessary and desirable by

hunger and thirst; by these things try the truth of your desires

after Christ.

Third use for consolation.

Do you indeed, upon serious trial, find such desires after

Christ as were described above? O, bless the Lord for that day

wherein Christ, the desire of all nations, became the desire of your

souls; and for your comfort, know that you are happy and blessed

souls at present.

First, Blessed in this, that your eyes have been opened to see

both the want and worth of Christ. Had not Christ applied his

precious eye-salve to the eyes of your mind, you could never have

desired him; you would have said with them in Isa. 53: 2, 3. "He has

no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no

beauty that we should desire him:" Or, as they to the spouse, Cant.

5: 9. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved." O, blessed

souls, enlightened of the Lord, to see those things that are hid

from them that perish!

Secondly, You are blessed in this, that your desires after

Christ are a sure evidence that the desire of Christ is towards you:

had he not first desired you, you could never have desired him. We

may say of desires, as it is said of love, we desire him because he

first desired us: our desires after Christ are inflamed from the

desires of Christ after you.

Thirdly, Blessed in this, that your desires shall surely be

satisfied, Matt. 5: 6. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst

after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Prov. 10: 24. "The

desires of the righteous shall be granted." God never raised such

desires as these in the souls of his people, to be a torment to them

for ever.

Fourthly, Blessed in this, that God has guided your desires to

make the best choice that ever was made in the world; whilst the

desires of others are hunting after riches, pleasure, and honour in

the world; toiling themselves like children in pursuit of a painted

butter fly, which when they have caught, does but daub their

fingers: God, meanwhile, has directed your desires to Christ, the

most excellent object in heaven or earth. Any good will satisfy some

men; O, happy soul, if none but Christ can satisfy thee! Psal. 4: 6.

Fifthly, Blessed in this, that there is a work of grace

certainly wrought upon thy soul; and these very desires after Christ

are a part thereof.

Sixthly, Blessed in this, that these desires after Christ keep

thy soul active and working after him continually in the ways of

duty, Psal. 27: 4. "One thing have I desired, that will I seek

after." Desire will be a continual spring to diligence and industry

in the ways of duty; the desire of the end quickeneth to the use of

means, Prov. 18: 1. Others may fall asleep and cast off duty, but it

will be hard for you to do so, whose souls burn with desire after

Christ.

Seventhly, Blessed in this, that your desires after Christ will

make death much the sweeter and easier to you, Phil. 1: 23. "I

desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better."

When a Christian was once asked, Whether he was willing to die? He

returned this answer, "Let him be unwilling to die, who is unwilling

to go to Christ." And much like it, was that of another, Vivere

renuo, ut Christo vivam: I refuse this life, to live with Christ.

Fourth use for exhortation.

In the fourth place, let me exhort and persuade all to make

Jesus Christ the desire and choice of their souls. And here I fall

in with the main scope and design of the gospel. And O that I could

effectually press home this exhortation upon your hearts; let me

offer some moving considerations to you, and may the lard accompany

them to your hearts.

First, Every creature naturally desires its own preservation;

do not you desire the preservation of your precious and immortal

soul! If you do, then make Christ your desire and choice, without

whom they can never be preserved, Jude, ver. 1.

Secondly, Do not your souls earnestly desire the bodies they

live in? How tender are they over them, how careful to provide for

them? though they pay a dear rent for those tenements they live in.

And is not union with Christ infinitely more desirable than the

union of soul and body? O covet union with him! then shall your

souls be happy, when your bodies drop off from them at death, 2 Cor.

5: 1, 2. yea, soul and body shall be happy in him, and with him for

evermore.

Thirdly, How do the men of this world desire the enjoyments of

it? They pant after the dust of the earth; they rise early, sit up

late, eat the bread of carefulness; and all this for very vanity:

Shall a worldling do more for earth, than you for heaven? Shall the

creature be so earnestly desired, and Christ neglected?

Fourthly, What do all your desires in this world benefit you,

if you go christless? Suppose you had the desire of your hearts in

these things, how long should you have comfort in them, if you miss

Christ?

Fifthly, Does Christ desire you, who have nothing lovely or

desirable in you? And have you no desires after Christ, the most

lovely and desirable one in both worlds? "His desires are towards

you," Prov. 8: 31. O make him the desire and choice of your souls.

Sixthly, How absolutely necessary is Jesus Christ to your

souls? Bread and water, breath and life, are not so necessary as

Christ is; "One thing is necessary," Luke 10: 42. and that one thing

is Christ. If you miss your desires in other things, you may yet be

happy; but if you miss Christ you are undone for ever.

Seventhly, How suitable a good is Christ to your souls!

comprising whatsoever they want, 1 Cor. 1: 30. Set your hearts where

you will, none will be found to match and suit them, as Christ does.

Eighthly, How great are the benefits that will redound to you

by Jesus Christ! In him you shall have a rich inheritance settled

upon you: all things shall be yours, when you are Christ's, 1 Cor.

3: 22. And is not such a Christ worth desiring?

Ninthly, All your well-grounded hopes of glory are built upon

your union with Christ, 1 Cor. 1: 21. If you miss Christ, you must

die without hope. Will not this draw your desires to him;

Tenthly, Suppose you were at the judgement seat of God, where

you must shortly stand, and saw the terrors of the Lord in that day;

the sheep divided from the goats; the sentences of absolution and

condemnation passed, by the great and awful Judge, upon the

righteous and wicked: would not Christ be then desirable in your

eyes? As ever you expect to stand with comfort at that bar, let

Christ be the desire and choice of your souls now.

Fifth use for direction.

Do these, or any other considerations, put thee upon this

enquiry; how shall I get my desires kindled and inflamed towards

Christ? Alas! my heart is cold and dead, not a serious desire

stirring in it after Christ. To such I shall offer the following

directions.

Direct. 1. Redeem some time every day for meditation; get out

of the noise and clamour of the world, Psal. 4: 4. and seriously

bethink yourselves how the present state of your soul stands, and

how it is like to go with you for ever: here all sound conversion

begins, Psal. 69: 59.

Direct. 2. Consider seriously of that lamentable state, in

which you came into the world; children of wrath by nature, under

the curse and condemnation of the law: so that either Your state

must be changed, or you inevitably damned, John 3: 3.

Direct. 3. Consider the way and course you have taken since you

came into the world, proceeding from iniquity to iniquity. What

command of God have you not violated a thousand times over? What sin

is committed in the world, that you are not one way or other guilty

of before God? How many secret sins upon your score, unknown to the

most intimate friend you have in the world? Either this guilt must

be separated from your souls, or your souls from God to all

eternity.

Direct. 4. Think upon the severe wrath of God due to every sin;

"The wages of sin is death," Rom. 6: 23. And how intolerable the

fulness of that wrath must be when a few drops sprinkled upon the

conscience in this world, are so insupportable, that has made some

to chase strangling rather than life, and yet this wrath must abide

for ever upon you, if you get not interest in Jesus Christ, John 3:

36.

Direct. 5. Ponder well the happy state and condition they are

in who have obtained pardon and peace by Jesus Christ, Psal. 32: 12.

And seeing the grace of God is free, and you are set under the means

thereof; why may not you be as capable thereof as others?

Direct. 6. Seriously consider the great uncertainty of your

time, and preciousness of the opportunities of salvation, never to

be recovered, when they are once past, John 9: 4. let this provoke

you to lay hold upon those golden seasons whilst they are yet with

you; that you may not bewail your folly and madness, when they are

out of your reach.

Direct. 7. Associate yourselves with serious Christians; get

into their acquaintance, and beg their assistance; beseech them to

pray for you; and see that you rest not here, but be frequently upon

your knees, begging of the Lord a new heart, and a new state.

In conclusion of the whole, let me beseech and bear all the

people of God, as upon my knees, to take heed, and beware, lest by

the carelessness and scandal of their lives they quench the weak

desires beginning to kindle in the hearts of others. You know what

the law of God awards for striking a woman with child, so that her

fruit go from her, Exod. 21: 22, 23. O shed not soul-blood, by

stifling the hopeful desires of any after Christ.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ. the desire of all nations.

Section 14.

Containing the fifth Motive to apply Christ, drawn from another

excellent Title of Christ.

1 Cor. 2: 8.

Which, none of the princes of this world have known, for had they

known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

In this chapter the apostle discourses to the Corinthians, of

the excellency of his ministry, both to obviate the contempt which

some cast upon it for want of human ornaments, and to give the

greater authority unto it among all: and whereas the spiritual

simplicity of his ministry laid it under the contempt of some, he

removes that several ways, by showing them,

First, That it was not suitable to the design and end of his

ministry, his aim being "to know nothing among them, save Jesus

Christ, and him crucified," ver. 1, 2.

Secondly, Neither was it for the advantage of their souls; it

might indeed tickle their fancies, but could be no solid foundation

to their faith and comfort, ver. 4, 5.

Thirdly, Though his discourses seemed jejune and dry to carnal

hearers, yet they had a depth and excellency in them, which

spiritual and judicious Christians saw and acknowledged, ver. 6, 7.

Fourthly, Therefore this excellent wisdom which he preached far

transcended all the natural wisdom of this world; yea, the most

raised and improved understandings of those that were most renowned

and admired in that age for wisdom, ver. 8. "which none of the

princes of this world knew."

In which words we have,

1. A negative proposition.

2. The proof of the proposition.

First, A negative proposition: None of the princes of this

world knew that spiritual wisdom which he taught. By princes of this

world, or rather, principes seculi, the princes of that age, he

means, as Cameron well notes, the learned Rabbies, Scribes, and

Pharisees, renowned for wisdom and learning among them; and honoured

upon that account as so many princes: but he adds a diminutive term,

which darkens all their glory: They are but the princes of this

world, utterly unacquainted with the wisdom of the other world. To

which he adds,

Secondly, A clear and full proof; "For had they known it, they

would not have crucified the Lord of glory." In which words we find

one of Christ's glorious and royal titles, The Lord of glory: upon

which title will be my present discourse. The words being fitly

rendered, and nothing of ambiguity in them, they give us this

observation,

Doct. That' Christ crucified is the Lord of glory.

Great and excellent is the glory of Jesus Christ, the

scriptures every where proclaim his glory: yea, we may observe a

notable climax, or gradation, in those scriptures that speak of his

glory. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of him, calls him glorious; Isa.

4: 2. "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and

glorious." John, speaking of his glory, rises a step higher, and

ascribeth to him a "glory as of the only begotten Son of the

Father," John 1: 14. i.e. a glory meet for, and becoming the Son of

God: proper to him, and incommunicable to any other. The apostle

James rises yet higher, and does not only call him glorious, or

glorious as the only begotten of the Father, but the glory, James 2:

1. glory in the abstract; "My brethren, (saith he) have not the

faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glory, with respect of persons;"

For the word "Lord", which is in our translation, is a supplement;

Christ is glory itself, yea, the glory emphatically so stiled; the

glory of heaven; the glory of Sion; the glory of our souls for ever.

The author to the Hebrews goes yet higher, and calls him not simply

the glory, but "the brightness of the Father's glory," Heb. 1: 3. as

though he should say, the radiancy, sparkling, or beaming forth of

his Father's glory; the very splendour or refulgency of divine

glory. O what a glorious Lord is our Lord Jesus Christ! the bright,

sparkling diamond of heaven; who shines in glory there, above the

glory of angels and saints, as the glory of the sun excels the

lesser, twinkling stars. When he appeared to Paul, Acts 26: 13. "I

saw (saith he) a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun,

shining round about me:" Needs must the glory of Christ be

unspeakable, who reflects glory upon all that are with him, John 17:

24. and stamps glory upon all that belong to him. His works on earth

were glorious works, Luke 13: 17. the purchased liberty of his

people, a glorious liberty, Rom. 8: 21. the church his mystical

body, a glorious church, Eph. 5: 27. the gospel which reveals him is

a glorious gospel, 1 Tim. 1: 11.

But more particularly let us consider the glory of Christ, as

it is distinguished into his either,

1. Essential, or,

2. Mediatorial glory.

First, The essential glory of Christ, which he has as God from

everlasting; which is unspeakable and inconceivable glory: For

(saith the apostle, Phil. 2: 6.) "He being in the form of God,

thought it no robbery to be equal with God," i.e. he has a peerage

or equality with his Father in glory; John 10: 80. "I and my Father

are one." And again, John 16: 15. "All things that the Father has

are mine:" the same name, the same nature, the same essential

properties, the same will, and the same glory.

Secondly, The mediatorial glory of Christ is exceeding great.

This is proper to him, as the head of the church, which he has

purchased with his own blood. Of this glory the apostle speaks,

Phil. 2: 9, 10. "Wherefore God also has exalted him, and given him a

name, which is above every name, &c. "huperupsose", exalted above

all exaltation. Now the mediatorial glory of our Lord Jesus Christ

consisteth either,

1. In the fulness of grace inherent in him; or,

2. In the dignity and authority put upon him.

First, In the tallness of grace inherent in him: The humanity

of Christ is filled with grace, as the sun with light: John 1: 14.

"Full of grace and truth." Never any creature was filled by the

Spirit of grace, as the man Christ Jesus is filled; for "God gives

not the Spirit to him by measure," John 3:34. By reason of this

fulness of grace inherent in him, he is "fairer than the children of

men," Psal. 14: 2. excelling all the saints in spiritual lustre and

gracious excellencies.

Secondly, In the dignity and authority put upon him. He is

crowned King in Sion; all power in heaven and earth is given unto

him, Matth. 28: 18. he is a law-giver to the church, James 4: 12.

all acts of worship are to be performed in his name; prayer,

preaching, censures, sacraments, all to be administered in his name.

Church officers are commissioned by him, Eph. 4: 11. The judgement

of the world in the great day will be administered by him; Matth.

25: 81. "Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."

To conclude, Jesus Christ shall have glory and honour ascribed

to him for evermore, by angels and saints, upon the account of his

mediatorial work; this some divines call his passive glory, the

glory which he is said to receive from his redeemed ones. Rev. 5: 8,

9, 10. "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and the

four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one

of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the

prayers of the saints; and they sung a new song, saying, Thou art

worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou

west slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every

kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," &c. And thus you see

that our Lord Jesus Christ is upon all accounts the Lord of glory.

The uses follow.

Inference 1. How wonderful was the love of Christ, the Lord of

Priory, to be so abased and bumbled, as he was for us, vile and

sinful dust? It is astonishing to conceive that ever Jesus Christ

should strip himself of his robes of glory, to clothe himself with

the mean garment of our flesh: O what a stoop did he make in his

incarnation for us! If the most magnificent monarch upon earth had

been degraded into a toad; if the sun in the heavens had been turned

into a wandering atom; if the most glorious angel in heaven had been

transformed even into a fly; it had been nothing to the abasement of

the Lord of glory. This act is everywhere celebrated in scripture as

the great mystery, the astonishing wonder of the whole world, 2 Tim.

3: 16. Phil 2: 8. Rom. 8: 3. The Lord of glory looked not like

himself, when he came in the habit of a man; Isa. 53: 3. "We hid, as

it were our faces from him:" Nay, rather like a worm than a man,

Psal. 22: 6. "A reproach of men, and despised of the people." The

birds of the air and beasts of the earth were here provided of

better accommodations than the Lord of glory, Matth. 8: 20. O

stupendous abasement! O love unspeakable! "Though he was rich, yet

for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be

rich," 2 Cor. 8: 9. He put off the crown of glory to put on the

crown of thorns; Quanto pro me vilior, tanto mihi charior, said

Bernard; The lower he humbled himself for me, the dearer he shall be

to me.

Inf. 2. How transcendently glorious is the advancement of be

believers, by their union with the Lord of glory? This also is an

admirable and astonishing mystery; it is the highest dignity of

which our nature is capable, to be hypostatically united; and the

greatest glory of which our persons are capable is to be mystically

united to this Lord of glory, to be bone of his bone, and flesh of

his flesh. O what is this! Christian, dost thou know and believe all

this, and thy heart not burn within thee in love to Christ? O! then,

what a heart hast thou? What art thou, by nature, but sinful dust, a

loathsome sinner, viler than the vilest creature, cast out to the

loathing of thy person in the day of thy nativity! O that ever the

Lord of glory should unite himself to such a lump of vileness! take

such a wretch into his very bosom! Be astonished, O heavens and

earth, at this! this is the great mystery which the angels stooped

down to look into: Such an honour as this could never have catered

into the heart of man. It would have seemed a rude blasphemy in us,

once to have thought or spoken of such a things, had not Christ made

first the motion thereof; yet how long didst thou make this Lord of

glory wait upon thy undetermined will, before he gained thy consent?

Might he not justly have spurned thee into hell, upon thy first

refusal, and never have made thee such another offer? Wilt thou not

say, Lord, what am I, and what is my father's house, that so great a

King, should stoop so far beneath himself, to such a worm as I am!

That strength should unite itself to weakness, infinite glory to

such baseness! O grace, grace, for ever to be admired!

Inf. 3. Is Jesus Christ the Lord of glory? Then let no man

count himself dishonoured by suffering the vilest indignities for

his sake: The Lord of glory puts glory upon the very suffering you

undergo in this world for him. "Moses esteemed the reproaches of

Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," Heb. 11: 26. he

cast a kingdom at his heels, to be crowned with reproaches, for the

name of Christ. The diadem of Egypt was not half so glorious as self-

denial for Christ. This Lord of' glory freely degraded himself' for

thee; wilt thou stand hesitating with him upon terms? It is

certainly your honour to be dishonoured for Christ, Acts 5: 41. to

you it is given, in behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also

to suffer for his sake, Phil. 1: 29. The gift of suffering is there

matched with the gift of faith; it is given as an honorarium, a

badge of honour to suffer for the Lord of glory. As all have not the

honour to wear the crown of glory in heaven, so few have the honour

to wear the chain of Christ upon earth. Thanus reports of Ludovicus

Marsacus, a knight of France, that being led to suffer with other

martyrs, who were bound, and he unbound, because a person of honour;

he cried out, "Why don't you honour me with a chain too, and create

me a knight of that noble order?" My brethren, count it all joy when

ye fall into divers temptations, James 1: 2. i.e. trials by

sufferings. David thought it an honour to be vile for God, and that

is a true observation that disgrace itself is glorious when endured

for the Lord of glory.

Inf. 4. Is Christ the Lord of glory? How glorious then shall

the saints one day be, when they shall be made like this glorious

Lord, and partake of his glory in heaven?, John 17: 22. "The glory

which thou gavest me, I have given them:" Yea, the vile bodies of

believers shall be made like to the glorious body of Christ, Phil.

3: 21. What glory then will be communicated to their souls? True,

his essential glory is incommunicable; but there is a glory which

Christ will communicate to his people. "When he comes to judge the

world, he will come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired

in all them that believe," 2 Thes. 1: 10. Thus he seemeth to account

his social glory, which shall result from his saints, a great part

of his own glory: As we have now fellowship with him in his

sufferings, so we shall have a fellowship or communion with him in

his glory: When he shall appear, then shall we also appear with him

in glory; then the poorest believer shall be more glorious than

Solomon in all his royalty. It was a pious saying of Luther, that he

had rather be Christianus rusticus, quam Ethnicus Alexander; a

Christian clown, then a Pagan emperor. The righteous is more

excellent than his neighbour, though he live next door to a

graceless nobleman: But it does not yet appear what they shall be.

The day will come, it certainly will come, for the Lord has spoken

it, when they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their

Father.

Inf. 5. How has the devil blindfolded, and deluded them that

are frighted off from Christ, by the fears of being dishonoured by

him? Many persons have half a mind to religion, but when they

consider the generality of its processors to be persons of the

lowest and meanest rank in the world, and that reproaches and

sufferings attend that way; they shrink back as men ashamed, and as

Salvian saith, Mali esse coguntur, ne viles habeantur; they chuse

rather to remain wicked, than to be esteemed vile: But to them that

believe, Christ is an honour; as the word which we translate

"precious" might be rendered, 1 Pet. 2: 7. Till God open men's eyes

thus, they will put evil for good, and good for evil. But O dear

bought honours, for which men stake their souls and everlasting

happiness! Paul was not of your mind: for birth he was an Hebrew of

the Hebrews; for dignity and esteem, a Pharisee; for moral

accomplishments, touching the law, blameless: Yet all this he

trampled under his feet, counting it all but dross and dung in

comparison of Jesus Christ. Moses had more honour to lay down for

Christ than you; yet it was no temptation to him to conceal or deny

the faith of Christ. Noble Galeacius would not be withheld from

Christ by the splendour and glory of Italy; but O, how does the

glory of this world dazzle and blind the eyes of many: "How can ye

believe (saith Christ) who receive honour one of another?" John 5:

44. Saints and sinners, upon this account, are wonders one to the

other. It is the wonder of the world to see Christians glory in

reproaches; they wonder that the saints run not with them into the

same excess of riot; and it is a wonder to believers, how such poor

toys and empty titles (rather than titles of honour) should keep the

world as it does from Jesus Christ, and their everlasting happiness

in him.

Inf. 6. If Christ be the Lord of glory, how careful should all

be who profess him, that they do not dishonour Jesus Christ, whose

name is called upon by them? Christ is a glory to you, be not you a

shame and dishonour to him. How careful had Christians need to be,

to draw every line and action of their lives exactly: The more

glorious Christ is, the more circumspect and watchful ye had need to

be. How lovely would Jesus Christ appear to the world, if the lives

of Christians did adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, in all

things! Remember, you represent the Lord of glory to the world; it

is not your honour only, but the honour of Christ which is engaged

and concerned in your actions. O let not the carelessness or scandal

of your life, make Jesus Christ ashamed to be called your Lord. When

Israel had grievously revolted from God, he bids Moses rise and get

down from thence; for (saith he) thy people, which thou hast brought

forth out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves, Deut. 9: 12. as if

the Lord were ashamed to own them for his people any longer. It was

a cutting question, James 2: 7. apt to startle the consciences of

these loose professors; "Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by

which ye are called? Your duty is to adorn the gospel by your

conversations, Titus 2: 10. The words signify to deck, trim, or

adorn the gospel, to make it trim, neat, and lovely, to the eyes of

beholders. When there is such a beautiful harmony, and lovely

proportion betwixt Christ's doctrine and your practices, as there is

in the works of creation, wherein the comeliness and elegancy of the

world much consists, (for to this the apostle's word here alludes)

then do we walk suitably to the Lord of glory.

Inf. 7. What delight should Christians take in their daily

converse with Jesus Christ in the way of duty? Your converses in

prayer, hearing, and meditation, are with the Lord of glory: The

greatest peers in the kingdom count it more honour to be in the

presence of a king, bare-headed, or upon the knee at court, than to

have thousands standing bare to them in the country. When you are

called to the duties of communion with Christ, you are called to the

greatest honour, dignified with the noblest privilege creatures are

capable of in this world: Had you but a sense of that honour God

puts upon you by this means, you would not need so much pressing and

striving, to bring a dead and backward heart into the special

presence of Jesus Christ. When he saith, Seek ye my face, your

hearts would echo to his calls; Thy face, Lord, will we seek. But

alas! the glory of Christ is much hid and veiled by ignorance and

unbelief, from the eyes of his own people; it is but seldom the best

of saints, by the eye of faith, do see the King in his glory.

Inf. 8. If Christ be so glorious, how should believers long to

be with him, and behold him in his glory above? Most men need

patience to die, a believer should need patience to live. Paul

thought it well worth enduring the pangs of death, to get a sight of

Jesus Christ in his glory, Phil. 1: 23. "The Lord direct your hearts

into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ,"

(saith the apostle) 2 Thess. 3: 5. intimating that the saints have

great need of patience, to enable them to endure the state of

distance and separation from Christ, so long as they must endure it

in this world. The spirit and the bride say, come, and let him that

heareth say, come, and let him that is a-thirst come: even so, come

Lord Jesus, and be thou as a swift roe upon the mountains of

separation.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

Sermon 15.

Opening the sixth Motive to come to Christ, contained in the

sixth and last Title of Christ.

Luke 2: 25.

-- Waiting for the [Consolation} of Israel.

Several glorious titles of Christ have been already spoken to,

out of each of which much comfort flows to believers: It is

comfortable to a wounded soul to eye him as a Physician; comfortable

to a condemned and unworthy soul to look upon him under the notion

of mercy: The loveliness, the desirableness, and the glory of

Christ, are all so many springs of consolation. But now I am to show

you, from this scripture, that the saints have not only much

consolation from Christ, but that Christ himself is the very

consolation of believers: He is pure comfort wrapped up in flesh and

blood.

In this context, you have an account of Simeon's prophecy

concerning Christ; and in this text, a description of the person and

quality of Simeon himself, who is described two ways.

1. By his practice.

2. By his principle.

His practice was heavenly and holy; he was a just and devout

man: The principle from which his righteousness and holiness did

flow, was his faith in Christ; "he waited for the consolation of

Israel." In which words, by way of periphrasis, we have,

1. A description of Christ, the consolation of Israel.

2. The description of a believer, one that waited for Christ.

First, That the consolation of Israel it a phrase descriptive

of Jesus Christ, is beyond all doubt, if you consult ver. 26. where

he, i.e. Simeon is satisfied by receiving Christ into his arms, the

consolation for which he had so long waited.

Secondly, And that waiting for Christ is a phrase describing

the believers of those times that preceded the incarnation of Christ

is past doubt; they all waited for that blessed day: But it was

Simeon's lot to fall just upon that happy point of time, wherein.

the prophecies and promises of his incarnation were fulfilled.

Simeon and others that waited with him, were sensible that the time

of the promise was come, which could not but raise (as indeed it

did) a general expectation of him, John 9: 19. But Simeon's faith

was confirmed by a particular revelation, ver. 26. That he should

see Christ before he saw death, which could not but greatly

encourage and raise his expectation to look out for him, whose

coming would be the greatest consolation to the whole Israel of God.

The consolation, "paraklesis", The Spirit is frequently called in

scripture, "parakletes", the Comforter: But Christ in this place is

called "paraklesis", comfort, or consolation itself: The reason of

both is given in John 16: 14. "He shall take of mine and shew it

unto you:" Where Christ is said to be the matter, and the Spirit,

the applier of true comfort to the people of God. Now this

consolation is here expressed both with a singular emphasis [the

consolation] intimating that there is nothing of consolation in any

thing besides him; all other comforts compared with this, are not

worth naming. And as it is emphatically expressed, so it is also

limited and bounded within the compass of God's Israel, i.e. true

believers, stiled the Israel of Cod, whether Jews or Gentiles, Gal.

6: 16. From whence the point of doctrine is,

Doct. That Jesus Christ is the only consolation of believers,

and of none besides them.

So speaks the apostle, Phil. 3: 3. "For we are the

circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ

Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Those that worship God.

in the Spirit are sincere believers; to such sincere believers,

Christ is consolation, our rejoicing is in Christ Jesus: And they

have no consolation in any thing beside him; nothing in the world

can give them comfort without Christ, We have no confidence in the

flesh. The gospel is glad tidings of great joy; but that which makes

it to be so is Jesus Christ, whom it imparts and reveals to us, Luke

2: 10, 1l. In the opening of this comfortable point, four things

must be spoken to, for the right stating the method of our

discourse. viz.

1. What is meant by consolation.

2. That Christ, and he only, is consolation to believers.

S. That believers only have consolation in Christ.

4. How it comes to pass that any believer should be dejected,

since Christ is consolation to all believers.

The first thing to be opened, is the nature of consolation,

which is nothing else but the cheerfulness of a man's spirit,

whereby he is upheld, and fortified against all evils felt, or

feared. Consolation is to the soul what health is to the body after

wasting sickness; or the reviving spring to the earth after a long

and hard winter. And there are three sorts of consolation, or

comfort, suitable to the disposition and temper of the mind, viz.

Natural,

Sinful, and

Spiritual.

Natural comfort is the refreshment of our natural spirits by

the good creatures of God, Acts 14: 17. "Filling their hearts with

food and gladness." Sinful comfort is the satisfaction and pleasure

men take in the fulfilling of their lusts, by the abuse of the

creatures of God, James 5: 5. "Ye have lived in pleasure upon

earth," i.e. your life has been a life of sensuality and sin.

Spiritual comfort is the refreshment, peace, and joy, gracious

souls have in Christ, by the exercise of faith, hope, and other

graces, Rom. 5: 2. And this only deserves the name of true solid

consolation: To which four things are required.

First, That the matter thereof be some spiritual, eminent, and

durable good; else our consolation in it will be but as the

crackling of thorns under a pot, a sudden blaze, quickly extinct

with the failing matter of it. Christ only gives the matter of

solid, durable consolation; the righteousness of Christ, the pardon

of sin, the favour of God, the hopes of glory, are the substantial

materials of a believer's consolation, Rom. 5: 2. Mat. 9: 2. Psal.

4: 6, 7. 2 Pet. 1: 8. Things are as their foundations be.

Secondly, Interest and propriety in these comfortable things,

are requisite to our consolation by them, Luke 1: 47. "My spirit

rejoiceth in God my Saviour." It is no consolation to him that is

hungry to see a feast; to him that is poor to see a treasure; if the

one may not taste, or the other partake thereof.

Thirdly, Knowledge, and evidence of interest, in some degree is

requisite to actual consolation, though without it a man may be in

the state of consolation; for that which appears not, is (in point

of actual comfort) as if it were not.

Fourthly, In order hereunto, the work of the Spirit upon our

hearts is requisite, both to give, and clear our interest in Christ

and the promises: And both these ways he is the Comforter, "The

fruit of the Spirit is joy," Gal. 5: 22. And thus briefly of the

nature of consolation.

Secondly, Next I will shew you that Christ, and he only, is

matter of consolation to believers: which will demonstratively

appear by this argument.

First, He that brings to their souls all that is comfortable,

and removes from their souls all that is uncomfortable, must needs

be the only consolation of believers.

But Jesus Christ brings to their souls all that is comfortable,

and removes from their souls all that is uncomfortable.

Therefore Christ only is the consolation of believers.

First, Jesus Christ brings whatsoever is comfortable to the

souls of believers. Is pardon comfortable to a person condemned? No

thing can be matter of greater comfort in this world. Why, this

Christ brings to all believers, Jer. 23: 6. "And this is the name

whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." This cannot

but give strong consolation; righteousness is the foundation of

peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. 14: 17. "The work of

righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness,

quietness and assurance for ever," Isa. 32: 17. Come to a dejected

soul, labouring under the burden of guilt, and say, cheer up, I

bring you good tidings, there is such an estate befallen you, or

such a troublesome business comfortably ended for you; alas! this

will not reach the heart: If you can bring me (saith he) good news

from heaven, that my sins are forgiven, and God reconciled, how soon

should I be comforted! And therefore (as one well observes) this was

the usual receipt with which Christ cured the souls of men and

women, when he was here on earth; Son or daughter, "be of good

cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." And, indeed, it is as easy to

separate light and warmth from the beams of the sun, as cheerfulness

and comfort from the voice of pardon.

Are the hopes and expectations of heaven and glory comfortable!

Yes sure, nothing is comfortable if this be not, Rom. 5: 2. "We

rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Now, Christ brings to the

souls of men all the solid grounds and foundations upon which they

build their expectations of glory, Col. 1: 27. "Which is Christ, in

you, the hope of glory." Name any thing else that is solid matter of

comfort to the souls of men, and the grounds thereof will be found

in Christ, and in none but Christ; as might easily be demonstrated

by the exoneration of multitudes of particular instances, which I

cannot now insist upon.

Secondly, Jesus Christ removes from believers whatever is

uncomfortable; therein relieving them against all the matters of

their affliction and sorrow. As namely,

First, Is sin a burden and matter of trouble to believers?

Christ, and none but Christ, removes that burden, Rom. 7: 24, 25. "O

wretched man that I am! (saith sin-burdened Paul) who will deliver

me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our

Lord." The satisfaction of his blood, Eph. 5: 2. The sanctification

of his Spirit, John 1: 5, 6. His perfect deliverance of his people

from the very being of sin at last, Eph. 5: 26, 27. This relieves at

present, and removes at last the matter and ground of all their

troubles and sorrows for sin.

Secondly, Do the temptations of Satan burden believers? O yes,

by reason of temptations, they go in trouble and heaviness of

spirit. Temptation is an enemy under the walls; temptation greatly

endangers, and therefore cannot but greatly afflict the souls of

believers; but Christ brings the only matter of relief against

temptations. The intercession of Christ is a singular relief at

present, Luke 22:32. "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail

not." And the promises of Christ are a full relief for the future;

"The God of peace shall shortly tread Satan under your feet," Rom.

16: 20.

Thirdly, Is spiritual desertion, and the hiding of God's face,

matter of affliction and casting down to believers? Yes, yes, it

distresses their hearts, nothing can comfort them; "Thou hidest thy

face, and I was troubled," Psal. 30: 7. Outward afflictions do but

break the skin, this touches the quick; they like rain fall only

upon the tiles, this soaks into the house; but Christ brings to

believers substantial matter of consolation against the troubles of

desertion: He himself was deserted of God for a time, that they

might not be deserted for ever. In him also the relieving promises

are made to believers, that notwithstanding God may desert them for

a time, yet the union betwixt him and them shall never be dissolved,

Heb. 13: 4. Jer. 32: 40. Though he forsake them for a moment, in

respect of evidenced favour, yet he will return again and comfort

them, Isa 54: 7. Though Satan pull hard, yet he will never "be able

to pluck them out of his Fathers hand," John 10: 20. O, what relief

is this! What consolation is Christ to a deserted believer.

Fourthly, Are outward afflictions matter of dejection and

trouble? Alas, who finds them not to be so? How do our hearts fail

and our spirits sink under the many smarting rods of God upon us?

But our relief and consolation under them all is in Christ Jesus;

for the rod that afflicts us is in the hand of Christ that loveth

us, Rev. 3: 29. "Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten." His design in

affliction is our profit, Heb. 12: 10. That design of his for our

good shall certainly be accomplished, Rom. 8: 28. And after that no

more afflictions for ever. Rev. 21: 3, 4. "God shall wipe away all

tears from their eyes". So that upon the whole, two things are most

evident.

First, Nothing can comfort the soul without Christ! he is the

soul that animates all comforts; they would be dead things without

him. Temporal enjoyments, riches, honours, health, relations yield

not a drop of true comfort without Christ. Spiritual enjoyments,

ministers, ordinances, promises, are fountains sealed and springs

shut up; till Christ open them, a man may go comfortless in the

midst of them all.

Secondly, No troubles, sorrows, or deletions can deject or sink

the soul that Christ comforteth, 2 Cor. 6: 20. "As sorrowful, yet

always rejoining." A believer may walk with a heart full of comfort

amidst all the troubles of this world: Christ makes the darkness and

troubles to be light round about his people. So that the conclusion

stands firm, and never to be shaken, that Christ, and Christ only,

is the consolation of believers; which was the thing to be proved.

In the third place, I am to shew you that believers, and none

but believers, can have consolation in Christ; which will

convincingly appear from the consideration of those things which we

laid down before as the requisites to all true spiritual

consolation. For,

First, No unbeliever has the materials, out of which spiritual

comfort is made, which (as I there told you) must be some solid,

spiritual, and eternal good, as Christ and the covenant are: what do

unregenerate men rejoice in but trifles and mere vanities, in a

thing of nought? Amos 6: 13. See how their mirth is described in Job

21: 12. "They take their timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound

of the organ." He does not say, they take the Bible, turn to the

promises, and rejoice in Christ and the covenant; it is not the

melody of a good conscience, the joy of the Holy Ghost; no, no, they

have no acquaintance with such music as that; but the rejoicing of

believers is in those things, 2 Cor. 1: 12. and this is well built

consolation, which reaches the heart.

Secondly, I told you that propriety and interest in Christ and

the promises are required to all spiritual consolation: but no

unbeliever has any title or interest in Christ and the promises, and

so they can signify nothing to him in point of comfort. It is not

another man's money, but my own, that must feed, clothe and comfort

me; nor is it another man's Christ, but my own Christ, that must

justify, save, and comfort my soul.

Thirdly, You were told, that evidence of a man's peace and

reconciliation with God, is necessary to his actual consolation,

which no unbeliever can possibly have; he has neither grace within

him to make him a qualified subject of any special promise, nor any

witness or seal of the Spirit, to confirm and clear his propriety in

Christ; for he never seals, but where he first sanctifies. So that

it is beyond all contradiction, that believers, and none but

believers are partakers of the consolations that are in Christ

Jesus.

Fourthly and lastly, There is one inquiry remains to be

satisfied; namely, seeing Jesus Christ is consolation to believers,

how it comes to pass, that so many believers in the world should

walk so dejectedly as they do, without any spiritual consolation?

First, This need not be wondered at, if we consider that the

consolations of Christ are of two sorts, seminal and in preparation,

or actual in present possession. Every believer in the world has the

root and seed of comfort planted and sown for him, Psal. 97: 11.

"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in

heart." They have Christ and the promises, which are the seeds of

consolation, and will bring forth joy at last, though at present

they have no actual consolation; the seed of all joy is sown, and in

due time they shall reap the full lope fruit thereof.

Secondly, It must be remembered, that interest and evidence are

distinct blessings, every believer has interest in Christ: but every

believer has not the evidence thereof, Isa. 1. 10. "Who is among

you, that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant;

that walketh in darkness, and has no light?" Every child of God is

not of sufficient age to know his Father, or take comfort in that

blessed inheritance whereunto he is begotten again, 1 Pet. 1: 3, 4.

Thirdly, Every believer does not walk with like strictness, and

exact holiness: all do not exercise faith in a like degree. Among

Christians some are strong in grace, rich in faith, strict in

obedience, tender of sin to an eminent degree; these usually are

owners of much consolation: but others are weak in grace, poor in

faith, comparatively careless of their hearts and ways, frequently

grieving the good Spirit of God, and wounding their own consciences

(the vessel into which spiritual consolation is poured;) and these

are usually denied the joy and comfort which others abound withal.

Fourthly, The consolations of Christ are arbitrarily dispensed

by the Spirit, who is the Comforter, and giveth to every man in such

proportions, and at such seasons, as pleaseth him: whence it comes

to pass, that he that is rich in comfort to-day, may be poor

tomorrow; and, contrarily, the heart that is quite full of sorrow

one hour, is filled with peace and joy in believing in the next.

Things that are necessary to the rein of a Christian, are fixed and

stable; but things belonging only to the well-being of a Christian,

come and go, according to the good pleasure and appointment of the

Spirit. The use of all follows.

Inf. 1. Hence it follows, That the state of unbelievers is the

most sad and uncomfortable state in the world, having no interest in

Christ, the consolation of Israel. It is true, they abound in

creature comforts; they live in pleasure upon earth; joy displays

its colours in their faces; but for all this, there is not the least

drop of true consolation in any of their hearts; they have some

comfort in the creature, but none in Christ: that little they gather

from the creature now, is all their portion of joy, Luke 6: 24. "Ye

have received your consolation:" as this is all they have, so they

shall enjoy it but a little while, Job 21: 13, 17. And while they do

enjoy it, it is mixed with many gripes of conscience, Job 14: 13.

"Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth

is heaviness." Whatever consolation any unbeliever speaks of besides

this, is but by rote; for when the day of his distress cometh, and

the terrors of conscience shall awake him out of his pleasant

dreams, all his sensual joys will vanish from him, and the doors of

true consolation will be shut against him. Let him go to Jesus

Christ, knock at that door, and say, Lord Jesus, thy name is

consolation: my heart is really to burst within me; hast thou no

consolation for me? O Lord, for one drop of spiritual comfort now;

but alas there is none, no not in Christ himself, for any

unbeliever. It is children's bread, the saints privilege; comfort

and grace are undivided. Let him return into himself, search his own

conscience for comfort, and say, O conscience! thou art more than a

thousand witnesses, and thousands have been comforted by thee; where

thou speakest comfort, none can speak trouble; hast thou no

consolation for me in my deepest distress? Alas, no; if God condemn

thee, wherewithal shall I comfort thee? I can speak neither more nor

less than the scriptures put into my mouth, and I find not one word

in all the book of God warranting me to be thy comforter. Believe it

is an undoubted truth (though the sense of the bewitched world

overrules it) that the state of unbelievers, even at the best, is a

sad and dismal state.

Inf. 2. Let all believers fetch ad their comfort out of Christ,

who is the Consolation of his people: "We rejoice (saith the

apostle) in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." That

is the true temper of a believing soul: take heed you live not

partly upon Christ and partly upon the creature for your comfort,

much rather beware that you forsake not Christ, the fountain of

living waters, and hew out cisterns for yourselves which can hold no

water, Jer. 2: 13. If you make any creature the spring and fountain

of your comfort, assuredly God will dry up that spring. If your

souls draw their comfort from any creature, you know they must

outlive that creature, and what then will you do for comfort?

Besides, as your comforts are, so are you. The food of every

creature is suitable to its nature. You see divers creatures feeding

upon several parts of the same herb, the bee upon the flower, the

bird upon the seeds, the sheep upon the stalk, and the swine upon

the root, according to their nature so is their food. Sensual men

feed upon sensual things; spiritual men upon spiritual things; as

your food is, so are you. If carnal comforts can content thy heart,

sure thy heart must then be a very carnal heart. Yea, and let

Christians themselves take heed, that they fetch not their

consolations out of themselves instead of Christ. Your graces and

duties are excellent means and instruments, but not the ground work

and foundation of your comfort, they are useful buckets to draw, but

not the well itself in which the springs of consolation rise. If you

put your duties in the room of Christ, Christ will put your comforts

out of the reach of your duties.

Inf. 3. If Christ be the consolation of believers, what a

comfortable life should all believers live in the world? Certainly,

if the fault be not your own, you might live the happiest and

comfortablest lives of all men in the world. If you would not be a

discomfort to Christ, he would be a comfort to you every day, and in

every condition, to the end of your lives. Your condition abounds

with all the helps and advantages of consolation. You have the

command of Christ to warrant your comforts, Phil. 4: 4. You have the

Spirit of Christ for a spring of comfort; you have the scriptures of

Christ for the rules of comfort; you have the duties of religion for

the means of comfort. Why is it then that you go comfortless? If

your afflictions be many in the world, yet your encouragements are

more in Christ. Your troubles in the world have been turned into

joy, but your comforts in Christ can never be turned into trouble.

Why should troubles obstruct your comfort, when the blessing of

Christ upon your troubles makes them subservient to promote your

happiness? Rom. 8: 28. Shake off despondency then, and live up to

the principles of religion. Your dejected life is uncomfortable to

yourselves, and of very ill use to others.

Inf. 4. If Christ be the consolation of believers, then let all

that desire comfort in this world, or in that to come, embrace Jesus

Christ, and get real union with him. The same hour you shall be in

Christ, you shall also be at the fountain head of all consolations:

thy soul shall be then a pardoned soul, and a pardoned soul has all

reason in the world to be a joyful soul: in that day the conscience

shall be sprinkled with the blood of Christ; and a sprinkled

conscience has all the reason in the world to be a comforting

conscience: in that day you become the children of your Father in

heaven, and he that has a Father in heaven, has all reason to be the

joyfullest man upon earth; in that day you are delivered from the

sting and hurt of death; and he that is delivered from the sting of

death, has the best reason to take in the comfort of life. O come to

Christ! come to Christ! till you come to Christ, no true comfort can

come to you

Sermon 16.

Enforcing the general Exhortation, by a seventh Motive drawn from

the first Benefit purchased by Christ.

Eph. 1: 7.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of

sins according to the riches of his grace.

Six great motives have been presented already from the titles

of Christ, to draw the hearts of sinners to him; more are now to be

offered from the benefits redounding to believers by Christ;

essaying, by all means, to win the hearts of men to Christ. To this

end I shall in the first place, open that glorious privilege of

gospel-remission, freely and fully conferred upon all that come to

Christ by faith, "in whom we have redemption by faith," &c.

In which words we have, first, a singular benefit, or choice

mercy bestowed, viz. redemption, interpreted by way of opposition,

the remission of sins: this is a privilege of the first rank, a

mercy by itself; none sweeter, none more desirable among all the

benefits that come by Christ. And therefore,

Secondly, You have the price of this mercy, an account what it

cost, even the brood of Christ, in whom we have redemption [through

his blood:] precious things are of great price; the blood of Christ

is the meritorious cause of remission.

Thirdly, You have here also the impulsive cause, moving God to

grant pardons at this rate to sinners, and that is said to be the

riches of his grace: where, by the way, you see that the freeness of

the grace of God, and the fulness of the satisfaction of Christ,

meet together without the least jar in the remission of sin,

contrary to the vain cavil of the Socinian adversaries: "In whom we

have redemption, even the remission of sins, according to the riches

of his grace."

Fourthly, You have the qualified subjects of this blessed

privilege, viz. Believers, in whose name he here speaks, [we] have

remission, i. e. We the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, ver. 1.

We whom he has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world,

and predestinated unto the adoption of children, ver. 4, 5. We that

are made accepted in the beloved, ver. 6. It is we, and we only, who

have redemption through his blood. Hence observe,

Doct. That all believers, and none but believers, receive the

remission of their sins through the riches of grace, by the

blood of Jesus Christ.

In the explication of this point three things must be spoken

to.

1. That all that are in Christ are in a pardoned state.

2. That their pardon is the purchase of the blood of Christ.

3. That the riches of grace are manifested in remission.

First, That all that are in Christ are in a pardoned state:

where I will first shew you what pardon or remission of sin is.

Secondly, That this is the privilege of none but believers.

First, Now remission of sin is the gracious act of God, in and

through Christ, discharging a believing sinner from all the guilt

and punishment of his sin, both temporal and eternal.

It is the act of God; he is the author of remission; none can

forgive sins but God only, Mark 2: 7. Against him only, i.e.

principally and especially, the offence is committed, Psal. 51: 4.

To his judgement guilt binds over the soul; and who can remit the

debt but the creditor? Matth. 6: 12.

It is an act of God, discharging the sinner; it is God's

loosing of one that stood bound, the cancelling of his bond or

obligation, called therefore remission or releasing in the text; the

blotting out of our iniquities, or the removing of our sins from us,

as it is called in other scriptures; see Psal. 103: 11. Micah 7:

18,19.

It is a gracious act of God, the effect of pure grace, done for

his own name's sake, Isa. 43: 25. discharging us without any

satisfaction at all by us: there is much grace in that; and

providing a surety for us every way able to pay our debt, there is

more grace in that.

It is the gracious act of God in and through Christ: the

satisfaction of Christ is the procuring cause of our remission, and

so God declares himself just in the remission of our sin, Rom. 3:

25. "Gracious is the Lord and righteous," Psal. 116: 5. Justice and

mercy meet here, and embrace each other; "in whom (saith the text)

we have remission:" no other price could purchase this privilege,

Micah 6: 6, 7. not rivers of oil, or of human blood.

And this gracious act of God discharges the pardoned soul both

from guilt and punishment. Guilt is nothing else but the force and

power that is in sin, to oblige the sinner to undergo the penalty

due to sin; therefore sinners are said to be guilty of hell-fire.

Matth 5: 22. Guilty of eternal judgement, Mark 3: 29. To be under

the judgement of God, Rom. 3: 19. Remission takes away both guilt

and punishment together; it takes away all guilt, Acts 13: 38, 39.

and all punishment. And so much of the first thing to be opened,

namely, what the remission of sin is.

Secondly, Now that this remission of sin is the privilege of

believers, is most apparent, for all the causes of remission are in

conjunction to procure it for them; the love of God, which is the

impulsive cause of pardon; the blood of Christ, which is the

meritorious cause of pardon; and saving faith, which is the

instrumental cause of pardon, do all co-operate for their remission,

as is plain in the text.

Besides, all the promises of pardon are made to them, Jer. 31:

34. Micah 7: 18. And, lastly, all the signs of pardon are found in

them, and in them only, that love God, Luke 7: 47. Mercifulness to

others, Matth. 6: 14. A blessed calmness and peace in the

conscience, Rom. 5: 1. So that it is a truth beyond controversy,

that all that are in Christ are in a pardoned state.

Secondly, Next I will shew you, that the pardon of believers is

the purchase of the blood of Christ: nothing but the blood of Christ

is a price equivalent to the remission of sin, for this blood was

innocent and untainted blood, 1 Pet. 1: 19. the blood of a Lamb

without spot; this blood was precious blood, blood of infinite worth

and value, the blood of God, Acts 20: 28. It was prepared blood for

this very purpose, Heb. 10: 5. Prepared by God's eternal

appointment; prepared by Christ's miraculous and extraordinary

production by the operation of the Spirit; prepared by his voluntary

sequestration, or sanctification of himself to this very use and

purpose.

The blood of Jesus is not only innocent, precious, and prepared

blood, but it is also blood actually shed and sacrificed to the

justice of God, for the expiation of guilt, and procurement of our

discharge, Isa. 53:5. O. To conclude, the severe justice of God

could put in no exception against the blood of Christ, it is

unexceptionable blood, being, (as before was noted,) untainted by

sin, and dignified above all estimation by the person whose blood it

was. Justice required no less, and could demand no more; and this is

the price at which our pardons are purchased, and without which no

sin could be pardoned; for "without shedding of blood, (such blood

as this) there is no remission," Heb. 9: 22.

Thirdly, The last thing to be opened is, That God has

manifested the riches of his grace, in the remission of our sins. So

speaks the apostle, Rom. 5: 20. "Where sin abounded, grace did much

more abound: And, 1 Tim. 1: 14. "The grace of our Lord (viz. in the

pardon of sin) was exceeding abundant." Which will appear, if we

bring our thoughts close to the matter, in several particulars.

First, From the nature of the mercy, which is the richest of

all mercies, except Christ the purchaser of it: No mercy sweeter

than a pardon to a condemned sinner; no pardon like God's pardon to

a man condemned at his bar; all the goodness of God is made to pass

before our eyes in his pardoning acts of grace, Exod. 33: 19.

Secondly, The very riches of grace must needs be in the pardon

of sin, if we consider the method in which pardons are dispensed,

which is, as the text speaks, "through his blood." Herein "God

commends his love to us," Rom. 5: 8. He commends it more than if he

had pardoned sin without such a sacrifice, for then he had only

displayed his mercy, but not caused mercy and justice to meet and

triumph together.

Thirdly, The riches of his grace shine forth in the peculiarity

of the mercy. Remission is no common favour; it is never extended to

the fallen angels, nor to the greater part of the children of men,

but only to a little flock, a small remnant of mankind, Luke 12: 82.

John 17: 9.

Fourthly, The riches of grace are manifested in remission, if

we consider the subjects of this privilege, who are not only equally

plunged into sin and misery with others by nature, Eph. 2: 3. but

many of the Lord's pardoned ones have been actually guilty of a

deeper dyed abomination than many unpardoned ones, in the civilised

world, are defiled with. "To me, (saith Paul), the greatest of

sinners, one that was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, &c. yet to

me is this grace given; I obtained mercy," 1 Tim. 1: 15. "And such

were some of you, but ye are justified," 1 Cor. 6: 11. Yea, God

singles out the most base, despised, poor, and contemptible ones

among men, to be the subjects of this glorious privilege, 2 Cor. 1:

26. "You see your calling, brethren," &c.

Fifthly, More of the riches of grace still appear, if we view

the latitude and extent of this act of grace. O how innumerable are

our transgressions! "Who can understand his errors;" Psal. 19: 12.

"Yet the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John 1: 7.

Small and great sins, open and secret sins, old and new sins, all

pardoned without exception. O the riches of grace! O the

unsearchable goodness of God! "With the Lord there is mercy and with

him there is plenteous redemption; and he shall redeem Israel from

all his iniquities," Psal. 130: 7. 8.

Sixthly, and lastly, The riches of grace shine forth in the

irrevocableness and perpetuity of remission. As grace pardons all

sins without exception, so the pardons it bestows are without

revocation: The pardoned soul shall "never come into condemnation,"

John 5: 24. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he

removed our transgressions from us," Psal. 103: 10. The east and

west are the two opposite points of heaven, which can never come

together; neither shall the pardoned soul and its sins ever meet any

more. "Thou hast cast, (saith Hezekiah) all my sins behind thy

back." The penitent believer sets his sins before his face, but the

merciful God casts them all behind his back, never to behold them

more, so as to charge them upon his pardoned people. And thus you

see what the pardon of sin is, what the price that purchaseth pardon

is, and what riches of grace God manifesteth in the remission of a

believer's sins; which were the things to be explained and opened in

the doctrinal part. The improvement of the whole you will have in

the following uses.

Inference 1. If this be so, that all believers, and none but

believers, receive the remission of their sins through the riches of

grace, by the blood of Christ; What a happy condition then are

believers in! Those that never felt the load of sin may make light

of a pardon; but so cannot you, that have been in the deeps of

trouble and fear about it; those that have been upon the rack of an

accusing and condemning conscience, as David, Heman, and many of the

saints have been, can never sufficiently value a pardon. "Blessed is

the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered;

blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity," Psal.

32: 1, 2. or, O the blessedness and felicities of the pardoned man!

as in the Hebrew. Remission cannot but appear the wonder of mercies,

if we consider through what difficulties the grace of God makes way

for it to our souls; what strong bars the love of God breaks

asunder, to open our way to this privilege; for there can be no

pardon without a Mediator; no other Mediator but the Son of God: the

Son of God cannot discharge our debts, but by taking them upon

himself as our surety, and making full payment, by bearing the wrath

of God for us; and when all this is done, there can be no actual

pardon, except the Spirit of grace open our blind eyes, break our

hard hearts, and draw them to Christ in the way of believing. And as

the mercy of remission comes to us through wonderful difficulties,

so it is in itself a complete and perfect mercy: God would not be at

such vast expense of the riches of his grace, Christ would not lay

out the invaluable treasures of his precious blood to procure a

cheap and common blessing for us. Rejoice then, ye pardoned souls,

God has done great things for you, for which you have cause to be

glad.

Inf. 2. Hence it follows, That interest in Christ by faith,

brings the conscience of a believer into a state of rest and peace,

Rom. 5: 1. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." I say

not that every believer is presently brought into actual peace and

tranquillity of conscience; there may be many fears, and much

trouble even in a pardoned soul; but this is an undoubted truth,

that faith brings the pardoned soul into that condition and state,

where he may find perfect rest in his conscience, with respect to

the guilt and danger of sin. The blood of Christ sprinkles us from

an evil (that is, an accusing, condemning) conscience. We are apt to

fear, that this or that special sin, which has most terrified and

affrighted our conscience, is not forgiven: but if there be riches

enough in the grace of God, and efficacy enough in the blood of

Christ, then the sins of believers, all their sins, great as well as

small, one as well as another, without limitation or exception, are

pardoned.

For let us but consider, If Christ remits no sin to any man,

but with respect to the blood of Christ, then all sins are pardoned,

as well as any one sin; because the dignity and desert of that blood

is infinite, and as much deserves an universal pardon for all sins,

as the particular pardon of any, even the least sin: moreover,

remission is an act of God's fatherly love in Christ; and if it be

so, then certainly no sin of any believer can be retained or

excluded from pardon; for then the same soul should be in the favour

of God, so far as it is pardoned, and out of favour with God, so far

as it is unpardoned, and all this at one and the same instant of

time: which is a thing both repugnant to itself, and to the whole

strain of the gospel.

To conclude: What is the design and end of remission, but the

saving of the pardoned soul? But if any sin be retained or excluded

from pardon, the retaining of that sin must needs make void the

pardon of all other sins; and so the acts of God must cross and

contradict each other, and the design and end of God miscarry and be

lost; which can never be. So then we conclude, faith brings the

believing soul into a state of rest and peace.

Inf. Hence it also follows, That no remission is to be expected

by any soul, without an interest by faith in Jesus Christ: no

Christ, no pardon; no faith, no Christ. Yet how apt are many poor

deluded souls to expect pardon in that way, where never any soul yet

did, or ever can meet it. Some look for pardon from the absolute

mercy of God, without any regard to the blood of Christ, or their

interest therein: we have sinned, but God is merciful! Some expect

remission of sin by virtue of their own duties, not Christ's merits:

I have sinned, but I will repent, restore, reform, and God will

pardon! But little do such men know how they therein diminish the

evil of sin, undervalue the justice of God, slight the blood of

Christ, and put an undoing cheat upon their own souls for ever. To

expect pardon from absolute mercy, or our own duties, is to knock at

the wrong door, which God has shut up to all the world, Rom. 3: 20.

Whilst these two principles abide firm, that the price of pardon is

only in the blood of Christ, and the benefit of pardon, only by the

application of his blood to us; this must remain a sure conclusion,

that no remission is to he expected by any soul, without an interest

by faith in Jesus Christ. Repentance, restitution, and reformation

are excellent duties in their kind, and in their proper places, but

they were never meant for saviours, or satisfaction to God for sin.

Inf. 2 It the riches of grace be thus manifested in the pardon

of sin, How vile an abuse is it of the grace of God, to take the

more liberty to sin, because grace abounds in the pardon of it!

"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!"

Rom. 6: 1, 2. Will nothing cheaper than the grace of God serve to

make a cloak for sin? O vile abuse of the most excellent thing in

the whole world? Did Christ shed his blood to expiate our guilt, and

dare we make that a plea to extenuate our guilt? God forbid!

If it be intolerable ingratitude among men, to requite good

with evil, sure that sin must want a name bad enough to express it,

which puts the greatest dishonour upon God for the greatest mercy

that ever was given by God to the world. "There is mercy with thee,

(saith the Psalmist,) that thou mayest be feared;" not that thou

mayest be the more abused, Psal. 130: 4. Nay, let me say, the devils

never sinned at this rate; they cannot abuse the pardoning grace of

God, because such grace was never offered unto them. And certainly,

if the abuse of the common mercies of God, as meat and drink, by

gluttony and drunkenness, be an heinous sin and highly provoking to

God; then the abuse of the riches of his grace, and the precious

blood of his Son, must be out of measure sinful, and the greatest

affront we can put upon the God of mercy.

Inf. 5. To conclude: If this be so, as ever you expect pardon.

and, mercy from God, come to Christ in the way of faith; receive and

embrace him now in the tenders of the gospel.

To drive home this great exhortation, I beseech you, as in the

bowels of Christ Jesus, and by all the regard and value you have for

your souls, let these following considerations sink down in your

hearts.

First, That all Christless persons are actually under the

condemnation of God, John 3: 113. "He that believeth not is

condemned already:" and it must needs be so, for every soul is

concluded under the curse of the law, till Christ make him free,

John 8: 36. Till we are in Christ, we are dead by law; and when we

believe unto justification, then we pass from death to life. A blind

mistaken conscience may possibly acquit you, but assure ourselves

God condemns you.

Secondly, Consider what a terrible thing it is to lie under the

condemnation of God; the most terrible things in nature cannot

shadow forth the misery of such a state; put all sicknesses, all

poverty, all reproaches, the torments invented by all tyrants into

one scale, and the condemnation of God into the other, and they will

be all found lighter than a feather. Condemnation is the sentence of

God, the great and terrible God; it is a sentence shutting you up to

everlasting wrath: it is a sentence never to be reversed, but by the

application of Christ in the season thereof. O souls! you cannot

bear the wrath of God; you do not understand it, if you think it

tolerable: One drop of it upon your consciences now, is enough to

distract you in the midst of all the pleasures and comforts of this

world: yet all that are out of Christ, are sentenced to the fulness

of God's wrath for ever.

Thirdly, There is yet a possibility of escaping the wrath to

come; a door of hope opened to the worst of sinners; a day of grace

is offered to the children of men, Heb. 3: 15. God declares himself

unwilling that any should perish, 2 Pet. 3: 9. O what a mercy is

this! Who, that is on this side heaven or hell, fully understands

the worth of it?

Fourthly, The door of mercy will be shortly shut, Luke 12: 25.

God has many ways to shut it: he sometimes shuts it by withdrawing

the means of grace, and removing the candlesticks; a judgement at

this time to be greatly feared. Sometimes he shuts it by withdrawing

the Spirit and blessing from the means, whereby all ordinances lose

their efficacy, 1 Cor. 3: 7. But if he shut it not by removing the

means of grace from you, certain it is, it will be shortly shut by

your removal from all the means and opportunities of salvation by

death.

Fifthly, When once the door of mercy is shut, you are gone

beyond all the possibilities of pardon and salvation for evermore.

The night is then come, in which no man can work, John 9: 4. All the

golden seasons you now enjoy, will be irrecoverably gone out of your

reach.

Sixthly, Pardons are now daily granted to others: some (and

they once as far from mercy as you now are,) are at this day reading

their pardons with tears of joy dropping from them. The world is

full of the examples and instances of the riches of pardoning grace.

And whatever is needful for you to do in the way of repentance and

faith to obtain your pardon, how easily shall it be done, if once

the day of God's power come upon you? Psal. 110:3. 0 therefore, lift

up your cries to heaven, give the Lord no rest, take no denial till

he open the blind eye, break the stony heart, open and bow the

stubborn will, effectually draw thy soul to Christ, and deliver thy

pardon signed in his blood.

Sermon 17.

Opening the eighth Motive to come to CHRIST, drawn from the sixth

Benefit purchased by Christ for Believers.

Eph. 1: 6.

To thc praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us

accepted in the Beloved.

IN our last discourse we opened to you the blessed privilege of

remission of sin, from the following verse; in this verse lies

another glorious privilege, viz. the acceptation that believers have

with God through Jesus Christ; both which comprise (as the two main

branches) our justification before God. In the words read, (to omit

many things that might be profitably observed from the method and

dependence of the apostle's discourse) three things are observable,

viz.

1. The privilege itself,

2. The meritorious cause,

3. The ultimate end thereof.

First, The privilege itself, which is exceeding rich and sweet

in its own nature; "he has made us accepted;" the word is

"echaritosen hemas", he has ingratiated us, or brought us into the

grace, favour and acceptance of God the Father; endeared us to him,

so that we find grace in his sight.

Secondly, The meritorious cause, purchasing and procuring this

benefit for us, noted in the words, "en toi egapemenoi", in the

Beloved; which words are a periphrasis of Christ, who is here

emphatically stiled the Beloved, the great favourite of heaven, the

delight of God's soul, the prime object of his love: it is he that

obtaineth this benefit for believers: he is accepted for his own

sake, and we for his.

Thirdly, The ultimate end and aim of conferring this benefit

upon believers; "To the praise of the glory of his grace;" or, to

the end that his grace might be made glorious in praises: there are

riches of grace in this act of God; and the work and business of

believers, both in this world and in that to come, is to search and

admire, acknowledge and magnify God for his abundant grace herein.

Hence the note is,

Doct. That Jesus Christ has purchased and procured special

favour and acceptation with God for all that are in him.

This point lies plain in scripture, Eph. 2: 13. "But now in

Jesus Christ, ye who sometimes were afar off; are made nigh by the

blood of Christ," ""engus egenetete", made nigh, a term of

endearedness: nothing is taken into the very bosom and embraces but

what is very dear, precious and acceptable, and in Rev. 2: 5, 6.

believers are said to be made by Jesus Christ "kings and priests

unto God, and his Father," i. e. dignified favourites, upon whom the

special marks of honour are set by God.

In opening of this point three things must be doctrinally

discussed and opened, viz.

1. What the acceptation of our persons with God is?

2. How it appears that believers are so accepted with God?

3. How Christ the Beloved procures this benefit for believers?

First, What the acceptation of our persons with God is? To open

which, it may be proper to remember, that there is a twofold

acceptance of persons mentioned in scripture.

1. One is the sinful act of corrupt man.

2. The other the gracious act of a merciful God.

First, Accepting of persons is noted in scripture as the sinful

act of a corrupt man; a thing which God abhors, being the corruption

and abuse of that power and authority which men have in judgement;

overlooking the merit of the cause through sinful respect to the

quality of the person whose cause it is; so that the cause doth not

commend the person, but the person the cause. This God everywhere

brands in men, as a vile perverting of judgement, and utterly

disclaims it himself, Gal. 2: 6. "God accepteth no man's person;"

Rom. 2: 11. "There is no respect of persons with God."

Secondly, There is also an accepting of persons, which is the

gracious act of a merciful God; whereby he receives both the persons

and duties of believers into special grace and favour for Christ's

sake; and of this my text speaks. In which act of favour three

things are supposed or included.

First, It supposes an estate of alienation and enmity; those

only are accepted into favour that were out of favour; and indeed so

stood the case with us, Eph. 2: 12, 13 "Ye were aliens and

strangers, but now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off,

are made nigh by the blood of Christ". So the apostle Peter, in 1

Pet. 2: 10. "Which in time past were not a people, but now are the

people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained

mercy." The fall made a fearful breach betwixt God and man. Sin,

like a thick cloud, intercepted all the beams of divine favour from

us; the satisfaction of Christ dissolves that cloud, Isa 44: 22. "I

have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a

cloud, thy sins." This dark cloud thus dissolved, the face of God

shines forth again with cheerful beams of favour and love upon all,

who, by faith, are interested in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, It includes the removing of guilt from the persons of

believers, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness to them, Rom.

5: 1, 2. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through

our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into

this grace wherein we stand:" for the face of God cannot shine upon

the wicked; the person must be first made righteous, before he can

be made accepted.

Thirdly, It includes the offering up, or tendering of our

persons and duties to God by Jesus Christ. Accepting implies

presenting or tendering: believers indeed do present themselves to

God, Rom. 12: 50: But Christ's presenting them makes their tender of

themselves acceptable to the Lord; Col. 1: 22. "In the body of his

flesh through death to present you holy, and unblameable, and

unreproveable, in his sight." Christ leads every believer, as it

were, by the hand, into the gracious presence of God; after this

manner bespeaking acceptance for him: "Father, here is a poor soul

that was born in sin, has lived in rebellion against thee all his

days; he has broken all thy laws, and deserved all thy wrath; yet he

is one of that number which thou gavest me before the world was. I

have made full payment by my blood for all his sins: I have opened

his eyes to see the sinfulness and misery of his condition: broken

his heart for his rebellions against thee, bowed his will in

obedience unto thy will; united him to myself by faith, as a living

member of my body: and now, Lord, since he is become mine by

regeneration, let him be thine also by special acceptation: let the

same love with which thou lovest me embrace him also, who is now

become mine." And so much for the first particular, viz. What

acceptation with God is.

Secondly, In the next place I must shew you how it appears that

believers are thus ingratiated, or brought into the special favour

of God by Jesus Christ. And this will be evinced divers ways.

First, By the titles of love and endearedness, with which the

Lord graceth and honoureth believers, who are sometimes called, the

household of God, Eph. 2: 19. The friends of God, James 2: 23. the

dear children of God, Eph. 5: 1. the peculiar people of God, 1 Pet.

2: 9. a crown of glory, and a royal diadem in the hand of their God,

Isa 63: 3. The object of his delight and pleasure, Psal. 147: 10,11.

0 what terms of endearedness doth God use towards his people! Does

not all this speak them to be in special favour with him? Which of

all these alone doth not signify a person highly in favour with God.

Secondly, The gracious manner in which he treats them upon

the throne of grace, to which he allows them to come with boldness,

Heb. 4: 16. This also speaks them in the special favour of God; he

allows them to come to him in prayer, with the liberty, confidence

and filial boldness of children to a father; Gal. 4: 6. "Because ye

are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,

crying Abba, Father;" the familiar voice of a dear child: yea, which

is a wonderful condescension of the great God to poor worms of the

earth, he saith, Isa. 14: 11. "Thus saith the Lord, the holy One of

Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons;

and concerning the work of my hands command ye me:" an expression so

full of grace and special favour to believers, that it needs great

caution in reading and understanding such an high and astonishing

expression: the meaning is, that God has, as it were, subjected the

works of his hands to the prayers of his saints; and it is as if he

had said, if my glory, and your necessity shall require it, do but

ask me in prayer, and whatever my Almighty Power can do, I will do

it for you. However, let no favourite of heaven forget the infinite

distance betwixt himself and God. Abraham was a great favourite of

heaven, and was called the friend of God; yet see with what humility

of spirit and reverential awe he addresseth God, Gen. 18:27. "Behold

now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust

and ashes." So that you see the titles of favour above-mentioned are

no empty titles.

Thirdly, God's readiness to grant, as well as their liberty to

ask, speaks them the special favourites of God. The heart of God is

so propense, and ready to grant the desires of believers, that it is

but ask and have, Matth. 7: 7. The door of grace is opened by the

key of prayer. That is a favourite indeed, to whom the king gives a

blank to insert what request he will: "If ye abide in me, and my

words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done

unto you," John 15: 7. O blessed liberty of the sons of God! David

did but say, "Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into

foolishness," and it was done as soon as asked, 2 Sam. 15: 31.

Joshua did but say, Thou sun stand still in Gibeon," and a

miraculous stop was presently put to its swift motion in the

heavens; nay, which is wonderful to consider, a prayer, yet unborn,

I mean conceived in the heart, and not yet uttered by the lips of

believers, is often anticipated by the propensiveness of free grace,

Isa. 65: 24. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call I

will answer, and whilst they are yet speaking I will hear." The

prayers of others are rejected as an abomination, Prov. 15: 8. God

casts them back into their faces, Mal. 2: 3. But free grace signs

the petitions of the saints more readily than they are presented; we

have not that freedom to ask that God has to give: it is true, the

answer of a believer's prayers may be a long time suspended from his

sense and knowledge; but every prayer, according to the will of God,

is presently granted in heaven, though, for wise and holy ends, they

may be held in a doubtful suspense about them upon earth.

Fourthly, The free discoveries of the secrets of God's heart to

believers, speak them to be his special favourites: men open not the

counsels and secrets of their own hearts to enemies or strangers but

to their most inward and intimate friends: "The secret of the Lord

is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant,"

Psal 25: 14. When God was about to destroy Sodom, he would do

nothing in that work of judgement until he had acquainted Abraham

his friend, with his purpose therein, Gen 18: 17. "And the Lord

said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know

him," &c. So when a king was to be elected for Israel, and the

person whom God had chosen was yet unknown to the people, God, as it

were, whispered that secret unto Samuel the day before, 1 Sam. 9:15.

"Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came:"

according to the manner of princes with some special favourite.

Fifthly, The Lord's receiving every small thing that comes from

them with grace and favour, when he rejects the greatest things

offered by others, doth certainly bespeak believers the special

favourites of God. There was but one good word in a whole sentence

from Sarah, and that very word is noted and commended by God, 1 Pet.

3: 6. "She called him Lord." There were but some small beginnings or

buddings of grace in young Abijah, and the Lord took special notice

thereof, 1 Kings 14: 13. "Because in him there is found some good

thing toward the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam." Let

this be an encouragement to young ones, in whom there are found any

breathing desires after Christ; God will not reject them if any

sincerity be found in them; a secret groan, uttered to God in

sincerity, shall not be despised, Rom. 8: 26. The very bent of a

believer's will when he had no more to offer unto God, is an

acceptable present 2 Cor. 8: 11. The very intent and purpose that

lie secretly in the heart of a believer, not yet executed, are

accepted with him, 1 Kings 8: 18. "Whereas it was in thine heart to

build an house to my name, thou didst well that it was in thine

heart." Thus small things offered to God by believers find

acceptance with him, whilst the greatest presents, even solemn

assemblies, sabbaths, and prayers from others are rejected: "They

are a trouble unto me; (saith God) I am weary to bear them", Isa 1:

14, 15. "Incense from Sheba, the sweet cane from a far country" are

not acceptable, nor sacrifices sweet from other hands, Jer. 6: 20.

From all which it appears beyond doubt, that the persons and duties

of believers are accepted in the special favour of God by Jesus

Christ; which was the second thing to be spoken to, and brings us to

the third general, viz.

Thirdly, How Christ, the beloved, procures this benefit for

believers? And this he doth four ways.

First, By the satisfaction of his blood, Rom. 5: 10. "When we

were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." No

friendship without reconciliation, no reconciliation but by the

blood of Christ: therefore the new and living way, by which

believers come unto God with acceptance, is said to be consecrated

for us through the veil of Christ's flesh; and hence believers have

boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb. 10:

19, 20.

Secondly, The favour of God is procured for believers, by their

mystical union with Christ, whereby they are made "members of his

body, of his flesh, and of his bones", Eph. 5: 30. So that as Adam's

posterity stood upon the same terms that he their natural head did,

so believers, Christ's mystical members, stand in the favour of God,

by the favour which Christ their spiritual head has, John 17: 33. "I

in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and

that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them

as thou hast loved me.

Thirdly, Believers are brought into favour with God by Christ's

becoming their altar, upon which their persons and duties are all

offered up to God: The altar sanctifies the gift, Heb. 13: 10. And

this was typified by the legal rite mentioned Luke 1: 9,10. Christ

is that golden altar from whence all the prayers of the saints

ascend to the throne of God, perfumed with the odours and incense of

his merits, Rev. 8: 34. "And 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 the saints

upon the golden altar which was before the throne; and the smoke of

the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up

before God out of the angel's hand." And thus you see how the

persons and duties of believers are brought into favour and

acceptance with God by Jesus Christ. The uses follow.

Inf. 1. If all believers be in favour with God, how great a

mercy is it to have the prayers of such engaged on our behalf. Would

we have our business speed in heaven, let us get into the favour of

God ourselves, and engage the prayers of his people, the favourites

of heaven for us. Vis unita fortior, one believer can do much, many

can do more: When Daniel designed to get the knowledge of that

secret, hinted in the obscure dream of the king, which none but the

God of heaven could make known, it is said, Dan. 2: 17. "Then Daniel

went to his house, and made the thing known unto Hananiah, Mishael,

and Azariah, his companions; that they would desire mercies of the

God of heaven concerning this secret." The benefit of such

assistance in prayer by the help of other favourites with God, is

plainly intimated by Jesus Christ to us, Mat. 18: 19. "If two of you

shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it

shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." God

sometimes stands upon a number of voices, for the carrying of some

public mercy, because he delighteth in the harmony of many praying

souls, and also loves to oblige and gratify many in the answer and

return of the same prayer. I know this usage is grown too formal and

complemental among professors; but certainly it is a great advantage

to be sincere with them who are so with God. St. Bernard,

prescribing rules for effectual prayer, closes them up with this

wish, et cum talis fueris, momento mei, when thy heart is in this

frame, then remember me.

Inf. 2. If believers be such favourites in heaven, in what a

desperate condition is that cause and those persons, against whom

the generality of believers are daily engaged in prayers and cries

to heaven?

Certainly Rome shall feel the dint and force of the many

millions of prayers that are gone up to heaven from the saints for

many generations; the cries of the blood of the martyrs of Jesus,

joined with the cries of thousands of believers, will bring down

vengeance at last upon the man of sin. It is said, Rev. 8: 4, 5, 6.

"That the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the

saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand:" And

immediately it is added, ver. 5. "And the angel took the censer and

filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth, and

there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquakes;

and the seven angels, which had the seven trumpets, prepared

themselves to sound." The prayer of a single saint is sometimes

followed with wonderful effects Psal. 18: 6, 7. "In my distress I

called upon the Lord, and I cried unto my God: he heard my voice out

of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears: then

the earth shook and trembled; the foundation also of the hills moved

and were shaken, because he was wroth:" what then can a thundering

legion of such praying souls do? It was said of Luther, Iste vir

potuit cum Deo quicquid voluit, that man could have of God what he

would; his enemies felt the weight of his prayers, and the church of

God reaped the benefit thereof. The queen of Scots professed she was

more afraid of the prayers of Mr. Knox, than of an army of ten

thousand men: these were mighty wrestlers with God, however

contemned and vilified among their enemies. There will a time come,

when God will hear the prayers of his people, who are continually

crying in his ears, How long? Lord, how long?

Inf. 3. Let no believer be dejected at the contempts and

slightings of men, so long as they stand in the grace and favour of

God. It is the lot of the best men to have the worst usage in the

world: those of whom the world was not worthy, were not thought

worthy to live in the world, Heb. 11: 38. Paul and his companions

were men of choice and excellent spirits; yet, saith he, 1 Cor. 4:

12. "Being defamed, we intreat; we are made as the filth of the

world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." They

are words signifying the basest, most contemptible, and abhorred

things among men. How are heaven and earth divided in their

judgements and estimations of the saints? Those whom men call filth

and dirt, God calls a peculiar treasure, a crown of glory, a royal

diadem. But trouble not thyself, believer, for the unjust censures

of the blind world, they speak evil of the things they know not: "He

that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no

man," 1 Cor. 2: 14. You can discern the earthliness and baseness of

their spirits: they want a faculty to discern the excellency and

choiceness of your spirits: he that carries a dark lantern in the

night can discern him that comes against him, and yet is not

discerned by him. A courtier regards not a slight in the country, so

long as he has the ear and favour of his prince.

Inf. 4. Never let believers fear the want of any good thing

necessary for them in this world. The favour of God is the fountain

of all blessings, provisions, protections, even of all that you

need. He has promised that he will withhold no good thing from them

that walk uprightly, Psal. 84: 11. He that is bountiful to his

enemies will not withhold what is good from his friends. The favour

of God will not only supply your needs, but protect your persons,

Psal. 5: 12. "Thou wilt bless the righteous, with favour wilt thou

compass him as with a shield."

Inf. 5. Hence also it follows, that the sins of believers are

very piercing things to the heart of God. The unkindness of those

whom he has received into his very bosom, upon whom he has set his

special favour and delight, who are more obliged to him than all the

people of the earth beside, O this wounds the very heart of God.

What a melting expostulation was that which the Lord used with

David, 2 Sam. 12: 7, 8. "I anointed thee king over Israel, and I

delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's

house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the

house of Israel and Judah, and if that had been too little, I would

moreover have given unto thee such and such things: wherefore hast

thou despised the commandment of the Lord?" But reader, if thou be a

reconciled person, a favourite with God, and hast grieved him by any

eminent transgression, how should it melt thy heart to hear the Lord

thus expostulating with thee: I delivered thee out of the hand of

Satan; I gave thee into the bosom of Christ; I have pardoned unto

thee millions of sins; I have bestowed upon thee the riches of

mercy; my favour has made thee great: and, as if all this were too

little, I have prepared heaven for thee: for which of all these

favours cost thou thus requite me?"

Inf. 6. How precious should Jesus Christ be to believers, by

whose blood they are ingratiated with God, and by whose intercession

they are, and shall for ever be continued in his favour? When the

apostle mentions the believer's translation, from the sad state of

nature to the blessed privileged state of grace, see what a title he

bestows upon Jesus Christ, the purchaser of that privilege, calling

him the dear Son, Col. 1: 13. Not only dear to God, but exceeding

dear to believers also. Christ is the favourite in heaven, to him

you owe all the preferment there: Take away Christ, and you have no

ground on which to stand one minute in the favour of God. O then let

Jesus Christ, the fountain of your honour, be also the object of

your love and praise.

Inf. 7. Estimate by this the state and condition of a deserted

saint, upon whom the favour of God is eclipsed. If the favour of God

be better than life, the hiding of it from a gracious soul must be

more bitter than death: Deserted saints have reason to take the

first place among all the mourners in the world: The darkness before

conversion had indeed more danger, but this has more of trouble.

Darkness after light is dismal darkness. Since therefore the case is

so sad, let your preventing care be the more; grieve not the good

Spirit of God; you prepare but for your own grief in so doing.

Inf. 8. Lastly, Let this persuade all men to accept Jesus

Christ, as ever they expect to be accepted with the Lord themselves.

It is a fearful case, for a man's person and duties to be rejected

of God; to cry and not be heard: And much more terrible to be denied

audience in the great and terrible day. Yea, as sure as the

scriptures are the sealed and faithful sayings of God, this is no

more than what every christless person must expect in that day, Mat.

7: 22. Luke 13: 26. trace the history of all times, even as high as

Abel, and you shall find that none but believers did ever find

acceptance with God; all experience confirms this great truth, that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Reader, if this be thy

condition, let me beg thee to ponder the misery of it in a few sad

thoughts.

Consider how sad it is to be rejected of God, and forsaken by

all creatures at once; what a day of straits thy dying day is like

to be, when heaven and earth shall cast thee out together. Be

assured whatever thy vain hopes for the present quiet thee withal,

this must be thy case, the door of mercy will be shut against thee;

no man cometh to the Father but by Christ. Sad was the case of Saul,

when he told Samuel, "the Philistines make war against me, and God

is departed from me," 1 Sam. 28: 15. The saints will have boldness

in the day of judgement, 1 John 4: 17. But thou wilt be a confounded

man; there is yet, blessed be the God of mercy, a capacity and

opportunity for reconciliation, 2 Cor. 5: 19. Isa. 27: 5. But this

can be of no long continuance. O therefore, by all the regard and

love you have for the everlasting welfare of your own souls, come to

Christ; embrace Christ in the offers of the gospel, that you may be

made accepted in the beloved.

Sermon 18.

The Liberty of Believers opened and stated.

John 8: 36.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

From the 30th verse of this chapter unto my text, you have an

account of the different effects which the words of Christ had upon

the hearts of his hearers: Some believed, ver. 30. These he

encourageth to continue in his word, ver. 31. giving them this

encouragement, ver. 32. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth

shall make you free." Hereat the unbelieving Jews take offence, and

commence a quarrel with him, ver. 33. "We be Abraham's seed, and

were never in bondage to any man." We are of no slavish extraction;

the blood of Abraham runs in our veins. This scornful boast of the

proud Jews, Christ confutes, ver. 34. where he distinguisheth on a

two fold bondage; one to men, another to sin; one civil, another

spiritual: Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin, then

tells them, ver. 36. "The servant abideth not in the house for ever,

but the Son abideth for ever." Wherein he intimateth two great

truths, viz. That the servants and slaves of sin may for a time

enjoy the external privileges of the house or church of God; but it

would not be long before the master of the house would turn them out

of doors: But if they were once the adopted children of God, then

they should abide in the house for ever. And this privilege is only

to be had by their believing in, and union with the natural Son of

God, Jesus Christ: which brings us fairly to the text; "If the Son

therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." In which

words we have two parts; viz.

1. A supposition.

2. A concession.

First, A supposition, "If the Son therefore shall make you

free," q. d. The womb of nature cast you forth into the world in a

state of bondage! in that state you have lived all your days;

servants to sin; slaves to your lusts; yet freedom is to be

obtained: And this freedom is the prerogative belonging to the Son

of God to bestow: "If the Son shall make you free."

Secondly, Christ's concession upon this supposition, "Then

shall ye be free indeed," i.e. you shall have a real freedom, an

excellent and everlasting freedom: No conceit only, as that which

you now boast of is: If ever therefore you will be free men indeed,

believe in me. Hence note,

Doct. That interest in Christ sets the soul at liberty from all

that bondage whereunto it was subjected in its natural

state.

Believers are the children of the new covenant, the denizens of

Jerusalem which is above, which is free, and the mother of them all,

Gal. 4: 26. The glorious liberty, viz. that which is spiritual and

eternal, is the liberty of the children of God, Rom. 8: 21. Christ,

and none but Christ, delivers his people out of the hand of their

enemies, Luke 1: 74.

In the doctrinal part of this point, I must shew you,

First, What believers are not freed from by Jesus Christ in

this world.

Secondly, What that bondage is from which every believer is

freed by Christ.

Thirdly, What kind of freedom that is which commences upon

believing.

Fourthly, Open the excellency of this state of spiritual

freedom.

First, what those things are from which believers are not made

free in this world: We must not think that our spiritual liberty by

Christ, presently brings us into an absolute liberty, in all

respects, For,

First, Christ does not free believers from obedience to the

moral law: It is true we are no more under it as a covenant for our

justification; but we are, and must still be under it, as a rule for

our direction. The matter of the moral law is unchangeable, as the

nature of good and evil is, and cannot be abolished except that

distinction could be destroyed, Mat. 5: 17,18. The precepts of the

law are still urged under the gospel to enforce duties upon us, Eph.

6: 12. It is therefore a vain distinction, invented by Libertines,

to say it binds us as creatures, not as Christians: or that it binds

the unregenerate part, but not the regenerate: but this is a sure

truth, that they who are freed from its penalties are still under

its precepts. Though believers are no more under its curse, yet they

are still under its conduct: The law sends us to Christ to be

justified, and Christ sends us to the law to be regulated. Let the

heart of every Christian join therefore with David's in that holy

wish, Psal. 119: 4, 5. "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts

diligently; O that my heart were directed to keep thy statutes." It

is excellent when Christians begin to obey the law from life, which

others obey for life; because they are justified, not that they may

be justified. It is also excellent when duties are done in the

strength, and for the honour of Christ, which is evangelical; and

not in our own strength, and for our own ends, which is servile and

legal obedience: Had Christ freed us from obedience, such a liberty

had been to our loss.

Secondly, Christ has not freed believers, in this world, from

the temptations and assaults of Satan: even those that are freed

from his dominion are not free from his molestation. It is said

indeed, Rom. 16: 20. "God shall shortly bruise Satan under your

feet:" But mean time he has power to bruise and buffet us by his

injections, 2 Cor. 12: 7. He now bruiseth Christ's heel, Gen. 3: 10.

i. e. bruiseth him in his tempted and afflicted members: Though he

cannot kill them, yet he can and doth afflict and fright them, by

shooting his fiery darts of temptation among them, Eph. 6: 16. It is

true, when the saints are got safe into heaven they are out of

gunshot; there is perfect freedom from all temptation. A believer

may then say, O thou enemy, temptations are come to a perpetual end.

I am now arrived there, where none of thy fiery darts can reach me:

But this freedom is not yet.

Thirdly, Christ has not yet freed believers, in this world,

from the motions of indwelling sin; these are continually acting,

and infesting the holiest of men, Rom. 7:. 21, 23,24. Corruptions,

like Canaanites, are still left in the land to be thorns in your

eyes, and goads in your sides. Those that boast most of freedom from

the motions of sin, have most cause to suspect themselves still

under the dominion of sin. All Christ's freemen are troubled with

the same complaint: who among them complains not as the apostle did,

Rom. 7: 24. "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from

the body of this death?"

Fourthly, Jesus Christ doth not free believers, in this world,

from inward troubles and exercises of soul, upon the account of sin.

God may let loose Satan, and conscience too, in the way of terrible

accusations, which may greatly distress the soul of a believer, and

woefully eclipse the light of God's countenance, and break the peace

of their souls. Job, Heman, and David were all made free by Christ,

yet each of them has left upon record his bitter complaint upon this

account, Job 7: 19, 20. Psal. 88: 14, 15,16. Psal. 38 unto ver. 11.

Fifthly, Christ has not freed believers, in this world, from

the rods of affliction. God, in giving us our liberty, does not

abridge his own liberty, Psal. 89: 32. All the children of God are

made free, yet what son is there whom the father chasteneth not?

Heb. 12: 8. Exemption from affliction is so far from being the mark

of a free man, that the apostle there makes it the mark of a slave.

Bastards, not sons, want the discipline and blessing of the rod: To

be free from affliction would be no benefit to believers, who

receive so many benefits by it.

Sixthly, No believer is freed by Christ from the stroke of

death, though they are all freed from the sting of death, Rom. 8:

10. The bodies of believers are under the same law of mortality with

other men, Heb. 9: 27. We must come to the grave as well as others;

yea, we must come to it through the same agonies, pangs, and dolours

that other men do: The foot of death treads as heavy upon the bodies

of the redeemed, as of other men. Believers, indeed, are

distinguished by mercy from others, but the distinguishing mercy

lies not here. Thus you see what believers are not freed from in

this world: If you shall now say, what advantage then has a

believer, or what profit is there in regeneration? I answer,

Secondly, That believers are freed from many great and sad

miseries and evils by Jesus Christ, notwithstanding all that has

been said. For,

First, All believers are freed from the rigour and curse of the

law: The rigorous yoke of the law is broken off from their necks,

and the sweet and easy yoke of Jesus Christ put on, Matth. 9: 28.

The law required perfect working, under the pain of a curse, Gal.

3:10. accepted of no short endeavours; admitted no repentance; gave

no strength: It is not so now; proportionable strength is given,

Phil. 4: 13. Evangelical sincerity is reckoned perfection, Job 1: 1.

Transgression brings not under condemnation, Rom. 8: 1. 0 blessed

freedom! when duty becomes light, and failings hinder not

acceptance! This is one part of the blessed freedom of believers.

Secondly, All believers are freed from the guilt of sin; it may

trouble, but it cannot condemn them, Rom. 8: 33. The hand writing

which was against us is cancelled by Christ, nailed to his cross,

Col. 2: 14. When the seal and hand-writing are torn off from the

bond, the debtor is made free thereby: Believers are totally freed,

Acts 13: 89. "Justified from all things:" And finally freed, John 5:

24. "They shall never come into condemnation." O blessed freedom!

How sweet is it to lie down in our beds, yea, in our graves, when

guilt shall neither be our bed-fellow, nor grave-fellow!

Thirdly, Jesus Christ frees all believers from the dominion as

well as the guilt of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for

ye are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. 6: 14. "The law of

the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus, has made me free from

the law of sin and death," Rom. 8: 2. Now, who can estimate such a

liberty as this? What slavery, what an intolerable drudgery is the

service of divers lusts, from all which believers are freed by

Christ; not from the residence, but from the reign of sin. It is

with sin in believers as it was with those beasts mentioned Dan. 7:

12. "They had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were

prolonged for a season and a time."

Fourthly, Jesus Christ sets all believers free from the power

of Satan, in whose right they were by nature, Col. 1: 13. they are

translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ.

Satan had the possession of them, as a man of his own goods; but

Christ dispossesseth that strong man armed, alters the property, and

recovers them out of his hand, Luke 11: 21, 22. There are two ways

by which Christ frees believers out of Satan's power and possession;

namely,

1. By price.

2. By power.

First, By price. The blood of Christ purchaseth believers out

of the hands of justice, by satisfying the law for them, which being

done, Satan's authority over them falls of course, as the power of a

gaoler over the prisoner does, when he has a legal discharge, Heb.

2: 14. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and

blood; he also himself took part of the same, that through death he

might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

The cruel tyrant beats and burdens the poor captive no more after

the ransom is once paid, and he actually freed; and therefore Christ

delivers his,

Secondly, By power. Satan is exceeding unwilling to let go his

prey: He is a strong, and malicious enemy; every rescue and

deliverance out of his hand is a glorious effect of the Almighty

Power of Christ, Acts 26: 18. 2 Cor. 10: 5. How did our Lord Jesus

Christ grapple with Satan at his death, and triumph over him, Col.

2: 15. 0 glorious salvation! blessed liberty of the children of God!

Fifthly, Christ frees believers from the poisonous sting and

hurt of death: Kill us it can, but hurt us it cannot, 1 Cor. 15: 55,

56. "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The

sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but

thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus

Christ." If there be no hurt, there should be no horror in death: It

is guilt that arms death, both with its hurting and terrifying

power. To die in our sins, John 8: 24. To have our bones full of the

sins of our youth, which shall lie down with us in the dust, Job 20:

11. To have death, like a dragon, pulling a poor guilty creature as

a prey into its dreadful den, Psal. 49: 14. In this lies the danger

and horror of death: But from death, as a curse, and from the grave,

as a prison, Christ has set believers at liberty, by submitting to

death in their room; and by his victorious resurrection from the

grave, as the firstborn of the dead, death is disarmed of its

hurting power. The death of believers is but a sleep in Jesus.

Thirdly, The nest thing to be briefly spoken to, is the kind

and nature of that freedom and liberty purchased and procured by

Christ for believers.

Now liberty may be considered two ways; viz.

1. As civil.

2. As sacred.

As to civil freedom, or liberty, it belongs not to our present

business: Believers, as to their civil capacity, are not freed from,

the duties they owe to their superiors. Servants, though believers,

are still to be subject to their masters, according to the flesh,

with fear and trembling, Eph. 6: 5. nor from obedience to lawful

magistrates, whom we are to obey in the Lord, Rom. 12: 1, 4.

Religion dissolves not the bonds of civil relations; nor is it to be

used as an occasion to the flesh, 1 Pet. 2: 16. It is not a carnal,

but a spiritual freedom Christ has purchased for us: And this

spiritual freedom is again to be considered, either as,

1. Inchoate.

2. Consummate.

The liberty believers have at present is but a beginning

liberty; they are freed but in part from their spiritual enemies;

but it is a growing liberty every day, and will be consummate and

complete at last.

To conclude, Christian liberty is either;

1. Privative, or,

2. Positive.

The liberty believers are invested with is of both kinds: They

are not only freed from many miseries, burdens and dangers, but also

invested by Jesus Christ with many royal privileges and invaluable

immunities.

Fourthly, And this brings us to the fourth and last thing,

namely, the properties of this blessed freedom which the saints

enjoy by Jesus Christ; and, if we consider it duly, it will be found

to be,

First, A wonderful liberty, never enough to be admired. How

could it be imagined that ever those who owed unto God more than

ever they could pay by their own eternal sufferings; those that were

under the dreadful curse and condemnation of the law, in the power

and possession of Satan the strong man armed; those that were bound

with so many chains in their spiritual prison; their understanding

bound with ignorance, their wills with obstinacy, their hearts with

impenetrable hardness, their affections with a thousand bewitching

vanities, that slight their state of slavery so much, as

industriously to oppose all instruments and means of deliverance;

for such persons to be set at liberty, notwithstanding all this, is

the wonder of wonders, and will be deservedly marvellous in the eyes

of believers for ever.

Secondly, The freedom of believers is a peculiar freedom; a

liberty which few obtain; the generality abiding still in bondage to

Satan, who, from the multitude of his subjects, is stiled the god of

this world, 2 Cor. 4: 4. Believers in scripture are often called a

remnant, which is but a small part of the whole piece: The more

cause have the people of God to admire distinguishing mercy. How

many nobles and great ones of the world are but royal slaves to

Satan, and their own lusts! Thirdly, The liberty of believers is a

liberty dearly purchased by the blood of Christ. What that captain

said, Acts 22: 28. "With a great sum obtained I this freedom," may

be much more said of the believers' freedom: It was not silver or

gold, but the precious blood of Christ that purchased it, 1 Pet. 1:

18.

Fourthly, The freedom and liberty of believers is a growing and

increasing liberty; they get more and more out of the power of sin,

and nearer still to their complete salvation every day, Rom. 13: 11.

The body of sin dies daily in them: they are said to be crucified

with Christ: the strength of sin abates continually in them, after

the manner of crucified persons, who die a slow, but sure death: And

look in what degree the power of sin abates, proportionably their

spiritual liberty increases upon them.

Fifthly, The freedom of believers is a comfortable freedom: the

apostle comforts Christians of the lowest rank, poor servants, with

this consideration, 1 Cor. 7: 25!. "He that is called in the Lord,

being a servant, is the Lord's freeman," q. d. Let not the meanness

of your outward condition, which is a state of subjection and

dependence, a state of poverty and contempt, at all trouble you: you

are the Lord's freemen, of precious account in his eyes. O it is a

comfortable liberty!

Sixthly, and Lastly, It is a perpetual and final freedom; they

that are once freed by Christ, have their manumission and final

discharge from that state of bondage they were in before: sin shall

never have dominion over them any more: it may tempt them and

trouble them, but shall never more rule and govern them, Acts 26:

18. And thus you see what a glorious liberty the liberty of

believers is.

The improvement whereof will be in the following inferences.

Inf. 1. How rational is the joy of Christians, above the joy of

all others in the world? Shall not the captive rejoice in his

recovered liberty? the very birds of the air (as one observes) had

rather be at liberty in the woods, though lean and hungry, than in a

golden cage with the richest fare: every creature naturally prizes

it; none more than believers, who have felt the burden and bondage

of corruption, who in the days of their first illumination and

conviction have poured out many groans and tears for this mercy.

What was said of the captive people of God in Babylon, excellently

shadows forth the state of God's people under spiritual bondage,

with the way and manner of their deliverance from it, Zech. 9: 11.

"By the blood of the covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of

the pit, wherein is no water." Believers are delivered by the blood

of Christ, out of a worse pit than that of Babylon; and look, as the

tribes in their return from thence were overwhelmed with joy and

astonishment, Psal 126: 1, 2. "When the Lord turned again the

captivity of Sion, we are like them that dream: then was our mouth

filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

They were overwhelmed with the sense of the mercy: So should it

be with the people of God. It is said, Luke 15: 24. when the

prodigal son (there made the emblem of a returning, converting

sinner) was returned again to his father's house, that there was

heard music and dancing, mirth and feasting in that house. The

angels in heaven rejoice when a soul is recovered out of the power

of Satan: And shall not the recovered soul, immediately concerned in

the mercy, greatly rejoice? Yea, let them rejoice in the Lord, and

let no earthly trouble or affliction ever have power to interrupt

their joy for a moment, after such a deliverance as this.

Inf. 2. How unreasonable and wholly inexcusable is the sin of

apostasy from Jesus Christ? What is it but for a delivered captive

to put his feet again into the shackles; his hands into the

manacles; his neck into the iron yoke, from which he has been

delivered? It is said, Mat. 12: 44, 45. "When the unclean spirit is

gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and

findeth none: Then he saith, I will return into mine house from

whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept,

and garnished; then goes he, and taketh with him seven other spirits

more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the

last state of that man is worse than the first." Even as a prisoner

that has escaped, and is again recovered, is loaded with double

irons. Let the people of God be content to run any hazard, endure

any difficulties in the way of religion, rather than return again

into their former bondage, to sin and Satan. O Christian! if ever

God gave thee a sight and a sense of the misery and danger of thy

natural state, if ever thou hast felt the pangs of labouring and

distressed conscience, and, after all this, tasted the unspeakable

sweetness of the peace and rest that are in Christ, thou wilt rather

chuse to die ten thousand deaths, shall to forsake Christ, and go

back again into that sad condition.

Inf. 3. How suitable and well-becoming is a free spirit in

believers to their state of liberty and freedom? Christ has made

your condition free, O let the temper and frame of your hearts be

free also; do all that you do for God with a spirit of freedom; not

by constraint, but willingly. Methinks, Christians, the new nature

that is in you should stand for a command, and be instead of all

arguments that use to work upon the hopes and fears of other men.

See how all creatures work according to the principle of their

natures. You need not command a mother to draw forth her breasts to

a sucking child; nature itself teaches and prompts to that. You need

not bid the sea ebb and flow at the stated hours. O Christian! why

should thy heart need any other argument, than its own spiritual

inclination, to keep its stated times and seasons of communion with

God? Let none of God's commandments be grievous to you: let not

thine heart need dragging and forcing to its own benefit and

advantage. Whatever you do for God, do it cheerfully; and whatever

you suffer for God suffer it cheerfully. It was a brave spirit which

actuated holy Paul, "I am ready (saith he) not only to be bound, but

also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," Acts 21:

13.

Inf. 4. Let no man wonder at the enmity and opposition of Satan

to the preaching of the gospel: for by the gospel it is that souls

are recovered out of his power, Acts 26: 18. It is the express work

of ministers "to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power

of Satan unto God." Satan (as one saith) is a great and jealous

prince: he will never endure to have liberty proclaimed by the

ministers of Christ within his dominions. And, indeed, what is it

less, when the gospel is preached in power, but as it were by beat

of drum, and sound of trumpet, to proclaim liberty, spiritual,

sweet, and everlasting liberty, to every soul sensible of the

bondage of corruption and the cruel servitude of Satan, and will now

come over to Jesus Christ? And O what numbers and multitudes of

prisoners have broken loose from Satan at one proclamation of

Christ, Acts 2: 41. But Satan owes the servants of Christ a spite

for this, and will be sure to pay them if ever they come within his

reach; persecution is the evil genius of the gospel, and follows it

as the shadow does the body.

Inf. 5. How careful should Christians be to maintain their

spiritual liberty in all and every point thereof! "Stand fast (saith

Paul) in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not

again entangled in the yoke of bondage," Gal. 5: 1. And again, Ye

are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men." It is

Christ's prerogative to prescribe the rules of his own house; he has

given no man dominion over your faith, 2 Cor. 1: 24. One man is no

rule to another, but the word of Christ is a rule to all: follow not

the holiest of men one step farther than they follow Christ, 1 Cor.

11: 4. Man is an ambitious creature, naturally affecting dominion;

and dominion over the mind rather than over the body. To give law to

others, feeds pride in himself; so far as any man brings the word of

Christ to warrant his injunctions, so far we are to obey, and no

farther; Christ is your Lord and Lawgiver.

Inf. 6. Lastly, Let this encourage and persuade sinners to come

to Christ; for with him is sweet liberty to poor captives. Oh that

you did but know what a blessed state Jesus Christ would bring you

into! "Come unto me (saith he) ye that labour and are heavy laden:"

and what encouragement does he give to comers? Why this, "My yoke is

easy, and my burden is light." The devil persuades you, that the

ways of obedience and strict godliness are a perfect bondage; but if

ever God regenerate you, you will find his ways, "ways of

pleasantness, and all his paths peace: you will rejoice in the way

of his commandments as much as in all riches:" you will find the

worst work Christ puts you about, even suffering work, sweeter than

all the pleasures that ever you found in sin. O therefore open your

hearts at the call of the gospel: Come unto Christ, then shall you

be free indeed.

Sermon 19.

The Saints coming home to GOD by Reconciliation and Glorification,

opened and applied.

1 Pet. 3: 18.

For Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that

he might bring us to God.

The scope of the apostle in this place is to prepare and

fortify Christians for a day of suffering. In order to their

cheerful sustaining whereof, he prescribeth two excellent rules of

mighty use for all suffering Christians.

First, To get a good conscience within them, ver. 16,17. Hic

murus aheneus esto.

Secondly, To set the example of Christ's sufferings before

them, ver. 18. "For Christ has once suffered for sinners;" the

sufferings of Christ for us, is the great motive engaging Christians

to suffer cheerfully for him.

In the words before us we have,

First, The sufficiency and fulness of Christ's sufferings

intimated in that particle [once]; Christ needs to suffer no more,

having finished and completed that whole work at once.

Secondly, The meritorious cause of the sufferings of Christ,

and that is sin, Christ once suffered for sins; not his own sins,

but ours; as it follows in the next clause, which is the third thing

here observable, viz.

Thirdly, The admirable grace and unexampled love of Christ to

us sinners, the just for the unjust; in which words the substitution

of Christ in the room and place of sinners, the vicegerence of his

death is plainly expressed. Christ died not only nostro bono, for

our good, but also nostro loco, in our stead.

Fourthly, Here is also the final cause or design and scope of

the sufferings of Christ, which was to bring us to God.

Fifthly, Here is also the issue of the sufferings of Christ,

which was the death of Christ in the flesh, and the quickening of

Christ after death by the Spirit. Many excellent observations are

lodged in the bosom of this scripture; all which I must pass over in

silence at this time, and confine my discourse to the final cause of

the sufferings of Christ, namely, that he might bring us to God:

where the observation will be plainly and briefly this.

Doct. That the end of Christ's cursed death, and bitter

sufferings, was to bring all those for whom he died unto

God.

In the explication and preparation of this point for use, two

things must be spoken unto, viz.

1. What Christ's bringing us to God imports?

2. What influence the death of Christ has upon this design of

bringing us to God?

First, What Christ's bringing us to God imports? And certainly

there be many great and excellent things contained in this

expression: more generally it notes our state of reconciliation, and

our state of glorification. By reconciliation we are brought nigh to

God, Eph. 2: 18. "Ye are made nigh," i.e. reconciled, "by the blood

of Christ," Heb. 12: 22, 23. we are said "to come to God the Judge

of all." By reconciliation we are brought nigh unto God now; by

glorification we shall be brought home to God hereafter, 1 Thes. 55:

17. "We shall be ever with the Lord." But more particularly this

phrase, "that he might bring us to God," imports,

First, That the chief happiness of man consisteth in the

enjoyment of God: that the creature has as necessary dependence upon

God for happiness, as the stream has upon the fountain, or the image

in the glass upon the face of him that looks into it. For as the sum

of the creature's misery lies in this, depart from me; separation

from God being the principal part of damnation, so, on the contrary,

the chief happiness of the creature consisteth in the enjoyment and

blessed vision of God, 1 John 3: 2. Psal. 17: 15. "I shall be

satisfied when I awake with thy likeness".

Secondly, It implies man's revolt and apostasy from God, Eph.

2: 12. "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who were some time afar off; are

made nigh by the blood of Christ." Those whom Christ bringeth unto

God were before afar off from him, both in state and condition, and

in temper and disposition: we were lost creatures, and had no desire

to return to God. The prodigal was said to go into a far country,

Luke 15: 80.

Thirdly, Christ's bringing us to God, implies our inability to

re turn to God of ourselves; we must be brought back by Christ, or

perish for ever in a state of separation from God: the lost sheep is

made the emblem of the lost sinner, Luke 15: 5. The sheep returns

not to the fold of itself, but the shepherd seeks it, finds it, and

carries it back upon his shoulders. And the apostle plainly tells

us, Rom. 5: 6. That when we were without strength, i.e. any ability

to recover, help, or save ourselves, in due time Christ died for the

ungodly.

Fourthly, Christ bringing us to God evidently implies this,

that God's unsatisfied justice was once the great bar betwixt him

and man. Man can have no access to God but by Christ: Christ brings

us to God by no other way but the way of satisfaction by his blood:

"He has suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might

bring us to God." Better ten thousand worlds should perish for ever,

than that God should lose the honour of his justice. This great

obex, or bar to our enjoyment of God, is effectually removed by the

death of Christ, whereby God's justice is not only fully satisfied,

but highly honoured and glorified, Rom. 3: 24. And so the way by

which we are brought to God is again opened (to the wonder and joy

of all believers) by the blood and sufferings of Christ.

Fifthly, and lastly, It shews us the peculiar happiness and

privilege of believers above all people in the world: these only are

they which shall be brought to God by Jesus Christ in a reconciled

state: others, indeed, shall be brought to God as a Judge, to be

condemned by him: believers only are brought to God in the

Mediator's hand, as a reconciled Father, to be made blessed for ever

in the enjoyment of him: every believer is brought singly to God at

his death, Luke 16: 22. And all believers shall be jointly and

solemnly presented to God in the great day, Col. 1: 22. Jude, ver.

24. They shall be all presented faultless before the presence of his

glory with exceeding joy. Now the privilege of believers in that day

will lie in divers things.

First, That they shall be all brought to God together. This

will be the general assembly mentioned, Heb. 12: 22. There shall be

a collection of all believers, in all ages of the world, into one

blessed assembly; they shall come from the east, and west, and

north, and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, Luke 13:

29. 0 what a glorious train will be seen following the Redeemer in

that day!

Secondly, As all the saints shall be collected into one body;

so they shall be all brought or presented unto God, faultless and

with out blemish, Jude, ver. 24. "A glorious church, without spot or

wrinkle, or any such thing," Eph. 5: 27. For this is the general

assembly of the spirits of just men that are made perfect, Heb. 12:

23. All sin was perfectly separated from them when death had

separated their souls and bodies.

Thirdly, In this lies the privilege of believers, that as they

shall be all brought together, and that in a state of absolute

purity, and perfection, so they shall be all brought to God: they

shall see his face, in the vision whereof is "fulness of joy, and at

whose right-hand are pleasures for evermore," Psal. 16: 11. The

objective blessedness of the saints consisteth in their fruition of

God, Psal. 72: 25. To see God in his word and works, is the

happiness of the saints on earth; but to see him face to face, will

be the fulness of their blessedness in heaven, 1 John 3: 2. This is

that intuitive, transforming, and sanctifying vision, of which the

scriptures frequently speaks, Psal. 17: 15. 1 Cor. 15: 28. Rev. 7:

17.

Fourthly, To be brought unto God, must needs imply a state of

perfect joy and highest delight. So speaks the apostle, Jude 14.

Christ shall present, or bring them to God with exceeding joy. And

more fully the joy of this day is expressed, Psal. 45: 15 "With joy

and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the

king's palace." It will be a day of universal joy, when all the

saints are brought home to God in a perfected state. For,

1. God the Father will rejoice when Christ brings home that

precious number of his elect, whom he redeemed by his blood: he

rejoiceth in them now, though imperfect, and under many distasteful

corruptions and weaknesses, Zeph. 3: 17. How much more will he

rejoice in them when Christ presents them without spot or wrinkle to

him, Eph. 5: 27.

2. Jesus Christ will exceedingly rejoice; it will be the day of

the gladness and satisfaction of his heart; for now, and not till

now, he receives his mystical fulness, Col. 1: 24. beholds all the

blessed issues of his death, which cannot but give him unspeakable

contentment, Isa 53: 11. "He shall see of the travail of his soul,

and shall be satisfied."

3. The day in which believers are brought home to God, will be

a day of unspeakable joy to the Holy Spirit of God himself. For unto

this all his sanctifying designs in this world had respect: to this

day he sealed them: towards this day he stirred up desires, and

groanings in their hearts that cannot be uttered, Eph. 4: 30. Rom.

8: 28. Thus the great and blessed persons, Father, Son, and Spirit,

will rejoice in the bringing home of the elect to God. For as it is

the greatest joy to a man to see the designs which his heart has

been long projecting, and intently set upon, by an orderly conduct,

at last brought to the happy issue he first aimed at; much more will

it be so here; the counsel and hand of each person being deeply

concerned in this blessed design.

4. The angels of God will rejoice at the bringing home of

believers to him: the spirits of just men made perfect, will be

united in one general assembly, with an innumerable company of

angels, Heb. 2: 22 Great is the affection and love of angels to

redeemed ones; they greatly rejoiced at the incarnation of Christ

for them, Luke 2: 13. They greatly delighted to pry into the mystery

of their redemption, 1 Pet. 1. 12 They were marvellously delighted

at their conversion, which was the day of their espousals to Christ,

Luke 15: 10. They have been tender and careful over them, and very

serviceable to them in this world, Heb. 1: 14. and therefore cannot

but rejoice exceedingly, to see them all brought home in safety to

their father's house.

5. To conclude, Christ's bringing home all believers unto God,

will be matter of unspeakable joy to themselves; for, whatever

knowledge and acquaintance they had with God here, whatever sights

of faith they had of heaven and the glory to come in this world, yet

the sight of God and Christ the Redeemer will be an unspeakable

surprise to them in that day. This will be the day of relieving all

their wants, the day of satisfaction to all their desires; for now

they are come where they would be, arrived at the very desires of

their souls.

Secondly, In the last place, let it be considered, what

influence the death of Christ has upon this design, and you shall

find it much every way. In two things especially, the death of

Christ has a blessed casualty and influence in this matter, viz.

1. It effectually removes all obstacles to it.

2. It purchaseth (as a price) their title to it.

First, The death of Christ removes all obstacles out of the way

of this mercy: such were the bars hindering our access to God as

nothing but the death of Christ could remove, and thereby open a way

for believers to come to God. The guilt of sin barred us from his

gracious presence, Rom. 1: 2, 3. Hos. 14: 2. The filth of sin

excluded us from God, Hab. 1: 23. Heb. 12: 14. The enmity of our

nature perfectly stopped up our way to God, Col. 1: 21. Rom. 8: 7.

by reason hereof fallen man has no desire to come unto God, Job 21:

14. The justice of God, like a flaming sword turning every way, kept

all men from access to God. And Lastly, Satan, that malicious and

armed adversary, lay as a lion in the way to God, 2 Pet. 5: 8. 0,

with what strong bars were the gates of heaven shut against our

souls! The way of God was chained up with such difficulties, as none

but Christ was able to remove; and he by death has effectually

removed them all: The way is now open, even the new and the living

way, consecrated for us by his blood. The death of Christ

effectually removes the guilt of sin, 1 Pet. 2: 21. washes off the

filth of sin, 1 John 5: 6. takes away the enmity of nature, Col. 1:

20, 21. satisfies all the demands of justice, Rom. 3: 25, 26. has

broken all the power of Satan, Col. 2: 15. Heb. 2: 14. and

consequently the way to God is effectually and fully opened to

believers by the blood of Jesus, Heb. 10: 20.

Secondly, The blood of Christ purchased for believers their

right and title to this privilege, Gal. 4: 4, 5. "But when the

fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,

made under the law; to redeem them that were under the law, that we

might receive the adoption of sons," i.e. both the relation and

inheritance of sons. There was value and worth enough in the

precious blood of Christ, not only to pay all our debts to justice,

but over and above the payment of our debts, to purchase for us this

invaluable privilege. We must put this unspeakable mercy of being

brought to God, as my text puts it, upon the account, and to the

score of the death of Christ: no believer had ever tasted the

sweetness of such a mercy, if Christ had not tasted the bitterness

of death for him. The use of all you will have in the following

deductions of truth.

Deduction 1. Great is the preciousness and worth of souls, that

the life of Christ should be given to redeem and recover them to

God. As God laid out his thoughts and counsel from eternity, upon

them, to project the way and method of their salvation, so the Lord

Jesus, in pursuance of that blessed design, came from the bosom of

the Father, and spilt his invaluable blood to bring them to God. No

wise man expends vast sums to bring home trifling commodities: how

cheap soever our souls are in our estimation, it is evident by this

they are of precious esteem in the eyes of Christ.

Deduct. 2. Redeemed souls must expect no rest or satisfaction

on this side heaven, and the full enjoyment of God. The life of a

believer in this world, is a life of motion and expectation: they

are now coming to God, 1 Pet. 2: 4. God, you see, is the centre and

rest of their souls, Heb. 4: 9. As the rivers cannot rest till they

pour themselves into the bosom of the sea, so neither can renewed

souls find rest till they come into the bosom of God. There are four

things which do and will break the rest, and disturb the souls of

believers in this world; afflictions, temptations, corruptions, and

absence from God. If the three former causes of disquietness were

totally removed, so that a believer were placed in such a condition

upon earth, where no affliction could disturb him, no temptation

trouble him, no corruption defile or grieve him, yet his very

absence from God must still keep him restless and unsatisfied, 2

Cor. 5: 6. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from

the Lord."

Deduct. 3. What sweet and pleasant thoughts should all

believers have of death! When they die, and never till they die,

shall they be fully brought home to God. Death to the saints, is the

door by which they enter into the enjoyment of God: the dying

Christian is almost at home, yet a few pangs and agonies more, and

then he is come to God, in whose presence is the fulness of joy. "I

desire (saith Paul) to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far

better," Phil. 1: 23. It should not affright us to be brought to

death, the king of terrors, so long as it is the office of death to

bring us to God. That dreaming opinion of the soul sleeping after

death, is as ungrounded, as it is uncomfortable: the same day we

loose from this shore, we shall be landed upon the blessed shore;

where we shall see and enjoy God for ever. O, if the friends of dead

believers did but understand where, and with whom their souls are,

whilst they are mourning over their bodies, certainly a few

believing thoughts of this would quickly dry up their tears. and

fill the house of mourning with voices of praise and thanksgiving!

Deduct. 4. How comfortable and sweet should the converses and

communication of Christians be one with another, in this world!

Christ is bringing them all to God through this vale of tears: they

are now in the way to him; all bound for heaven; going home to God,

their everlasting rest in glory: every day, every hour, every duty

brings them nearer and nearer to their journey's end, Rom. 13: 11.

"Now (saith the apostle) is our salvation nearer than when we

believed." O, what manner of heavenly communications and ravishing

discourses should believers have with each other as they walk by the

way! O, what pleasant and delightful converse should they have with

one another about the place and state whither Christ is bringing

them, and where they shall shortly be! What ravishing, transporting,

transforming visions they shall have that day they are brought home

to God! How surprisingly glorious to them the sight of Jesus Christ

will be, who died for them to bring them unto God! how should such

discourses as these, shorten and sweeten their passage through this

world, strengthen and encourage the dejected and feeble-minded, and

exceedingly honour and adorn their profession? Thus lived the

believers of old, Heb. 11: 9, 10. "By faith he sojourned in the land

of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with

Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he

looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is

God." But, alas! most Christians are either so entangled in the

cares and troubles, or so ensnared by the delights and pleasures

which almost continually divert and take up their thoughts by the

way, that there is but little room for any discourses of Christ and

heaven, among many of them: but certainly this would be as much your

interest as your duty. When the apostle had entertained the

Thessalonians with a lovely discourse of their meeting the Lord in

the air, and being ever with the Lord, he charges it upon them as

their great duty, to comfort one another with these words, 1 Thes.

4: 17,18.

Deduct. 5; How unreasonable are the dejections of believers

upon the account of those troubles which they meet with in this

world! It is true, afflictions of all kinds do attend believers in

their way to God; through many tribulations we must enter into that

kingdom. But what then? must we despond and droop under them as

other men? Surely no; If afflictions be the way through which you

must come to God, then never be discouraged at affliction; troubles

and afflictions are of excellent use, under the blessings of the

Spirit, to further Christ's great design in bringing you to God. How

often would you turn out of that way which leads to God, if he did

not hedge up your way with thorns, Hos. 2: 6. Doubtless when you

come home to God, you shall find you have been much beholden (it may

be a great deal more) to your troubles than to your comforts, for

bringing you thither: however, the sweetness of the end will

infinitely more then recompense the sorrows and troubles of the way:

nor are they worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be

revealed in you, Rom. 8: 18.

Deduct 6. How much are all believers obliged, in point of

interest, to follow Jesus Christ whithersoever he goes! Thus are the

saints described, Rev. 14: 4. "These are they which follow the Lamb

whithersoever be goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being

the first fruits unto God, and to the Lamb." If it be the design of

Christ to bring us to God, then certainly it is our duty to follow

Christ in all the paths of active and passive obedience through

which he now leads us, as ever we expect to be brought home to God

at last: "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning

of our confidence stedfast unto the end," Heb. 3: 14. If we have

followed him through many sufferings and troubles, and shall turn

away from him at last, we lose all that we have wrought and suffered

in religion, and shall never reach home to God at last. The crown of

life belongs only to them who are faithful to the death.

Deduct. 7. Let all that desire, or expect to come to God

hereafter, come to Christ by faith now. There is no other way to the

Father, but by Christ, no other way to Christ but faith. How vain

therefore are the hopes and expectations of all unbelievers? Be

assured of this great truth, Death shall bring you to God as an

avenging Judge, if Christ do not bring you now to God as a

reconciled Father: without holiness no man shall see God: the door

of hope is shut against all christless persons, John 14: 6. "No man

cometh unto the Father but by me." O what a sweet voice comes down

from heaven to your souls this day, saying, As ever you expect or

hope to come to God, and enjoy the blessing that is here, come unto

Christ, obey his calls, give up yourselves to his conduct and

government, and you shall certainly be brought to God! As sure as

you shall now be brought to Jesus Christ by spiritual union, so sure

shall you be brought to God in full fruition.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the new and living way to the

Father.

And thus I have finished the motives drawn from the titles and

benefits of Christ, serving to enforce and quicken the great gospel

exhortation of coming to, and effectually applying the Lord Jesus

Christ in the way of faith. O that the blessings of the Spirit might

follow these calls, and fix these considerations as nails in sure

places! But seeing the great hindrance and obstruction to faith is

the false opinion and persuasion of most unregenerate men, that they

are already in Christ; my next work therefore shall be, in a second

use of conviction, to undeceive men in that matter; and that, by

shewing them the undoubted certainty of these two things:

First, That there is no coming ordinarily to Christ without the

application of the law to our consciences, in a way of effectual

conviction.

Secondly, Nor by that neither, without the teachings of God, in

the way of spiritual illumination. The first of these will be fully

confirmed and opened in the following sermon.

Sermon 20.

The great usefulness of the Law or Word of GOD, in order to the

Application of CHRIST.

Rom. 7: 9.

For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came,

sin revived, and I died.

The scope of the apostle in this epistle, and more particularly

in this chapter, is to state the due use and excellency of the law,

which he does accordingly.

First, By denying to it a power to justify us, which is the

peculiar honour of Christ.

Secondly, By ascribing to it a power to convince us, and so

prepare us for Christ.

Neither attributing to it more honour than belongeth to it, nor

yet detracting from it that honour and usefulness which God has

given it. It cannot make us righteous, but it can convince us that

we are unrighteous; it cannot heal, but it can open and discover the

wounds that sin has given us; which he proves in this place by an

argument drawn from his own experience, confirmed also by the

general experience of believers, in whose persons and names we must

here understand him to speak; "For I was alive without the law once;

but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Wherein

three particulars are very observable.

First, The opinion Paul had, and all unregenerate men have of

themselves before conversion: I was alive once. By life, understand

here liveliness, cheerfulness, and confidence of his good estate and

condition: he was full of vain hope, false joy, and presumptuous

confidence; a very brisk and jovial man.

Secondly, The sense and opinion he had, and all others will

have of themselves, if ever they come under the regenerating work of

the Spirit in his ordinary method of working: I died. The death he

here speaks of, stands opposed to that life before mentioned; and

signifies the sorrows, fears, and tremblings that seized upon his

soul, when his state and temper were upon the change: the

apprehensions he then had of his condition struck him home to the

heart, and damped all his carnal mirth: I died.

Thirdly, The ground and reason of this wonderful alteration and

change of his judgement, and apprehension of his own condition; the

commandment came, and sin revived: The commandment came, i.e. it

came home to my conscience, it was fixed with a divine and mighty

efficacy upon my heart: the commandment was come before by way of

promulgation, and the literal knowledge of it; but it never came

till now in its spiritual sense and convincing power to his soul;

though he had often read, and heard the law before, yet he never

clearly understood the meaning and extent, he never felt the mighty

efficacy thereof upon his heart before; it so came at this time, as

it never came before. From hence the observations are,

Doct. 1. That unregenerate persons are generally full of

groundless confidence and cheerfulness, though their condition be

sad and miserable.

Doct. 2. That there is a mighty efficacy in the word or law of

God, to kill vain confidence, and quench carnal mirth in the hearts

of men, when God sets it home upon their consciences.

We shall take both these points under consideration, and

improve them to the design in hand.

Doct. 1. That unregenerate persons are full of groundless

confidence and cheerfulness, though their condition be sad and

miserable; Rev. 3: 17. Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased

with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art

wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; This is the

very life that unregenerate men do live.

In opening whereof, I shall shew you,

1. What is the life of the unregenerate.

2. What maintains that life.

3. How it appears that this is the life the generality of the

world do live.

4. The danger of living such a life as this: and then apply it.

First, What is the life of the unregenerate, and wherein it

consists? Now there being, among others, three things in which the

life of the unregenerate does principally consist, viz.

Carnal security,

Presumptuous hope, and false joy,

Of these briefly in their order.

First, There is in unregenerate men a great deal of carnal

security; they dread no danger; Luke 11: 21. "When a strong man

armed keepeth his palace, his goods are at peace:" There is

generally a great stillness and silence in the consciences of such

men; when others, in a better condition, are watching and trembling,

they sleep securely: so they live, and so ofttimes they die, Psal.

123: 4. "They have no bonds in their death," [Hebrew, on knots], no

difficulties that puzzle them. It is true, the consciences of few

men are so perfectly stupefied, but that some time or other they

twang and gird them; but it seldom works to that height, or

continues with them so long as to give any considerable interruption

to their carnal peace and quietness.

Secondly, The life of the unregenerate consisteth in

presumptuous hope: this is the very foundation of their carnal

security. So Christ tells the Jews, John 8: 54, 53. "Of whom ye say

that he is your God, and yet ye have not known him." The world is

full of hope without a promise, which is but as a spider's web, when

a stress comes to be laid upon it, John 27: 8. Unregenerate men are

said indeed to be without hope, Ephes. 2: 12. but the meaning is,

they are without any solid, well-grounded hope; for in scripture-

account, vain hope is no hope, except it be a lively hope, 1 Pet. 1:

5. A hope flowing from union with Christ, Col. 1: 27. A hope

nourished by experience, Rom. 5: 4. A hope for which a man can give

a reason, 1 Pet. 3: 15. a hope that puts men upon heart-purifying

endeavours, 1 John 3: 5. It is in the account of God a cipher, a

vanity, not deserving the name of hope; and yet such a groundless,

dead, christless, irrational, idle hope is that which the

unregenerate live upon.

Thirdly, The life of the unregenerate consisteth in false joy,

the immediate offspring of ungrounded hope, Mat. 13: 28. The stony

ground receive the word with joy.

There are two sorts of joy upon which the unregenerate live,

viz.

1. A sensitive joy in things carnal.

2. A delusive joy in things spiritual.

They rejoice in corn, wine, and oil, in their estates and

children, in the pleasant fruitions of the creature; yea, and they

rejoice also in Christ and the promises, in heaven and in glory:

with all which they have just such a kind of communion as a man has

in a dream with a full feast and curious music; and just so their

joy will vanish when they awake. Now these three, security, hope,

and joy, make up the livelihood of the carnal world.

Secondly, Next it concerns us to enquire what are the things

that maintain and support this security, hope and joy in the hearts

of unregenerate men; and if we consider duly, we shall find that

church privileges, natural ignorance, false evidences of the love of

God, slight workings of the gospel, self love, comparing themselves

with the more profane, and Satan's policy managing all these in

order to their eternal ruin, are so many springs to feed and

maintain this life of delusion in the unregenerate.

1. First, Church privileges lay the foundation to this strong

delusion. Thus the Jews deceived themselves, saying in their hearts,

"We have Abraham for our father," Mat. 3: 9. This props up the vain

hopes that Abraham's blood ran in their veins, though Abraham's

faith and obedience never wrought in their hearts.

2. Secondly, Natural ignorance; this keeps all in peace: they

that see not, fear not. There are but two ways to quiet the hearts

of men about their spiritual and eternal concernments, viz. the way

of assurance and faith, or the way of ignorance and self-deceit; by

the one we are put beyond danger, by the other beyond fear, though

the danger be greater. Satan could never quiet men, if he did not

first blind them.

3. Thirdly, False evidences of the love of God is another

spring feeding this security, vain hope, and false joy in the hearts

of men: see the power of it to hush and still the conscience, Mat.

7: 92. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not

prophesied in thy name?" &c. The things upon which they built their

evidence and confidence, were external things in religion; yet they

had a quieting power upon them, as if they had been the best

evidences in the world.

4. Fourthly, Slight workings of the gospel; such are transient

motions of the affections under the word, Heb. 6: 8. the working of

their desires about spiritual objects. John 6: 34. Math. 12: 43. the

external change and reformation of their ways, Mat. 12: 43. all

which serve to nourish the vain hopes of the unregenerate.

5. Fifthly, Self-love is an apparent reason and ground of

security and false hope, Mat. 7: 3. It makes a man to overlook great

evils in himself, whilst he is sharp-sighted to discover and censure

lesser evils in others: self love takes away the sight of sin, by

bringing it too near the eye.

6. Sixthly, Men's comparing themselves with those that are more

profane and grossly wicked than themselves, serves notably to quiet

and hush the conscience asleep; "God, I thank thee, (said the

Pharisee), I am not as other men, or as this publican." O what a

saint did he seem to himself, when he stood by those that were

externally more wicked.

7. Seventhly, and lastly, The policy of Satan to manage all

these things to the blinding and ruining of the souls of men, is

another great reason they live so securely and pleasantly as they

do, in a state of so much danger and misery, 2 Cor. 4: 3, 4. "The

god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not.

Thirdly, You have seen what the life of the unregenerate is,

and what maintains that life. In the next place, I shall give you

evidence that this is the life the generality of the world do live;

a life of carnal security, vain hope, and false joy; this will

evidently appear, if we consider,

First, The activity and liveliness of men's spirits in pursuit

of the world. O how lively and vigorous are their hearts in the

management of earthly designs! Psal. 6: 4. "Who will shew us any

good?" The world eats up their hearts, time, and strength. Now this

could never be, if their eyes were but opened to see the danger and

misery their souls are in. How few designs for the world run in the

thoughts of a condemned man? O if God had ever made the light of

conviction to shine into their consciences, certainly the

temptations would lie the quite contrary way, even in too great a

neglect of things of this life! But this briskness and liveliness

plainly shew the great security which is upon most men.

Secondly, The marvellous quietness and stillness that is in the

thoughts and consciences of men, about their everlasting

concernments, plainly shews this to be the life of the unregenerate:

How few scruples, doubts, or fears shall you hear from them? How

many years may a man live in carnal families, before he shall hear

such a question as this seriously propounded, "What shall I do to be

saved?" There are no questions in their lips, because no fear or

sense of danger in their hearts.

Thirdly, The general contentedness, and professed willingness

of carnal men to die, give clear evidence that such a life of

security and vain hope is the life they live; "Like sheep they are

laid in the grave," Psal. 49: 14. O how quiet and still are their

consciences, when there are but a few breaths more between them and

everlasting burnings! Had God opened their eyes to apprehend the

consequences of death, and what follows the pale horse, Rev. 6: 8.

it were impossible but that every unregenerate man should make that

bed on which he dies shake and tremble under him.

Fourthly, and lastly, The low esteem men have for Christ, and

the total neglect of, at least the mere biding with, those duties in

which he is to be found, plainly discover this stupid secure life to

be the life that the generality of the world do live, for were men

sensible of the disease of sin, there could be no quieting them

without "Christ the physician," Phil. 3: 8. All the business they

have to do in this world could never keep them from their knees, or

make them strangers to their closets; all which, and much more that

might be said of the like nature, gives too full and clear proof of

this sad assertion, that this is the life the unregenerate world

generally lives.

Fourthly, In the last place, I would speak a few words to

discover the danger of such a life as has been described; to which

purpose let the following brief hints be seriously minded.

First, By these things souls are inevitably betrayed into hell

and eternal ruin; this blinding is in order to damning, 2 Cor. 4: 3,

4. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, whose

eyes the god of this world has blinded." Those that are turned over

into eternal death are thus generally hoodwinked and blinded in

order thereunto, Isa 6: 9, 10. "And he said go and tell this people,

hear ye indeed, but understand not: and see ye indeed, but perceive

not. Make the hearts of this people fat, and make their ears heavy,

and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with

their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be

healed.

Secondly, As damning is the event of blinding, so nothing makes

hell a more terrible surprise to the soul than this does. By this

means the wrath of God is felt before its danger be apprehended; a

man is past all hope, before he begins to have any fear: his eternal

ruin, like a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall,

cometh suddenly at an instant, Isa. 30: 13. and as it damns surely

and surprisingly, so,

Thirdly, Nothing more aggravates a man's damnation than to sink

suddenly into it, from amidst so many hopes, and high confidence of

safety: For a man to find himself in hell, when he thought and

concluded himself within a step of heaven O what a hell will it be

to such men! The higher vain hopes lifted them up, the more dreadful

must their fall be, Matth. 7: 22. And as it damns surely,

surprisingly, and with highest aggravations, so,

Fourthly, This life of security and vain hope frustrates all

the means of recovery and salvation, in the only season wherein they

can be useful and beneficial to us: By reason of these things the

word has no power to convince men's consciences, nothing can bring

them to a sight and sense of their condition: Therefore Christ told

the self-confident and blind Jews, Matth. 21: 21. "That the

publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before them:" And

the reason is, because their hearts lie more open and fair to the

strokes of conviction and compunction for sin than those do, who are

blinded by vain hopes and confidences.

Inference 1. Is this the life that the unregenerate world

lives? Then it is not to be wondered at that the preaching of the

gospel has so little success: "Who has believed our report? (saith

the prophet) and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isa. 53:

1. Ministers study for truths apt to awaken and convince the

consciences of them that hear them, but their words return again to

them: They turn to God, and mourn over the matter; we have laboured

in vain, and spent our strength for nought: And this security is the

cause of all, vain hopes bar fast the doors of men's hearts against

all the convictions and persuasions of the word. The greater cause

have they to admire the grace of God, who have found, or shall find

the convictions of the word sharper than any two edged sword,

piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit; to whose

hearts God brings home the commandment by an effectual application.

Inf. 2. If this be the life of the unregenerate world, what

deadly enemies are they that nourish and strengthen the groundless

confidences and vain hopes of salvation in men. This the scripture

calls the healing of the hurt of souls slightly, by crying, "Peace,

peace, when there is no peace," Jer. 6: 14. The sewing of pillows

under their arm-holes, Ezek. 13: 18. That they may lie soft and easy

under the ministry; and this is the doctrine which the people love:

but oh, what wilt the end of these things be! And what an account

have those men to give to God for the blood of those souls by them

betrayed to the everlasting burnings! Such flattery is the greatest

cruelty: Those whom you bless upon earth, will curse you in hell,

and the day in which they trusted their souls to your conduct.

Inf. 3. How great a mercy is it to be awakened out of that

general sleep and security which is fallen upon the world! You

cannot estimate the value of that mercy, for it is a peculiar mercy.

O that ever the Spirit of the Lord should touch thy soul under the

ministry of the word, startle and rouse thy conscience, whilst

others are left in the dead sleep of security round about thee! When

the Lord dealt with thy soul much after the same manner he did with

Paul in the way to Damascus, who not only saw a light shining from

heaven, which those that travelled with him saw as well as he, but

heard that voice from heaven which did the work upon his heart,

though his companions heard it not. Besides, it is not only a

peculiar mercy, but it is a leading introductive mercy, to all other

spiritual mercies that follow it to all eternity. If God had not

done this for thee, thou hadst never been brought to faith, to

Christ, or heaven. From this act of the Spirit all other saving acts

take their rise; so that you have cause for ever to admire the

goodness of God in such a favour as this is.

Inf. 4. Lastly, Hence it follows that the generality of the

world are in the direct way to eternal ruin; and whatever their vain

confidences are, that cannot be saved "Narrow is the way, and strait

is the gate that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Hear me all you that live this dangerous life of carnal security and

vain hope, whatever your persuasions and confidences are, except you

give them up, and get better grounds for your hope, you cannot be

saved. For,

First, Such hopes and confidences as yours are directly

contradictory to the established order of the gospel, which requires

repentance, Acts 5: 31. faith, Acts 13: 39. and regeneration, Joh

3: 3. in all that shall be saved. And this order shall never be

altered for any man's sake.

Secondly, If such as you be saved, all the threatenings in

scripture must be reversed, which lie in full opposition to your

vain hopes, Mark 16: 16. John 3: 16. Rom. 3: 8, 9. Either the truth

of God, in these threatenings must fail, or your vain hopes must

fail.

Thirdly, If ever such as you be saved, new conditions must be

set to all the promises; for there is no condition of any special

promise found in any unregenerate person. Compare your hearts with

these scriptures, Matth. 5: 3, 4, 5, 6. Psal. 24: 4. Psal. 84: 11.

Gen. 17: 1, 2.

Fourthly, If ever such a hope as yours bring you to heaven,

then the saving hope of God's elect is not rightly described to us

in the scriptures. Scripture-hope is the effect of regeneration, 1

Pet. 1: 3. And purity of heart is the effect of that hope, 1 John 3:

3. Nay.

Fourthly, The very nature of heaven is mistaken in scripture,

if such as you be subjects qualified for its enjoyment: For

assimilation, or the conformity of the soul to God in holiness, is,

in the scripture account, a principal ingredient of that

blessedness: By all which it manifestly appears that the hopes of

most men are in vain, and will never bring them to heaven.

Sermon 21.

Rom 7:9

For I was alive without the law once: But when the commandment

came, sin revived, and I died.

Doct. 2. THAT there is a mighty efficacy in the word or law of

God, to kill vain confidence, and quench carnal mirth in the hearts

of men, when God sets it home upon their consciences. "The weapons

of the word are not carnal, but mighty through God; to the pulling

down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every thing

that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into

captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. 10: 4,

5.

In the opening of this point I shall,

1. Demonstrate the efficacy of the word or law of God.

2. Shew wherein the efficacy thereof lies.

3. From whence it has all this mighty power and efficacy.

First, I shall give you some demonstrations of the mighty power

and efficacy that there are in the word or law of God; which will

appear with the fullest evidence,

First, From the various subjects upon whom it works: The hearts

and consciences of men of all orders and qualities, have been

reached and wounded to the quick by the two-edged sword of God's

law. Some, among the great and honourable of the earth, (though

indeed the fewest of that rank) have been made to stoop and tremble

under the word, Acts 24: 16. Mark 6: 20. 1 Sam. 15: 24. The wise and

learned of the world have felt its power, and been brought over to

embrace the humbling and self-denying ways of Christ, Acts 17: 31.

Thus Origen, Hierom, Tertullian, Bradwardine, and many more, came

into Canaan laden with the Egyptian gold, as one speaks, i.e. they

came into the church of God abundantly enriched and furnished with

the learned arts and sciences, devoting them all to the service of

Christ. Yea, and which is as strange, the most simple, weak, and

illiterate have been wonderfully changed, and wrought upon by the

power of the word: "The testimonies of the Lord make wise the

simple:" Men

of weak understandings, in all other matters, have been made

wise to salvation by the power of the word, Matth. 11: 25. 1 Cor. 1:

27. Nay the most malicious and obstinate enemies of Christ have been

wounded and converted by the word, 1 Tim. 1: 13. Acts 16: 25. Those

that have been under the prejudice of the worst and most idolatrous

education, have been the subjects of its mighty power, Acts 19: 26.

To conclude, men of the most profligate and debauched lives have

been wonderfully changed and altered by the power of the word, 1

Cor. 6: 10, 11.

Secondly, The mighty efficacy of the law of God appears in the

manner of its operation; it works suddenly; strikes like a dart

through the hearts and consciences of men, Acts 2: 37. A wonderful

change is made in a short time: And, as it works quickly and

suddenly, so it works irresistibly, with an uncontrolled power upon

the spirits of men, 1 Thes. 1: 5. Rom. 1: 16. Let the soul be armed

against conviction with the thickest ignorance, strongest prejudice,

or most obstinate resolution, the word of God will wound the breast

even of such a man, when God sends it forth in his authority and

power.

Thirdly, The wonderful power of the law or word of God is

evidently seen in the strange effects which are produced by it in

the hearts and lives of men. For,

First, It changes and alters the frame and temper of the mind:

It moulds a man into a quite contrary temper, Gal. 1: 3. "He which

persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith, which once he

destroyed:" Thus a tiger is transformed into a lamb, by the power of

the word of God.

Secondly, It makes the soul, upon which it works, to forego and

quit the dearest interests it has in this world for Jesus Christ,

Phil. 3: 7, 8, 9. Riches, honours, self-righteousness, dearest

relations, are denied and forsaken. Reproach, poverty, and death

itself, are willingly embraced for Christ's sake, when once the

efficacy of the word has been upon the hearts of men, 1 Thes. 1: 6.

Those that were their companions in sin, are declined, renounced,

and cast of F with abhorrence, 1 Pet. 4: 8, 4. In such things as

these the mighty power of the word discovers itself.

First, It has an awakening efficacy upon secure and sleepy

sinners: It rouses the conscience, and brings a man to a sense and

feeling apprehension, Eph. 5: 13, 14. The first effectual touch of

the word startles the drowsy conscience. A poor sinner lies in his

sins, as Peter did in his chains, fast asleep, though a warrant was

signed for his execution the next day: but the Spirit in the word

awakens him as the angel did Peter: And this awakening power of the

word is in order, both of time and nature, antecedent to all its

operations and effects.

Secondly, The law of God has an enlightening efficacy upon the

minds of men: It is eye-salve to the blinded eye, Rev. 3: 18. A

light shining in a dark place, 2 Pet. 1: 19. A light shining into

the very heart of man, 2 Cor. 4: 6. When the word comes in power,

all things appear with another face: The sins that were hid from our

eyes, and the danger which was concealed by the policy of Satan from

our souls, now lie clear and open before us, Eph. 5: 8.

Thirdly, The word of God has a convincing efficacy: It sets sin

in order before the soul, Psal. 50: 21. As an army is drawn up in an

exact order, so are the sins of nature and practice, the sins of

youth and age, even a great and terrible army is drawn up before the

eye of the conscience; the convictions of the word are clear and

full, 1 Cor. 14: 24, 25. The very secrets of a sinner's heart are

made manifest; his mouth is stopped; his pleas are silenced; his

conscience yields to the charge of guilt, and to the equity of the

sentence of the law, so that the soul stands mute, and self-

condemned at the bar of conscience: It has got nothing to say why

the wrath of God should not come upon it to the uttermost, Rom. 3:

19.

Fourthly, The law of God has a soul-wounding, an heart-cut tiny

efficacy: It pierces into the very soul and spirit of man, Acts 2:

37. "When they heard this, they were pricked at their hearts, and

said unto Peter, and to the rest of tile apostles; men and brethren,

what shall we do?" A dreadful sound is in the sinner's ears; his

soul is in deep distress; he knows not which way to turn for ease;

no plaister but the blood of Christ can heal these wounds which the

word makes: No outward trouble, affliction, disgrace, or loss, ever

touched the quick as the word of God does.

Fifthly, The word has a heart-turning, a soul converting

efficacy in it: It is a regenerating, as well as a convincing word,

1 Pet. 1: 23. 1 Thes. 1: 9. The law wounds, the gospel cures; the

law discovers the evil that is in sin, and the misery that follows

it; and the Spirit of God, working in fellowship with the word,

effectually turns the heart from sin. And thus we see in what

glorious acts the efficacy of the word discovers itself upon the

hearts of men; and all these acts lie in order to each other: For,

until the soul be awakened, it cannot be enlightened, Eph. 5: 14.

Till it be enlightened, it cannot be convinced, Eph. 5: 13.

Conviction being nothing else but the application of the light that

shines in the mind to the conscience of a sinner: Till it be

convinced, it cannot be wounded for sin, Acts 2: 37. And until it be

wounded for sin, it will never be converted from sin, and brought

effectually to Jesus Christ. And thus you see what the power of the

word is.

Thirdly, In the last place, it will concern us to enquire

whence the word of God has all this power? And it is most certain,

that it is not a power inherent in itself, nor derived from the

instrument by which it is managed, but from the Spirit of the Lord,

who communicates to it all that power and efficacy which it has upon

our souls.

1. Its power is not in, or from itself: It works not in a

physical way, as natural agents do; for then the effect would always

follow, except it were miraculously hindered: But this spiritual

efficacy is in the word, as the healing virtue was in the waters of

Bethesda, John 5: 4. "An angel went down at a certain season into

the pool, and troubled the water: Whosoever then first, after the

troubling of the water, steps in, was made whole of whatsoever

disease he had." It is not a power naturally inherent in it at all

times, but communicated to it at some special seasons. How often is

the word preached, and no man awaked or convinced by it!

2. The power of the word is not communicated to it by the

instrument that manageth it, 1 Cor. 3: 7. "Neither is he that

planteth any thing, neither be that watereth." Ministers are nothing

to such an effect and purpose as this is; he does not mean that they

are useless and altogether unnecessary, but insufficient of

themselves to produce such mighty effects: It works not as it is the

word of man, 2 Thess. 2: 13. Ministers may say of the ordinary, as

Peter said of the extraordinary effects of the Spirit, Acts 3: 12.

"Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so

earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made

this man to walk?" If the effects of the word were in the power, and

at the command of him that preacheth it, then the blood of all the

souls that perish under our ministry must lie at our door, as was

formerly noted.

3. If you say, whence then has the word all this power? Our

answer is, It derives it all from the Spirit of God, 1 Thes. 2: 13,

"For this cause thank we God without ceasing, because when ye

received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as

the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which

effectually worketh also in you that believe." It is a successful

instrument only when it is in the hand of the Spirit, with out whose

influence it never did, nor can convince, convert, or save any soul.

Now, the Spirit of God has a sovereignty over three things in order

to the conversion of sinners.

1. Over the word which works.

9. Over the soul wrought upon.

S. Over the time and season of working.

First, The Spirit has a glorious sovereignty over the word

itself whose instrument it is to make it successful or not, as it

pleaseth him, Isa. 4: 10, 11. "For as the rain cometh down, and the

snow from heaven, &c. so shall my word be that goeth out of my

mouth:" as the clouds, so the word is carried and directed by divine

pleasure. It is the Lord that makes them both give down their

blessings, or to pass away fruitless and empty: yea, it is from the

Spirit that this part of the word works, and not another. Those

things upon which ministers bestow greatest labour in their

preparation, and from which accordingly they have the greatest

expectation; these do nothing, when, mean time, sometime, that

dropped occasionally from them, like a chosen shaft, strikes the

mark and does the work.

Secondly, The Spirit of the Lord has a glorious sovereignty

over the souls wrought upon: it is his peculiar work "to take away

the stony heart out of our flesh, and to give us an heart of flesh,"

Ezel. 36:26. We may reason, exhort, and reprove, but no thing will

abide till the Lord set it home. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia

under Paul's ministry: he opens every heart that is effectually

opened to receive Christ in the word: if the word can get no

entrance, if your hearts remain dead under it still, we may say

concerning such souls, as Martha did concerning her brother Lazarus:

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." So, Lord,

if thou hadst been in this sermon, in this prayer, or in that

counsel, these souls had not remained dead under them.

Thirdly, The Spirit has dominion over the times and seasons of

conviction and conversion. Therefore the day in which souls are

wrought upon is called "the day of his power," Psal. 110: 3. That

shall work at one time, which had no efficacy at all at another

time; because this, and not that, was the time appointed. And thus

you see whence the word derives that mighty power it has.

Now this word of God, when it is set home by the Spirit, is

mighty to convince, humble, and break the hearts of sinners, Joh 16:

9. "The Spirit when it comes shall convince the world of sin." The

word signifies conviction by such clear demonstration as compelleth

assent: it not only convinces men in general that they are sinners,

but it convinces men particularly of their own sins, and the

aggravations of them. So in the text, Sin revived, that is, the Lord

revived his sins, the very circumstances and aggravations with which

they were committed; and so it will be with us when the commandment

comes; sins that we had forgotten, committed so far back as our

youth or childhood; sins that lay slighted in our consciences, shall

now be roused up as so many sleepy lions to affright and terrify us:

for now the soul hears the voice of God in the word, as Adam heard

it in the cool of the day and was afraid, and hides itself; but all

will not do, for the Lord is come in the word; sin is held up before

the eyes of the conscience in its dreadful aggravations and fearful

consequences, as committed against the holy law, clear light,

warnings of conscience, manifold mercies, God's long-suffering,

Christ's precious blood, many warnings of judgement, the wages and

demerit whereof, by the verdict of a man's own conscience, is death,

eternal death, Rom. 6: 23. Rom. 1: 32. Rom. 2: 9. Thus the

commandment comes, sin revives, and vain hope gives up the ghost.

Inf. 1. Is there such a mighty power in the word? then

certainly the word is of divine authority. There cannot be a more

clear and satisfying proof that it is no human invention, than the

common sense that all believers have of the Almighty power in which

it works upon their hearts. So speaks the apostle, 1 Thes. 2: 13.

"When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received

it not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God,

which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Can the power

of any creature, the word of a mere man, so convince the conscience,

so terrify the heart, so discover the very secret thoughts of the

soul, as to put a man into such tremblings? No, a greater than man

must needs be here; none but a God can so open the eyes of the

blind, so open the graves of the dead, so quicken and enliven the

conscience that was seared, so bind over the soul of a sinner to the

judgement to come, so change and alter the frame and temper of a

man's spirit, or so powerfully raise, refresh and comfort a drooping

dying soul; certainly the power of God is in all this; and, If there

were no more, yet this alone were sufficient to make full proof of

the divine authority of the scriptures.

Inf. 2. Judge from hence what an invaluable mercy the preaching

of the word is to the world: It is a blessing far above our

estimation of it; little do we know what a treasure God committeth

to us in the ordinances, Acts 13: 25. "To you is the word of this

salvation sent." It is the very power of God to salvation, Rom. 1:

16. And salvation is ordinarily denied to whom the preaching of the

word is denied, Rom. 10: 14. It is called the Word of life, Phil. 2:

16. and deserves to be valued by every one of us as our life. The

eternal decree of God's election is executed by it upon our souls;

as many as he ordained to eternal life shall believe by the

preaching of it. Great is the ingratitude of this generation, which

so slights and undervalues this invaluable treasure; which is a sad

presage of the most terrible judgement, even in the removing our

candlestick out of its place, except we repent.

Inf. 3. How sore and terrible a judgement lies upon the souls

of those men to whom no word of God is made powerful enough to

convince and awaken them! Yet so stands the case with thousands, who

constantly sit under the preaching of the word; many arrows are shot

at their consciences, but none goes home to the mark, all fall short

of the end; the commandment has come unto them many thousand times,

by way of promulgation and ministerial inculcation, but yet never

came home to their souls by the Spirit's effectual application. O

friends! you have often beard the voice of man, but you never yet

heard the voice of God; your understandings have been instructed,

but your consciences to this day were never thoroughly convinced.

"We have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented," Matth. 11: 17.

"Who has believed our report? And unto whom is the arm of the Lord

revealed?" Alas! we have laboured in vain, we have spent our

strength for nought; our word returns unto us empty; but O what a

stupendous judgement is here! Heb. 6: 7, 8. "The earth which

drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth

herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from

God; but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is

nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." What a sore judgement

and sign of God's displeasure would you account it, if your fields

were cursed; if you should manure, dress, prow, and sow them, but

never reap the fruit of your labour; the increase being still

blasted? And yet this were nothing, compared with the blessing of

the word to your souls: that which is a savour of life unto life

unto some, becomes the savour of death unto death to others, 2 Cor.

2: 16. The Lord affect our hearts with the terrible strokes of God

upon the souls of men!

Use of Exhortation.

I shall conclude this point with a few words of exhortation to

three sorts of men, viz.

1. To those that never felt the power of the word.

2. To those that have only felt some slight and common effects

thereof.

3. To those unto whose very hearts the commandment is come, in

its effectual and saving power.

First, You that never felt any power in the word at all, I beg

you in the name of him that made you, and by all the regard and

value you have for those precious souls within you, that now at last

such considerations as these may find place in your souls, and that

you will bethink yourselves.

Consideration 1.

Whose word is that which cannot gain entrance into your hearts?

Is it not the word of God which you despise and slight? "Thou

casteth my word behind thy back," Psal. 50: 17. 0 what an affront

and provocation to God is this! You despise not man, but God; the

great and terrible God, in whose hand your breath and soul are: This

contempt runs higher than you imagine.

Consideration 2.

Consider, that however the word has no power upon you, the

commandment cannot come home to your hearts; yet it does work, and

comes home with power to the hearts of others: Whilst you are

hardened, others are melted under it; whilst you sleep, others

tremble; whilst your hearts are fast locked up, others are opened.

How can you choose but reflect with fear and trembling upon these

contrary effects of the word; especially when you consider that the

eternal decrees, both of election and reprobation, are now executed

upon the souls of men, by the preaching of the word; some believe,

and others are hardened.

Consideration 3.

That no judgement of God, on this side hell, is greater than a

hard heart and stupid conscience under the word; it were much better

that the providence of God should blast thy estate, take away thy

children, or destroy thy health, than harden thy heart, and sear thy

conscience under the word: So much as thy soul is better than thy

body, so much as eternity is more valuable than time, so much is

this spiritual judgement more dreadful than all temporal ones. God

does not inflict a more terrible stroke than this upon any man in

this world.

O therefore, as you love your own souls, and are loth to ruin

them to all eternity, attend upon every opportunity that God affords

you; for you know not in which of them the Lord may work upon your

hearts. Lay aside your prejudices against the word or the weaknesses

and infirmities of them that preach it; for the word works not as it

is the word of man, as it is thus neat and elegant, but as it is the

word of God. Pray for the blessing of God upon the word; for except

his word of blessing go forth with it, it can never come home to thy

soul. Meditate upon what you hear; for, without meditation, it is

not like to have any effectual operation upon you. Search your souls

by it, and consider whether that be not your very case and state

which it describes; your very danger whereof it gives warning. Take

heed, lest after you have heard it, the cares of the world choke

what you have heard, and cause those budding convictions which begin

to put forth, to blast and wither. Carefully attend to all those

items and memorandums your consciences give you under the word, and

conclude that the Lord is then come nigh unto you.

Secondly, Let this be matter of serious consideration and

caution to all such; as have only felt some slight, transient, and

ineffectual operations of the gospel upon their souls: The Lord has

come nigh to some of our souls; we have felt a strange power in the

ordinances, sometimes terrifying, and sometimes transporting our

hearts; but, alas! it proves but a morning-dew, or an early cloud,

Hos. 6: 4. We rejoice in the word, but it is but for a season, John

3: 25. Gal. 4: 14, 15. They are vanishing motions, and come to

nothing. Look, as in nature there are many abortives, as well as

perfect children, so it is in religion; yea, where the new creature

is perfectly formed in one soul, there be many abortives and

miscarriages in others; and there may be three reasons assigned for

it, viz.

First, The subtilty and deep policy of Satan, who never more

effectually deceives and destroys the souls of men, than in such a

method, and by such an artifice as this; for when men have once felt

their consciences terrified under the word, and their hearts at

other times ravished with the joys and comforts of it, they now seem

to have attained all that is necessary to conversion, and

constitutive of the new creature; these things look so well like the

regenerating effects of the Spirit, that many are easily deceived by

them. The devil beguiles the hearts of the unwary by such false

appearances: for it is not every man that can distinguish betwixt

the natural and spiritual motions of the affections under the word:

It is very frequently seen that even carnal and unrenewed hearts

have their meltings and transports, as well as spiritual hearts. The

subject-matter upon which the word treats, are the weighty things of

the world to come; heaven and hell are very awful and affecting

things, and an unrenewed heart is apt to thaw and melt at them: Now

here is the cheat of Satan, to persuade a man that these must needs

be spiritual affections, because the objects about which they are

conversant are spiritual; whereas it is certain the objects of the

affections may be very spiritual and heavenly, and yet the workings

of man's affections about them may be in a mere natural way.

Secondly, The dampening efficacy of the world is a true and

proper cause of these abortions and miscarriages under the word,

Luke 8: 12, 18, 14. There are hopeful and promising beginnings and

buddings of affections in some persons, especially in their youth;

but when once they come to be engaged in the world, how soon are

they damped and quenched! As the cares of a family grow on, so does

the care of salvation wear off. It is not as it was wont to be, What

shall I do to be saved? How shall I get interest in Christ? But what

shall I eat, and drink, and wherewith shall I, and mine, be

maintained? Thus earth justles out heaven, and the present world

drowns all thoughts of that to come. Good had it been for many men,

they had never been engaged so deep in the world as they are; their

life is but a constant hurry of business, and a perpetual diversion

from Christ, and things that are eternal.

Thirdly, and lastly, The deceitfulness and treachery of the

heart, which too easily gives way to the designs of Satan, suffers

itself to be imposed upon by him, is not the least cause why so many

hopeful beginnings come to nothing, and the effects of the word

vanish. Pride and self-love are very apt to over-rule every little

good, and slight or undervalue every ill that is in us; and so

quickly choke those convictions that begin to work in our souls.

But oh! that such men would consider, that the dying away of

their convictions is that which threatens the life of their souls

for ever; now is the bud withered, the blossom blasted: and what

expectation is there of fruit after this, except the Lord revive

them again? The Lord open men's eyes to discern the danger of such

things as these are! Jude 12. Heb. 10: 58. Yet I deny not but there

are many stands and pauses in the work of conversion; it seems to

die away, and then revives again; and revive it must, or we are

lost. But how many are there who never recover it more! This is a

sore judgement of a most terrible consequence to the souls of men!

Thirdly, In the last place, let it be a word of counsel and

advice to them, upon whom the word works effectually and powerfully;

to whose hearts the commandment is come home to revive sin, and kill

their vain hopes; and these are of two sorts.

1. Embryos under the first workings of the Spirit.

2. Complete births of the Spirit, regenerated souls.

First, Embryos that are under the first workings of the Spirit

in the word. O let it not seem a misery, or unhappiness to you, that

the commandment is come, and sin revived, and your former hopes

overthrown. It must be thus, if ever God intend mercy for you. Had

you gone on in that dangerous security you were in before, you had

certainly been lost for ever: God has stopt you in that path that

leads down to hell, and none that go in there do ever return again,

or take hold of the paths of life. O! it is better to weep, tremble,

and be distressed now, than to mourn without hope for ever. Let it

not trouble you that sin has found you out; you could never have

found out the remedy in Christ, if you had not found out the disease

and danger, by the coming of the commandment. And I beseech you

carefully to observe, whether the effects and operations of the word

upon your hearts be deeper and more powerful than they are found to

be in such souls as miscarry under it: the commandment comes to

them, and shews them this or that more gross and startling sin. Does

it come to you, and shew you not only this or that particular sin,

but all the evils of your heart and life; the corruption of your

natures, as well as the transgressions of your lives? If so, it

promises well, and looks hopefully and comfortably to you. The

commandment comes to others, and startles them with the fears of

damnation for their sin: it puts them into a grievous fright at

hell, and the everlasting burnings: but does it come to thee and

discover the infinite evil that is in thy sin, as it is committed

against the great, holy, righteous, and good God, and so melts thy

heart into tears for the wrong that thou hast done him, as well as

the danger into which thou hast brought thyself? This is a hopeful

work, and may encourage thee. It comes to others, and greatly

shakes, but never destroys and razes the foundation of their vain

hopes: if it so revive sin as to kill all vain hopes in thee, and

send thee to Christ alone, as thy only door of hope, fear not; these

troubles will prove the greatest mercies that ever befel thee in

this world, if thus they work, and continue to work upon thy soul.

Secondly, Others there are upon whom the word has had its full

effect as to conversion. 0 bless God for ever for this mercy; you

cannot sufficiently value it! God has not only made it a convincing

and wounding, but a converting and healing word to your souls; he

has not only revived your sins, and killed your vain hopes, but

begotten you again to a lively hope; see that you be thankful for

this mercy. How many have sate under the same word, but never felt

such effects of it? As Christ said in another case, there were many

widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, but unto none of them was

the prophet sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, to a certain

widow there, Luke 4: 96. So I may say, in this case, there were many

souls in the same congregation, at the same time, but unto none of

them was the word sent with a commission to convince and save, but

such a one as thyself; one as improbable to be wrought upon as any

soul there. O let this beget thankfulness in your souls; and let it

make you love the word as long as you live: "I will never forget thy

precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me," Psal. 119: 98.

But above all, I beseech you make it appear that the

commandment has come home to your hearts, with power to convince you

of the evil of sin, by your tenderness and care to shun it as long

as you live. If ever you have seen the face of sin, in the glass of

the law of God; if your hearts have been humbled and broken for it

in the days of your trouble and distress, certainly you will choose

the worst affliction rather than sin: It would be the greatest folly

in the world to return again to iniquity, Psal 85: 8. You that have

seen so much of the evil that is in it, and the danger that follows

it; you that have had such inward terrors and fears of spirit about

it, when that terrible representation was made you, will he loth to

feel those gripes and distresses of conscience again, for the best

enjoyment in this world.

Blessed be God if any word has been brought home to our hearts,

which has been instrumental to bring us to Christ!

Sermon 22.

The Teachings of God opened, in their Nature and Necessity.

John 6: 45.

It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.

Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the

Father, cometh unto me.

How necessary to our union with Jesus Christ, the application

of the law, or coming home of the commandment to the heart of a

sinner is, we have heard in the last discourse; and how impossible

it is, either for the commandment to come to us, or for us to come

to Christ without illumination and instruction from above, you shall

hear in this.

This scripture has much of the mind of God in it; and he that

is to open it, had need himself to be taught of God. In the

foregoing verses, Christ offers himself as the bread of life unto

the souls of men: against this doctrine they oppose their carnal

reason, ver. 41, 42. Christ strikes at the root of all their cavils

and objections in his reply, ver. 43, 44. "Murmur not among

yourselves: no man can come to me, except the Father which has sent

me draw him;" q. d. you slight me because you do not know me; you do

not know me because you are not taught of God; of these divine

teachings, the prophets of old have spoken, and what they foretold

is at this day fulfilled in our sight; so many as are taught of God,

and no more, come unto me in the way of faith: it is impossible to

come without the teachings of God, ver. 44. It is as impossible not

to come, or to miscarry in their coming unto me, under the influence

of these divine teachings, ver. 45.

The words read, consist of two parts, viz.

1. An allegation out of the prophets.

2. The application thereof made by Christ.

First, An allegation out af the prophets: "It is written in the

prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." The places in the

prophets to which Christ seems here to refer, are, Isa. 54: 13. "And

all thy children shall be taught of the Lord;" and, Jer. 31: 34.

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man

his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from

the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." These

promises contain the great blessings of the new covenant, viz.

Divine instruction and heavenly illumination, without which no man

can obtain an interest in the new covenant.

Secondly, We have here the application of these testimonies out

of the prophets, made by Christ himself; "Every man therefore that

has heard, and learned of the Father, come unto me.

In which words we have both the necessity and the efficacy of

these divine teachings; without them no man can come, and under them

no man can miscarry. The words being fitly rendered, and the sense

obvious,

The notes are,

Doct. 1. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to

every man that cometh unto Christ, in the way of faith.

Doct. 2. No man can miss of Christ, or miscarry in the way of

faith, that is under the special instructions and teachings

of the Father.

Doct. 1. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to

every man that cometh unto Christ, in the way of faith.

Of the necessity of divine teaching, in order to believing, the

apostle speaks, in Eph. 4: 20, 21. "But ye have not so learned

Christ; if so be that you have heard him, and been taught by him, as

the truth is in Jesus;" i.e. Your faith must needs be effectual,

both to the reformation of your lives, and your perseverance in the

ways of holiness, if it be such a faith as is begotten and

introduced into your hearts by divine teaching. Now, in the

explication of this point, I shall speak distinctly to the following

enquiries.

1. How does God teach men, or what is imported in our being

taught of God?

2. What those special lessons are, which all believers do hear,

and are taught of God?

3. In what manner does God teach these things to men in the day

of their conversion to Christ?

4. What influence God's teaching has upon our believing?

5. Why it is impossible for any man to believe, or come to

Christ without the Father's teachings

First, How does God teach men, or what is imported in our being

taught of God? To this I will speak both negatively and positively,

for your clearer apprehension of the sense and meaning of the Spirit

of God in this phrase.

First, The teaching of God, and our hearing and learning of

him, is not to be understood of any extraordinary visional

appearances, or oraculous and immediate voice of God to men: God

indeed has so appeared unto some, Numb. 12: 8. Such voices have been

heard from heaven, but now these extraordinary ways are ceased, Heb.

1: 1, 2. and we are no more to expect them; we may sooner meet with

satanical delusions than divine illuminations in this way. I

remember, the learned Gerson tells us that the devil once appeared

to an holy man in prayer, personating Christ, and saying, I am come

in person to visit thee, for thou art worthy. But he with both hands

shut his eyes, saying, Nolo hic Christum videre, satis est ipsum in

gloria videre; i.e. I will not see Christ here; it is enough for me

to see him in glory. We are now to attend only to the voice of the

Spirit in the scriptures: this is a more sure word than any voice

from heaven, 2 Pet. 1: 19.

Secondly, The teachings of God are not to be understood as

opposite unto, or exclusive of the teachings of men. Divine

teachings do not render ministerial teachings in vain or useless.

Paul was taught of God, Gal. 1: 12. and his conversion had something

extraordinary in it, yet the ministry of Ananias was used and

honoured in that work, Acts 9: 4, 17. compared. Divine teachings do

indeed excel, but not exclude human teachings. I know that

scripture, Jer. 31: 24. to which Christ here refers, is objected

against the necessity of a standing ministry in the church, "They

shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his

brother," &c. But if those words should be understood absolutely,

they would not only overthrow all public ordinances of God's own

institution, 1 Cor. 12: 28. and deprive us of a principal fruit of

Christ's ascension, Eph. 4: 11. 12. but, for the same reason, would

destroy all private instructions and fraternal admonitions also.

Such a sense would make the prophet to contradict the apostle, and

spoil the consent and harmony of the scriptures: the sense thereof

cannot be negative, but comparative; it shews the excellency of

divine, but does not destroy the usefulness of human teachings;

Subordinata non pugnant. The teachings of men are made effectual by

the teachings of the Spirit; and the Spirit in his teachings will

use and honour the ministry of man.

Thirdly, But to speak positively, the teachings of God are

nothing else but that spiritual and heavenly light, by which the

Spirit of God shineth into the hearts of men, to give them "the

light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus

Christ," as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 4: 6. And though this be the

proper work of the Spirit, yet it is called the teachings of the

Father, because the Spirit who enlightens us is commissioned and

sent by the Father so to do, John 14: 26. Now these teachings of the

Spirit of God, consist in two things, viz. in his,

1. Sanctifying impressions.

2. Gracious assistances.

First, In his sanctifying impressions or regenerating work upon

the soul, by virtue whereof it receives marvellous light and insight

into spiritual things; and that not only as illumination is the

first act of the Spirit in our conversion, Col. 3: 10. but as his

whole work of sanctification is illuminative and instructive to the

converted soul, 1 John 2: 27. "The anointing which you have received

of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but

as the same anointing teacheth you." The meaning is that

sanctification gives the soul experience of those mysterious things

which are contained in the scriptures, and that experience is the

most excellent key to unlock and open those deep scripture

mysteries; no knowledge is so distinct, so clear, so sweet, as that

which the heart communicates to the head, John 7: 17. "If any man do

his will, he shall know of the doctrine." A man that never read the

nature of love in books of philosophy, nor the transports and

ecstasies thereof in history, may yet truly describe and express it

by the sensible motions of that passion in his own soul; yea, he

that has felt, much better understands, than he that has only read

or heard. O what a light does spiritual sense and experience cast

upon a great part of the scriptures! for indeed sanctification is

the very copy or transcript of the word of God upon the heart of

man; Jer. 31: 83. "I will write my law in their hearts:" so that the

scriptures and the experiences of believers, by this means answer to

each other, as the lines and letters in the press answer to the

impressions made upon the paper; or the figures in the wax, to the

engravings in the seal. When a sanctified man reads David's psalms,

or Paul's epistles, how is he surprised with wonder to find the very

workings of his own heart so exactly deciphered and fully expressed

there! O, saith he, this is my very case, these holy men speak what

my heart has felt.

Secondly, The Spirit of God teacheth us, as by his sanctifying

impressions, so by his gracious assistances, which he gives us pro

re nata, as our need requires, Mat. 10: 19. "It shall be given you

in that same hour what ye shall speak;" John 14: 26. "He shall bring

all things to your remembrance: he assisteth both the understanding

in due apprehensions of truth, and the heart in the spiritual

improvements of truth. And so much briefly of the first particular.

Secondly, In the next place we are to enquire what those

special truths are which believers hear and learn of the Father,

when they come to Christ.

And there are divers great and necessary truths, wherein the

Spirit enlightens men in that day. I cannot say they are all taught

every believer in the same degree and order; but it is certain they

are taught of God such lessons as these are, which they never so

understood before.

Lesson 1. First, They are taught of God that there is

abundantly more evil in their sinful natures and actions, than ever

they discerned or understood before: "the Spirit when he cometh

shall convince the world of sin," John 16: 8, 9. Men had a general

notion of sin before; so had Paul, when a Pharisee: but how vastly

different were his apprehensions of sin, from all that ever he had

in his natural state, when God brought home the commandment to his

very heart? There is a threefold knowledge of sin, viz. traditional,

discursive, and intuitive. The first is the more rude and illiterate

multitude. The second is more rational and knowing men. The third is

only found in those that are enlightened and taught of God. And

there is as great a difference betwixt this intuitive knowledge of

sin, whereby God makes a soul to discern the nature and evil of it

in a spiritual light, and the two former, as there is betwixt the

sight of a painted lion upon the wall, and the sight of a living

lion that meets us roaring in the way. The intuitive sight of sin is

another thing than men imagine it to be: it is such a sight as

wounds a man to the very heart, Acts 2: 37. for God does not only

shew a man this or that particular sin, but in the day of

conviction, he sets all his sins in order before him, Psal. 50: 21.

yea, the Lord shews him the sinfulness of his nature as well as

practice. Conviction digs to the root, shews and lays open that

original corruption, from whence the innumerable evils of the life

do spring, James 1: 14, 15. and which is yet more, the Lord shews

the man whom he is bringing to Christ the sinful and miserable

estate which he is in by reason of both, John 16: 9. And now all

excuses, pleas and defences of sin are gone, he shews him "how their

iniquities have exceeded," Job 36: 8, 9. exceeded in number, and in

aggravations of sinfulness; exceeding many, and exceeding vile; no

such sinner in the world as I; can such sins as mine be pardoned?

The greatness of God greatens my sin; the holiness of God makes it

beyond measure vile; the goodness of God puts inconceivable weight

into my guilt. O, can there be mercy for such a wretch as I! If

there be, then there will not be a greater example of the riches of

free grace in all the world than I am. Thus God teacheth the evil of

sin.

Lesson 2. Secondly, God teacheth the soul whom he is bringing

to Christ, what that wrath and misery are which hang over it in the

threatenings because of sin. Scripture-threatenings were formerly

slighted, now the soul trembles at them: They once apprehended

themselves safe enough, Isa. 28: 15. Psal. 50: 21. They thought,

because they heard no more of their sins after the commission of

them, that therefore they should never hear more; that the effect

had been as transient a thing as the act of sin was; or if trouble

must follow sin, they should speed no worse than others, the

generality of the world being in the same case; and besides, they

hoped to find God more merciful than sour and precise preachers

represented him. But when a light from God enters into the soul, to

discover the nature of God, and of sin, then it sees that whatever

wrath is treasured up for sinners in the dreadful threatenings of

the law, is but the just demerit of sin, the recompence that is

meet: "The wages of sin is death," Rom. 6: 23. The penal evil of

damnation is but equal to the moral evil of sin: So that in the

whole ocean of God's eternal wrath, there is not one drop of

injustice; yea, the soul does not only see the justice of God in its

eternal damnation, but the wonderful mercy of God in the suspension

thereof so long. O, what is it that has withheld God from damning me

all this while! How is it that I am not in hell! Now do the fears

and awful apprehensions of eternity seize the soul, and the worst of

sensitive creatures is supposed to be in a better condition than

such a soul. Never do men tremble at the threatenings of God, nor

rightly apprehend the danger of their condition, until sin, and

wrath, and the wages of sin be discovered to them by a light from

heaven.

Lesson 3. Thirdly, God teaches the soul whom he brings to

Christ that deliverance from sin, and wrath to come, is the greatest

and most important business it has to do in this world. Acts 16: 30.

"What must I do to be saved?" q. d. O direct me to some effectual

way (if there be any) to secure my poor wretched soul from the wrath

of God. Sin, and the wrath that follows it, are things that swallow

up the souls, and drink up the very spirits of men: Their thoughts

never conversed with things of more confessed truth and awful

solemnity: These things float not upon their fancies as matters of

mere speculation, but settle upon their hearts day and night, as the

deepest concernment in all the world: They now know much better than

any mere scholar, the deep sense of that text, Matth. 16: 26. "What

is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his

own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Five things shew how weighty the thoughts and cares of

salvation are upon their hearts.

First, Their continual thoughtfulness and solicitude about

these things: if earthly affairs divert them for a while, yet they

are still returning again to this solemn business.

Secondly, Their careful redeeming of time, and saving the very

moments thereof to employ about this work: Those that were prodigal

of hours and days before, look upon every moment of time as a

precious and valuable thing now.

Thirdly, Their fears and tremblings lest they should miscarry,

and come short at last, shew how much their hearts are set upon this

work.

Fourthly, Their inquisitiveness and readiness to embrace all

the help and assistance that they can act from others, evidently

discover this to be their great design.

Fifthly, and lastly, The little notice they take of all other

troubles and afflictions, tells you their hearts are taken up about

greater things. This is the third lesson they are taught of God.

Lesson 4. Fourthly, The Lord teaches the soul that is coming to

Christ, that though it be their duty to strive to the uttermost for

salvation; yet all strivings, in their own strength, are

insufficient to obtain it. This work is quite above the power of

nature: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but

of God that sheweth mercy." The soul is brought to a full conviction

of this, by the discovery of the heinous nature of sin, and of the

rigour and severity of the law of God. No repentance nor reformation

can possibly amount unto a just satisfaction, nor are they within

the compass and power of our will. It was a saying that Dr. Hill

often used to his friends, speaking about the power of man's will;

he would lay his hand upon his breast, and say, "Every man has

something here to confute the Arminian doctrine." This fully takes

off the soul from all expectations of deliverance that way; it

cannot but strive, that is its duty; but to expect deliverance, as

the purchase of its own strivings, that would be its sin.

Lesson 5. Fifthly, The soul that is coming to Christ by faith,

is taught of God, that though the case it is in be sad, yet it is

not desperate and remediless: There is a door of hope, a way of

escape for poor sinners, how black and fearful soever their own

thoughts and apprehensions are; there is usually at this time a

dawning light of hope in the soul that is under the Father's

teachings; and this commonly arises from the general and indefinite

encouragements and promises of the gospel, which, though they do not

presently secure the soul from danger, yet they prop and mightily

support it against despair: For though they be not certain that

deliverance shall be the event of their trouble; yet the

possibilities, and much more the probabilities of deliverance are a

great stay to a sinning soul. The troubled soul cannot but

acknowledge itself to be in a far better case than the damned are,

whose hopes are perished from the Lord, and a death pang of despair

has seized their consciences. And herein the merciful and

compassionate nature of God is eminently discovered, in hasting to

open the door of hope, almost as soon as the evil of sin is opened.

It was not long after Adam's eyes were opened to see his misery,

that God opened Christ, his remedy, in that first promise, Gen. 3:

15. And the same method of grace is still continued to his elect

offspring, Gal. 3: 21, 22. Rom. 3: 21, 22. These supporting hopes

the Lord sees necessary to encourage industry in the use of means;

it is hope that sets all the world a work; if all hope were cut off,

every soul would sit down in a sullen despair, yielding itself for

hell.

Lesson 6. Sixthly, The Lord teaches those that come to Christ,

that there is a fulness of saving power in him, whereby any soul

that duly receives him, may be perfectly delivered from all its sin

and misery, Heb. 7: 25. Col. 1: 19. Matth. 28: 18. This is a great

and necessary point for every believer to learn and hear from the

Father; for unless the soul be satisfied of the fulness of Christ's

saving, power, it will never move forward towards him; and herein

also the goodness of God is most sweetly and seasonably manifested;

for, at this time, it is the great design of Satan to fill the soul

with despairing thoughts of a pardon; but all those black and heart

sinking thoughts vanish before the discovery of Christ's all

sufficiency. Now the sin-sick soul saith with that woman, Matth. 9:

21. "If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be healed."

How deep soever the guilt and stain of sin be, yet the soul which

acknowledges the infinite dignity of the blood of Christ, the

offering it up to God in our room, and God's declared satisfaction

in it, must needs be satisfied that Christ is "able to save, to the

uttermost, all that come unto God by him;" which is the sixth lesson

believers are taught of God.

Lesson 7. Seventhly, Every man that comes to Christ is taught

of God, that he can never reap any benefit by the blood of Christ,

except he have union with the person of Christ, 1 John 5: 12. Eph.

4: 16. Time was when men fondly thought nothing was necessary to

their salvation but the death of Christ; but now the Lord shows them

that their union with Christ by faith is as necessary, in the place

of an applying cause, as the death of Christ is, in the place of a

meritorious cause: The purchase of salvation is an act of Christ

without us, whilst we are yet sinners; the application thereof is by

a work wrought within us, when we are believers, Col. 1: 27. In the

purchase all the elect are redeemed together by way of price; in the

application they are actually redeemed, each person, by way of

power. Look, as the sin of the first Adam could never hurt us,

unless he had been our head by way of generation; so the

righteousness of Christ can never benefit us, unless he be our head

by way of regeneration. In teaching this lesson, the Lord, in mercy,

unteaches and blots out that dangerous principle, by which the

greatest part of the christianised world do perish, viz. that the

death of Christ is, in itself, effectual to salvation, though a man

be never regenerated or united to him by saving faith

Lesson 8. Eighthly, God teaches the soul, whom he is bringing

to Christ, that whatever is necessary to be wrought in us, or done

by us, in order to our union with Christ, is to be obtained from him

in the way of prayer, Ezek. 36: 37. And it is observable, that the

soul no sooner comes under the effectual teachings of God, but the

Spirit of prayer begins to breathe in it, Acts 9: 8. "Behold, he

prayeth." Those that were taught to pray by men before, are now

taught of the Lord to pray: To pray did I say? yea, and to pray

fervently too, as men concerned for their eternal happiness; to pray

not only with others, but to pour out our souls before the Lord in

secret; for their hearts are as bottles full of new wine, which must

vent or break. Now the soul returns upon its God often in the same

day; now it can express its burdens and wants, in words and groans

which the Spirit teacheth. They pray, and will not give over

praying, till Christ come with complete salvation.

Lesson 9. Ninthly, All that come to Christ are taught of God to

abandon their former ways and companions in sin, as ever they expect

to be received unto mercy, Isa. 55: 7. 2 Cor. 5: 17. Sins that were

profitable and pleasant, that were as the right hand, and right eye,

must now be cut off. Companions in sin, who were once the delight of

their lives, must now be cast off. Christ saith to the soul

concerning these, as he said in another case, John 18: 8. "If

therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." And the soul saith

unto Christ, as it is, Psal. 119: 115. "Depart from me, ye evil-

doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God." And now pleasant

sins and companions in sin, become the very burden and shame of a

man's soul. Objects of delight are become objects of pity and

compassion: No endearments, no union of blood, no earthly interests

whatsoever, are found strong enough to hold the soul any longer from

Christ: Nothing but the effectual teachings of God are found

sufficient to dissolve such bonds of iniquity as these.

Lesson 10. Tenthly, All that come unto Christ are taught of

God, that there is such a beauty and excellency in the ways and

people of God, as is not to be equalled in the whole world, Psa. 16:

3. When the eyes of strangers to Christ begin to be opened, and

enlightened in his knowledge, you may see what a change of judgement

is wrought in them, with respect to the people of God: and towards

them especially, whom God has any way made instrumental for the good

of their souls, Cant. 5: 9. they then call the spouse of Christ, the

fairest among women. The convincing holiness of the bride then began

to enamour and affect them, with a desire of nearer conjunction and

communion: We will seek him with thee; with thee that hast so

charged us, that hast taken so much pains for the good of our souls;

now, and never before, the righteous appeareth more excellent than

his neighbour. Change of heart is always accompanied with change of

judgement, with respect to the people of God: thus the gaoler, Acts

16: 33. washed the apostle's stripes, to whom he had been so cruel

before. The godly now seem to be the glory of the places where they

live; and the glory of any place seems to be darkened by their

removal; as one said of holy Mr. Barrington, "Methinks the town is

not at home when Mr. Barrington is out of town." They esteem it a

choice mercy to be in their company and acquaintance; Zech. 8: 23.

"We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." No

people like the people of God now; as one said, when he heard of two

faithful friends, Utinam tertius essem! O that I might make the

third! Whatever vile or low thoughts they had of the people of God

before, to be sure now they are the excellent of the earth, in whom

is all their delight: The holiness of the saints might have some

interest in their consciences before, but they never had such an

interest in their estimation and affections, till this lesson was

taught them by the Father.

Lesson 11. Eleventhly, An that come to Christ are taught of

God, that whatever difficulties they apprehend in religion, yet they

must not, upon pain of damnation, be discouraged thereby, or return

again to sin, Luke 9: 62. "No man having put his hand to the plough,

and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Ploughing work is

hard work; a strong and steady hand is required for it: he that

ploughs must keep on, and make no balks of the hardest and toughest

ground he meets with. Religion also is the running of a race. 1 Cor.

9: 24. there is no standing still, much less turning back, if ever

we hope to win the prize.

The devil, indeed, labours every way to discourage and daunt

the soul, by representing the insuperable difficulties of religion

to it; and young beginners are but too apt to be discouraged, and

fall under despondency; but the teachings of the Father are

encouraging teachings; they are carried on from strength to strength

against all the oppositions they meet with from without them, and

the many discouragements they find within them. To this conclusion

they are brought by the teaching of God, We must have Christ, we

must get a pardon, we must strive for salvation, let the

difficulties, troubles, and sufferings in the way be never so great

or many. As he said, Necesse est ut eam, non ut vivam; it is

necessary that I go on, it is not necessary that I live: So saith

the soul that is taught of God; it is easier for me to dispense with

ease, honour, relations, yea, with life itself, than to part with

Christ, and the hopes of eternal life.

Lesson 12. Twelfthly, They that come to Christ, are taught of

God, that whatever guilt and unworthiness they discover in

themselves, and whatever fears and doubts are upon their hearts, as

to pardon and acceptance; yet as the case stands, it is their wisdom

and great interest to venture themselves in the way of faith, upon

Jesus Christ, whatever the issue thereof be.

Three great discouragements are usually found upon the hearts

of those that come to Christ in the way of faith.

First, The sensible greatness of guilt and sin. How can I go to

Christ that am in such a case, that have been so vile a wretch? And

here measuring the grace and mercy of Christ, by what it finds in

itself, or in other creatures, 1 Sam. 24: 19. the soul is ready to

sink under the weight of its own discouraging and mist giving

thoughts.

Secondly, The sense they have of their own weakness and

inability to do what God requires, and must of necessity be done, if

ever they be saved. My heart is harder than adamant, how can I break

it? My will is stubborn, and exceeding obstinate, I am no way able

to bow it; the frame and temper of my spirit is altogether carnal,

and earthly; and it is not in the power of my hand to alter and

change it; alas! I cannot subdue any one corruption, nor perform one

spiritual duty, nor bear one of those sufferings and burdens which

religion lays upon all that follow Christ: this also proves a great

discouragement in the way of faith.

Thirdly, And, which is more than all, the soul that is coming

to Jesus Christ, has no assurance of acceptance with him, if it

should adventure itself upon him: it is a great hazard, a great

adventure; it is much more probable, if I look to myself, that

Christ will shut the door of mercy against me.

But under all these discouragements the soul learns this lesson

from God, That, as ungodly as it is, nevertheless it is every way

its great duty and concernment to go on in the way of faith, and

make that great adventure of itself upon Jesus Christ: and of this

the Lord convinceth the soul by two things, viz.

1. From the absolute necessity of coming.

2. From the encouraging probabilities of speeding

First, The soul seeth an absolute necessity of coming:

necessity is laid upon it, there is no other way, Acts 4: 12. God

has shut it up by a blessed necessity to this only door of escape,

Gal. 3: 23. Damnation lies in the neglect of Christ, Heb. 2:3. The

soul has no choice in this case; angels, ministers, duties,

repentance, reformation cannot save me; Christ, and none but Christ

can deliver me from present guilt, and the wrath to come. Why do I

dispute, demur, delay, when certain ruin must inevitably follow the

neglect or refusal of gospel offers?

Secondly, The Lord sheweth those that are under his teaching,

the probabilities of mercy, for their encouragement in the way of

believing. And these probabilities the soul is enabled to gather

from the general and free invitations of the gospel, Isa. 55: 1, 7.

Rev. 22: 17. from the conditional promises of the gospel, John 6:

37. Mat. 11: 28. Isa. 1: 18. from the vast extent of grace, beyond

all the thoughts and hopes of the creatures, Isa 55: 8, 9. Heb. 7:.

25. from the encouraging examples of other sinners, who have found

mercy in as bad a condition as they, 1 Tim. 1: 13. 2 Chron. 23:3. 2

Cor. 6: 10, 11. from the command of God, which warrants the action,

and answers all the objections of unworthiness and presumption in

them that come to Christ, 1 John 3: 23. and lastly, from the

sensible changes already made upon the temper and frame of the

heart. Time was, when I had no sense of sin, nor sorrow for sin; no

desire after Christ, no heart to duties. But it is not so with me

now; I now see the evil of sin, so as I never saw it before; my

heart is now broken in the sense of that evil; my desires begin to

be enflamed after Jesus Christ; I am not at rest, nor where I would

be, till I am in secret mourning after the Lord Jesus; surely these

are the dawnings of the day of mercy; let me go on in this way. It

saith, as the lepers at the siege of Samaria, 2 Kings 7: 8, 4. "If I

stay here, I perish:" If I go to Christ I can but perish. Hence

believers bear up against all objected discouragements, certum

exitium commutemus incerto; it is the dictate of wisdom, the vote of

reason, to exchange a certain for an uncertain ruin. And thus you

have here what those excellent lessons are, which all that come to

Christ are taught by the Father.

Sermon 23.

John 6: 45.

It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.

Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the

Father, cometh unto me.

In the former sermon, you have been taught this great truth;

Doct. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to

every soul that cometh unto Christ, in the way of faith.

What the teachings of God import, has been formerly opened; and

what those special lessons are, which all believers hear and learn

of the Father, was the last thing discoursed: that which remains to

he further cleared about this subject, before I come to the

application of the whole, will be to shew you,

1. What are the properties of divine teachings.

2. What influence they have in bringing souls to Christ.

3. Why it is impossible for any man to come to Christ without

these teachings of the Father.

First, What are the properties of divine teachings? Concerning

the teachings of God, we affirm in general, that, though they

exclude not, yet they vastly differ from all human teachings: as the

power of God in effecting transcends all human power, so the wisdom

of God in teaching transcends all human wisdom. For,

1. God teacheth powerfully; he speaketh to the soul with a

strong hand; when the word cometh accompanied with the Spirit, it is

"mighty through God, to cast down all imaginations," 2 Cor. 10: 4.

Now the gospel "comes not in word only, (as it was wont to do,) but

in power," 1 Thes. 1: 4, 5. a power that makes the soul fall down

before it, and acknowledge that God is in that word, 1 Cor. 14: 25.

2. The teachings of God are sweet teachings. Men never relish

the sweetness of a truth, till they learn it from God, Cant. 1: 8.

"His name is as ointment poured forth." Cant. 5: 16. "His mouth is

most sweet." O how powerfully and how sweetly does the voice of God

slide into the hearts of poor melting sinners! how jejune, dry, and

tasteless are the discourses of men, compared with the teachings of

the Father!

3. God teacheth plainly and clearly: He not only opens truths

to the understanding, but he openeth the understanding also to

perceive them, 2 Cor. 3: 16 In that day the vail is taken away from

the heart; a light shineth into the soul; a clear beam from heaven

is darted into the mind, Luke 24: 45. Divine teachings are fully

satisfying; the soul doubts no more, staggers and hesitates no more,

but acquiesces in that which God teaches; it is so satisfied, that

it can venture all upon the truth of what it has learned from God;

as that martyr said, I cannot dispute, but I can die for Christ. See

Prov. 8: 8, 9.

Fourthly, The teachings of God are infallible teachings. The

wisest and holiest of men may mistake, and lead others into the same

mistakes with themselves; but it is not so in the teachings of God.

If we can be sure that God teacheth us, we may be as sure of the

truth of what he teacheth; for his Spirit guideth us into all truth,

John 16: 3. and into nothing but truth.

Fifthly, The teachings of God are abiding teachings; they make

everlasting impressions upon the soul, Psal. 119: 98. they are ever

wish it: The words of men vanish from us; but the words of God abide

by us: what God teacheth, he writeth upon the heart, Jer. 31:33. and

that will abide; litera scripta manet. It is usual with souls, whose

understandings have been opened by the Lord, many years afterward to

say, I shall never forget such a scripture that once convinced, such

a promise that once encouraged me.

Sixthly, The teachings of God are saving teachings; they make

the soul wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. 3: 15. There is a great deal of

other knowledge that goes to hell with men: The pavement of hell (as

one speaks) is pitched with the skulls of many great scholars, but

eternal life is the teachings of God, John 17::3. "This is the

eternal life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom

thou hast sent." This is deservedly stiled the light of this life,

John 8: 12. "In this light we shall see light," Psal. 36: 9.

Seventhly, The teachings of God make their own way into the

dullest and weakest capacities, Isa. 32: 4. "The heart also of the

rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers

shall be ready to speak plainly." Upon this account Christ said,

Matth. 11: 25. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,

because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and

hast revealed them unto babes." It is admirable to see what clear

illuminations some poor illiterate Christians have in the mysteries

of Christ and salvation, which others, of great abilities, deep and

searching heads, can never discover with all their learning and

study.

Eighthly, To conclude, The teachings of God are transforming

teachings; 2 Cor. 3: 18. they change the soul into the same image;

God casts them, whom he teacheth, into the very mould of those

truths which they learn of him, Rom. 6: 17. These are the teachings

of God, and thus he instructeth those that come to Christ.

Secondly, Next let us see what influence divine teachings have

upon souls, in bringing them to Christ; and we shall find a

threefold influence in them.

1. They have an influence upon the external means, by which

they come to Christ.

2. They have an influence upon the mind, to remove what

hindered it from Christ.

3. They have an influence upon the will, to allure and draw it

to Christ.

First, They have an influence upon the means by which we come

to Christ; the best ordinances are but a dead letter except the

Spirit, the teaching and quickening Spirit of God, work in

fellowship with them, 2 Cor. 3: 6. The best ministers, like the

disciples, cast forth the net, but take nothing, win not one soul to

God, till God teach as well as they. Paul is nothing, and Apollos

nothing, but God that giveth the increase, 1 Cor. 3: 7. Let the most

learned, eloquent, and powerful orator be in the pulpit, Yet no

man's heart is persuaded till it hear the voice of God, Cathedram in

coelis habet, qui corda docet.

Secondly, They have influence upon the mind, to remove what

hindered it from Christ. Except the minds of men be first untaught

those errors, by which they are prejudiced against Christ, they will

never be persuaded to come unto him; and nothing but the Father's

teachings can unteach those errors, and cure those evils of the

mind. The natural mind of man slights the truths of God, until God

teach them; and then they tremble with an awful reverence of them.

Sin is but a trifle, till God shews us the face of it in the glass

of the law, and then it appears exceeding sinful, Rom. 7: 13. We

think God to be such a one as ourselves, Psal. 1. 21. until he

discover himself unto us in his infinite greatness, awful holiness,

and severe justice; and then we cry, who can stand before this great

and dreadful God! We thought it was time enough hereafter, to mind

the concernments of another world, until the Lord open our eyes, to

see in what danger we stand upon the very brink of eternity; and

then nothing alarms us more, than the fears that our time will be

finished before the great work of salvation be finished. We thought

ourselves in a converted state before, till God made us to see the

necessity of another manner of conversion, upon pain of eternal

damnation. We readily caught hold upon the promises before, when we

had no right to them; but the teachings of God make the presumptuous

sinner let go his hold, that he may take a better and surer hold of

them in Christ. We once thought that the death of Christ, in itself,

had been enough to secure our salvation; but, under the teachings of

God, we discern plainly the necessity of a change of heart and

state; or else the blood of Christ can never profit us. Thus the

teachings of God remove the errors of the mind, by which men are

withheld from Christ.

Thirdly, The teachings of God powerfully attract and allure the

will of a sinner to Christ, Hos. 2: 14. But of these drawings of the

Father I have largely spoken before, and therefore shall say no more

of them in this place, but hasten to the last thing propounded, viz.

Thirdly, Why it is impossible for any man to come to Christ

without the Father's teachings; and the impossibilities hereof will

appear three ways.

1. From the power of sin.

2. From the indisposition of man.

B. From the nature of faith.

By all which, the last point designed to be spoken to from this

scripture, will be fully cleared, and the whole prepared for

application.

First, The impossibility of coming to Christ without the

teachings of the Father, will appear from the power of sin, which

has so strong an holdfast upon the hearts and affections of all

unregenerate men, that no human arguments or persuasions whatsoever

can divorce or separate them; for,

First, Sin is connatural with the soul, it is born and bred

with a man; Psal. 2: 4. Isa. 48: 8. It is as natural for fallen man

to sin, as it is to breathe.

Secondly, The power of sin has been strengthening itself from

the beginning, by long continued custom, which gives it the force of

a second nature, and makes regeneration and mortification naturally

impossible, Jer. 15: 28. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the

leopard his spots? Then may he also do good that is accustomed to do

evil."

Thirdly, Sin is the delight of a sinner: "It is sport to a fool

to do mischief," Prov. 10: 23. Carnal men have no other pleasure in

this world, but what arises from their lusts; to cut off their

corruptions by mortification, were at once to deprive them of all

the pleasure of their lives.

Fourthly, Sin being connatural, customary, and delightful, does

therefore bewitch their affections and inchant their hearts, to that

degree of madness and fascination, that they rather chuse damnation

by God, than separation from sin: "Their hearts are fully set in

them to do evil," Eccles. 8: 11. they rush into sin, as the horse

rusheth into the battle," Jer. 8: 6. And now, what think you can

separate a man from his beloved lust, except the powerful and

effectual teachings of God? Nothing but a light from heaven can

rectify and reduce the inchanted mind; no power, but that of God,

can change and alter the sinful bent and inclination of the will; it

is a task above all the power of the creature.

Secondly, The impossibility of coming to Christ, without the

Father's teachings, evidently appears from the indisposedness of

man, the subject of this change; "The natural man receives not the

things which are of God," 1 Cor. 2: 14. Three things must be wrought

upon man, before he can come to Christ: His blind understanding must

be enlightened; his hard and rocky heart must be broken and melted;

his stiff, fixed, and obstinate will must be conquered and subdued:

but all these are effects of a supernatural power. The illumination

of the mind is the peculiar work of God, 2 Cor. 4: 6. Rev. 3: 17.

Eph. 5: 8. The breaking and melting of the heart is the Lord's own

work; it is he that giveth repentance, Acts 5: 31. It is the Lord

that "takes away the heart of stone, and giveth an heart of flesh,

Ezek. 36: 26. It is he that poureth out the spirit of contrition

upon man, Zech. 12: 10. The changing of the natural bent and

inclination of the will, is the Lord's sole prerogative, Phil. 2:

13. All these things are effectually done in the soul of man, when

God teacheth it, and never till then.

Thirdly, The nature of faith, by which we come to Christ,

plainly shews the impossibility of coming without the Father's

teaching. Every thing in faith is supernatural; the implantation of

the habit of faith is so, Eph 2: 8. It is not of ourselves, but the

gift of God; it is not an habit acquired by industry, but infused by

grace, Phil 1: 29. The light of faith, by which spiritual things are

discerned, is supernatural, Heb. 11: 1, 27. It seeth things that are

invisible. The adventures of faith are supernatural; for "against

hope, a man believeth in hope, giving glory to God," Rom. 4: 18. By

faith a man goeth unto Christ, against all the dictates and

discouragements of natural sense and reason. The self-denial of

faith is supernatural; the cutting off the right hand, and plucking

out of right eye sins, must needs be so, Matt. 5: 29. The victories

and conquests of faith do all speak it to be supernatural; it

overcomes the strongest oppositions from without, Heb. 11: 33, 34.

It subdueth and purgeth the most obstinate and deep rooted

corruptions within, Acts 15: 9. It overcometh all the blandishments

and charming allurements of the bewitching world, 1 John 5: 4. All

which considered, how evident is the conclusion, that none can come

to Christ without the Father's teachings? The uses follow.

First use for information.

Inference 1. How notoriously false and absurd is that doctrine

which asserteth the possibility of believing without the efficacy of

supernatural grace, The desire of self-sufficiency was the ruin of

Adam, and the conceit of self-sufficiency is the ruin of multitudes

of his posterity. This doctrine is not only contradictory to the

current stream of scripture, Phil. 2: 13. 1 John 1: 13. with many

other scriptures; but it is also contradictory to the common sense

and experience of believers; yet the pride of nature will strive to

maintain what scripture and experience plainly contradict and

overthrow.

Inf. 2. Hence we may also inform ourselves, how it cometh to

pass that so many rational, wise and learned men miss Christ, whilst

the simple and illiterate, even babes in natural knowledge, obtain

interest in him, and salvation by him. The reason hereof is plainly

given us by Christ, in Matth. 13: 11. "To you it is given to know

the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not

given." It is the dropping and dews of divine teaching upon one, and

not upon another, that dryeth up the green tree, and maketh the dry

tree to flourish. Many natural men have very fine brains, searching

wits, solid judgements, nimble fancies, tenacious memories; they can

search out the mysteries of nature, solve the phaenomena, satisfy

the enquiries of the most curious; they can measure the earth,

discover the motions of the heavens; but after all take up their

place in hell, when, in the mean time, the statutes of the Lord (by

the help of his teachings) make wise the simple, Psal 19: 17. It is

no matter how dull and incapable the scholar be, if God undertake to

be the teacher. I remember, Austin speaks of one who was commonly

reputed a fool, and yet he could not but judge him to be truly

godly, and that by two signs of grace which appeared in him; one

was, his seriousness when he heard any discourses of Christ; the

other was, his indignation manifested against sin. It was truly said

by those two Cardinals, (who, riding to the council of Constance,

overheard a poor shepherd in the fields with tears bewailing his

sins) Surgent indocti et rapient coelum; The unlearned will rise and

take heaven, whilst we with all our learning shall descend into

hell.

Inf. 3. This also informs us of the true reason of the strange

and various successes of the gospel upon the souls of men. Here we

see why the ministry of one man becomes fruitful, and another's

barren; yea why the labours of the same poor man prosper exceedingly

at one time, and not at another; these things are according as the

teachings of God do accompany our teachings. We often see a weaker

and plainer discourse blessed with success, whilst that which is

more artificial, neat and laboured, comes to nothing. St. Austin has

a pretty similitude to illustrate this; Suppose, saith he, two

conduits, the one very plain, the other curiously carved and adorned

with images of lions, eagles, &c. the water does not refresh and

nourish as it cometh from such a curious conduit, but as it is

water. Where we find most of man, we frequently find least of God. I

speak not this to encourage carelessness and laziness, but to

provoke the dispensers of the gospel to more earnestness and

frequent prayer for the assistance and blessing of the Spirit upon

their labours, and to make men less fond of their own gifts and

abilities; blear-eyed Leah may bear children, when beautiful Rachel

proves barren.

Inf. 4. Learn hence the transcendent excellency of saving,

spiritual knowledge, above that which is merely literal and natural.

One drop of knowledge taught by God, is more excellent than the

whole ocean of human knowledge and acquired gifts, Phil. 3: 8. John

17: 3. 1 Cor. 2: 2. Let no man therefore be dejected at the want of

those gifts with which unsanctified men are adorned. If God have

taught thee the evil of sin, the worth of Christ, the necessity of

regeneration, the mystery of faith, the way of communion with God in

duties; trouble not thyself because of thine ignorance in natural or

moral things: thou hast that, reader, which will bring thee to

heaven; and he is a truly wise man that knows the way of salvation,

though he be ignorant and unskilful in other things: thou knowest

those things which all the learned doctors and libraries in the

world could never teach thee, but God has revealed them to thee;

others have more science, thou hast more savour and sweetness; bless

God, and be not discouraged.

Second use for examination.

If there be no coming to Christ without the teachings of the

Father: then it greatly concerns us to examine our own hearts,

whether ever we have been under the saving teachings of God, during

the many years we have sat under the preaching of the gospel. Let

not the question be mistaken; I do not ask what books you have read,

what ministers you have heard, what stock of natural or speculative

knowledge you have acquired; but the question is, whether ever God

spake to your hearts, and has effectually taught you such lessons,

as were mentioned in our last discourse? O there is a vast

difference betwixt that notional, speculative, and traditional

knowledge which man learneth from men, and that spiritual,

operative, and transforming knowledge which a man learneth from God.

If you ask how the teachings of God may be discerned from all other

mere human teachings; I answer, they may be discerned, and

distinguished by these six signs.

Sign 1. The teachings of God are very humbling to the soul that

is taught. Human knowledge puffeth up, 1 Cor. 8: 1. but the

teachings of God do greatly abase the soul, Job 13: 5. "I have heard

of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee;

wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes:" the same

light which discovers to us the holiness, justice, greatness, and

goodness of God, discovereth also the vileness, baseness, emptiness,

and total unworthiness of men; yea, of the best and holiest of men,

Isa. 6: 5.

Sign 2. The teachings of God are deeply affecting and

impressive teachings; they fully reach the heart of man, Hos. 2: 14.

"I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak

comfortably unto her;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, I will speak to

her heart. When God sheweth unto man the evil of sin, he so

convinceth the soul, that no creature-comforts have any pleasure or

sweetness in them; and when he sheweth unto man his righteousness,

pardon, and peace in Christ, he so comforteth and refresheth the

heart, that no outward afflictions have any weight or bitterness in

them: one drop of consolation from heaven, sweetens a sea of trouble

upon earth, Psal. 94: 19. "In the multitude of my thoughts within

me, thy comforts delight my soul."

Sign 3. The teachings of God are sanctifying and renewing

teachings; they reform and change the heart, Eph. 4: 21, 22, 23. "If

so be that you have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth

is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation the

old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts: and be

renewed in the spirit of your mind," &c. See here what holiness and

purity are the effect of divine teaching! Holiness, both external

and internal, negative and positive: holiness of every kind follows

the Father's teachings: all the discoveries God makes to us of

himself in Christ, have an assimilating quality, and change the soul

into their own likeness, 2 Cor. 3: 18.

Sign 4. All God's teachings are practical, producing obedience.

Idle notions and useless speculations are not learned from God. As

God's creating words, so his teaching words are with effect: as when

he said, "Let there be light, and there was light:" so when he saith

to the soul, Be comforted, be humbled; it is effectually comforted,

Isa. 66: 18. it is humbled, Job 40: 4, 5. As God has in nature made

no creature in vain, so he speaks no word in vain: every thing which

men hear, or learn from the Father, is for use, practice, and

benefit to the soul.

Sign 5. All teachings of God are agreeable with the written

word: The Spirit of God, and the word of God do never jar, John 14:

26. "He shall take of mine, and shew it unto you." When God speaketh

unto the heart of man, whether in a way of conviction, consolation,

or instruction in duty, he always either maketh use of the express

words of scripture, or speaks to the heart in language every way

consentaneous and agreeable to scripture: So that the written word

becomes the standard to weigh and try all divine teachings, Isa 8:

20. "To the law, and to the testimony: If they speak not according

to this word, it is because there is no light (or morning) in them."

Whatever is disagreeing or jarring with the scripture must not pass

for an inspiration of God, but a deluding sophism, and insinuation

of Satan.

Sign 6. The teachings of God are very satisfying teachings to

the soul of man: The understanding faculty, like a dial, is

enlightened with the beams of divine truth shining upon it: this no

man's teachings can do: Men can only teach objectively, by

propounding truth to the understanding; but they cannot enlighten

the faculty itself, as God does, 1 John 5: 20. He giveth man

understanding as well as instructions, to be understood; he opens

the eyes of the understanding, as well as propoundeth the object,

Eph. 1: 18. And thus we may discern and distinguish the teachings of

God from all other teachings.

Third use of exhortation.

The last use I shall make of this point, shall be a word of

exhortation, both to them that never were yet effectually taught of

God, and to them also that have heard his voice, and are come to

Christ.

First, To those that never yet heard the voice of God speaking

to their hearts; and truly this is the general case of most men and

women, in the professing world: They have heard the sound of the

gospel, but it has been a confused, empty, and ineffectual sound in

their ears; they have heard the voice of man, but have never yet

heard the voice of God. The gifts and abilities of preachers have,

in a notional and mere human way, improved their understandings, and

sometimes slightly touched their affections: All this is but the

effect of man upon man. O that you would look for something which is

beyond all this: satisfy not yourselves with what is merely natural

and human in ordinances; come to the word with higher ends and more

spiritual designs, than to get some notions of truth which you had

not before, or to judge the gifts and abilities of the speaker: If

God speak not to your hearts, all the ordinances in the world can do

you no good, 1 Cor. 3: 7. O remember what a solemn and awful thing

it is to come to those ordinances, and attend upon that

ministration, in and by which the eternal decrees of heaven are to

be executed upon your souls, which must be to you the "savour of

life unto life, or of death unto death;" Wrestle with God by prayer

for a blessing upon the ordinances. Say, "Lord, speak thyself to my

heart, let me hear thy voice, and feel thy power in this prayer, or

in this sermon: Others have heard thy voice, cause me to hear it: It

had been much better for me if I had never heard the voice of

preachers, except I hear thy voice in them."

Secondly, Let all those that have heard the voice of God, and

are come to Christ in the virtue of his teachings, admire the

wonderful condescension of God to them. O that God should speak to

thy soul, and be silent to others! There be many thousands living at

this day under ordinances, to whom the Lord has not given an ear to

hear, nor an heart to obey, Deut. 29: 4. "To you it is given to know

the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not

given," Mat. 13: 11. And I beseech you, walk as men and women that

have been taught of God. When Satan and your corruptions tempt you

to sin, and to walk in the ways of the carnal and careless world;

remember then that scripture, Eph. 4:!30, 21. "But ye have not so

learned Christ, if so be that you have heard him, and have been

taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." To conclude, see that you

be exceeding humble, and lowly in spirit. Humility qualifies you for

divine teachings, Psal. 25: 9. The meek he will teach; and the more

ye are taught of God, the more humble you will still be.

And thus you see, that no man can come to Christ without the

application of the law, and the teachings of the Father; which being

considered, may be very useful to convince us, (which indeed is the

design of it) that among the multitudes of men and women, living

under the ordinances of God, and the general profession of religion,

there are but few, very few to be found, who have effectually

received the Lord Jesus Christ by saving faith.

And now, reader, I suppose by this time thou art desirous to

know by what signs and evidences thy union with Christ by faith may

be cleared up, and made evident to thee; and how that great

question, whether thou hast yet effectually applied Christ to thy

soul or no, may be clearly decided; which brings me to the third

general use of the whole, viz.

The examination of our interest in Christ, by

1. The donation of the Spirit, from 1 John 3: 24.

2. The new creation, from 2 Cor. 5: 17.

S. The mortification of sin, from Gal. 5: 24.

4. The imitation of Christ, from 1 John 2: 6.

Of each of these trials of our interest in Christ I shall speak

in their order: And, first, of the donation of the Spirit.

Sermon 24.

Of the Manner and Importance of the Spirit's Indwelling.

1 John 3: 24.

-- And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he

has given us.

THE apostle in this chapter is engaged in a very trying

discourse; his scope is to discriminate the spirits and states of

sincere believers, from merely nominal and pretended Christians;

which he attempts not to do by any thing that is external, but by

the internal effects and operations of the Spirit of God upon their

hearts. His enquiry is not into those things which men profess, or

about the duties which they perform, but about the frames and

tempers of their hearts, and the principles by which they are acted

in religion. According to this test, he puts believers upon the

search and study of their own hearts; calls them to reflect upon the

effects and operations of the Spirit of God, wrought within their

own souls, assuring them, that these gracious effects, and the

fruits of the Spirit in their hearts, will be a solid evidence unto

them of their union with Jesus Christ, amounting to much more than a

general, conjectural ground of hope, under which it is possible

there may subesse falsum, lurk a dangerous and fatal mistake: But

the gracious effects of the Spirit of God within them, are a

foundation upon which they may build the certainty and assurance of

their union with Christ: Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by

the Spirit which he has given us. In which words we have three

things to consider, viz.

1. The thing to be tried, our union with Christ.

2. The trial of it, by the giving of his Spirit to us.

3. The certainty of the trial this way: Hereby we know,

First, The thing to be tried; which is indeed the greatest and

weightiest matter that can be brought to trial in this world, or in

that to come, namely, our union with Christ, expressed here by his

abiding in us; a phrase clearly expressing the difference betwixt

those who, by profession and common estimation, pass for Christians

among men, though they have no other union with Christ, but by an

external adhesion to him in the external duties of religion, and

those whose union with Christ is real, vital, and permanent, by the

indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in their souls. John 15: 5, 6.

opens the force and importance of this phrase, "I am the vine, ye

are the branches; he that abideth In me and I in him, the same

bringeth forth much fruit: If a man abide not in me, he is cast

forth as a branch, and is withered." The thing then to be tried is,

Whether we stand in Christ as dead branches in a living stock, which

are only bound to it by external ligatures or bonds that hold them

for a while together; or whether our souls have a vital union and

coalition with Christ, by the participation of the living sap of

that blessed root?

Secondly, The trial of this union, which is by the giving of

the Spirit to us: The Spirit of Christ is the very bond of union

betwixt him and our souls. I mean not that the very person of the

Spirit dwelleth in us, imparting his essential properties to us; it

were a rude blasphemy so to speak; but his saving influences are

communicated to us in the way of sanctifying operations; as the sun

is said to come into the house, when his beams and comforting

influence come there. Nor yet must we think that the graces or

influences of the Spirit abide in us in the self-same measure and

manner they do in Christ; "for God giveth not the Spirit to him by

measure;" in him all fulness dwells. He is anointed with the Spirit

above his fellows; but there are measures and proportions of grace

differently communicated to believers by the same Spirit; and these

communicated graces, and real operations of the Spirit of grace in

our hearts, do undoubtedly prove the reality of our union with

Christ; as the communication of the self-same vital juice or sap of

the stock, to the branch whereby it lives, and brings forth fruit of

the same kind, certainly proves it to be a real part or a member of

the same tree.

Thirdly, Which brings us to a third thing; namely, the

certainty of the trial this way, "en toutoi ginoskomen", in this, or

by this we know: We so know that we cannot be deceived. To clear

this, let us consider two things in grace, viz.

1. Somewhat constitutive of its being.

2. Somewhat manifestative of its being.

There is something in grace which is essential, and

constitutive of its being; and somewhat that flows from grace, and

is manifestative of such a being: We cannot immediately and

intuitively discern the essence of grace, as it is in its simple

nature. So God only discerns it, who is the author of it; but we may

discern it mediately and secondarily, by the effects and operations

of it. Could we see the simple essence of grace, or intuitively

discern our union with Christ, our knowledge would be demonstrative,

a priori ad posterius, by seeing effects, as they are lodged in the

cause: But we come to know the being of grace, and the reality of

our union with Christ, a posteriori, by ascending in our knowledge

from the effects and operations, to their true cause and being.

And, accordingly, God has furnished us with a power of self-

intuition and reflection; whereby we are able to turn it upon our

own hearts, and make a judgement upon ourselves, and upon our own

acts. The soul has not only power to project, but a power also to

reflect upon its own actions; not only to put forth a direct act of

faith upon Jesus Christ, but to judge and discern that act also, 2

Tim. 1: 12. I know whom I have believed: And this is the way in

which believers attain their certainty and knowledge of their union

with Christ: from hence the observation will be,

Doct. That interest in Christ may be certainly gathered and

concluded from the gift of the Spirit to us: "No man (saith the

apostle) has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God

dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us: Hereby know we that

we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his

Spirit," 1 John 4: 12, 18. The being of God is invisible, but the

operations of his Spirit in believers, are sensible and discernible.

The soul's union with Christ is a supernatural mystery, yet it is

discoverable by the effects thereof, which are very perceptible in

and by believers.

Two things require explication and confirmation in the

doctrinal part of this point.

1. What the giving of the Spirit imports and signifies.

2. How it evidences the soul's interest in Jesus Christ.

First, As to the import of this phrase, we are to enquire what

is meant by the Spirit, and what by the giving of the Spirit.

Now the Spirit is taken in scripture two ways, viz.

Essentially, or personally.

In the first sense it is put for the Godhead, 1 Tim. 3: 16.

Justified in the Spirit, i.e. By the power of his divine nature,

which raised him from the dead. In the second sense it denotes the

third person, or subsistence in the glorious and blessed Trinity;

and to him this word Spirit is attributed, sometimes properly in the

sense before mentioned, as denoting his personality; at other times

metonymically, and then it is put for the effects, fruits, graces,

and gifts of the Spirit communicated by him unto men, Eph. 5: 11 Be

ye filled with the Spirit. Now the fruits or gifts of the Spirit are

either,

1. Common and assisting gifts: Or,

2. Special and sanctifying gifts.

In the last sense and signification, it must be taken in this

place; for, as to the common assisting and ministering gifts of the

Spirit, they are bestowed promiscuously upon one as well as another;

such gifts in an excellent degree and a large measure, are found in

the unregenerate, and therefore can never amount to a solid evidence

of the soul s union with Christ: but his special sanctifying gifts,

being the proper effect and consequent of that union, must needs

strongly prove and confirm it. In this sense therefore we are to

understand the Spirit in this place; and by giving the Spirit to us,

we are to understand more then the coming of the Spirit upon us: The

Spirit of God is said to come upon men in a transient way, for their

present assistance in some particular service, though in themselves

they be unsanctified persons: Thus the Spirit of God came upon

Balaam, Num. 24: 2. enabling him to prophesy of things to come: And,

although those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit be now ceased, yet

the Spirit ceaseth not to give his ordinary assistances unto men,

both regenerate and unregenerate, 1 Cor. 12: 8, 9, 10, 31. compared:

But, whatever gifts he gives to others, he is said to be given, to

dwell, and to abide only in believers, 1 Cor. 3: 6. "Know ye not

that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth

in you?" An expression denoting both his special property in them,

and gracious familiarity with them. There is a great difference

betwixt the assisting and the indwelling of the Spirit; the one is

transient, the other permanent. That is a good rule the schoolmen

give us, Illa tantum dicuntur inesse, quae insunt per modum quietis:

those things are only said to be in a man, which were in him by way

of rest and permanency, and so the Spirit is in believers: Therefore

they are said to live in the Spirit, Gal. 5: 26. to be led by the

Spirit, ver. 18. to be in the Spirit, and the Spirit to dwell in

them, Rom. 8: 9. And so much of the first thing to be opened, viz.

What we ale to understand by the giving of the Spirit.

Secondly, In the next place we are to enquire and satisfy

ourselves, how this giving of the Spirit evidently proves and

strongly concludes that soul's interest in Christ unto whom he is

given: and this will evidently appear by the consideration of these

five particulars.

1. The Spirit of God in believers is the very bond by which

they are united unto Christ: If therefore we find in ourselves the

bond of union, we may warrantably conclude, that we have union with

Jesus Christ: This is evidently held forth in those words of Christ,

John 17: 22, 23. "The glory which thou gavest me, have I given them,

that they may be one, even ns we are one. I in them and thou in me,

that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know

that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

It is the glory of Christ's human nature to be united to the

Godhead: "This (said Christ) thou gavest me, and the glory thou

gayest me, I have given them," i.e. By me they are united unto thee.

And how this is done, he sheweth us more particularly, I in them;

there is Christ in us, viz. mystically: And thou in me; there is God

in Christ, viz. hypostatically: So that in Christ, God and believers

meet in a blessed union: It is Christ's glory to be one with God; it

is our glory to be one with Christ, and with God by him: But how is

this done? Certainly no other way but by the giving of his Spirit

unto us; for so much the phrase, I in them, must needs import:

Christ is in us by the sanctifying Spirit, which is the bound of our

union with him.

Secondly, The scripture every where makes this giving, or

indwelling of the Spirit, the great mark and trial of our interest

in Christ; concluding from the presence of it in us, positively, as

in the text; and from the absence of it, negatively, as in Rom. 8:

9. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none

of his," Jude, ver. 19. "Sensual, not having the Spirit." This mark

therefore agreeing to all believers, and to none but believers, and

that always, and at all times, it must needs clearly infer the

soul's union with Christ, in whomsoever it is found.

Thirdly, That which is a certain mark of our freedom from the

covenant of works, and our title to the privileges of the covenant

of grace, must needs also infer our union with Christ, and special

interest in him; but the giving or indwelling of the sanctifying

Spirit in us, is a certain mark of our freedom from the first

covenant, under which all Christless persons still stand, and our

title to the special privileges of the second covenant, in which

none but the members are interested; and, consequently, it fully

proves our union with the Lord Jesus. This is plain from the

apostle's reasoning Gal. 4: 6, 7. "And because ye are sons, God has

sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba

Father: Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son: and if a

son, then an heir of God, through Christ." The spirit of the first

covenant was a servile spirit, a spirit of fear and bondage, and

they that were under that covenant were not sons, but servants; but

the spirit of the new covenant is a free, ingenuous spirit, acting

in the strength of God, and those that do so, are the children of

God; and children inherit the blessed privileges and royal

immunities contained in that great charter, the covenant of grace:

they are heirs of God, and the evidence of this their inheritance,

by virtue of the second covenant, and of freedom from the servitude

and bondage of the first covenant, is the Spirit of Christ in their

hearts, crying, Abba Father; So Gal. 5: 18. "If ye be led by the

Spirit, ye are not under the law."

Fourthly, If the eternal decree of God's electing love be

executed, and the virtues and benefits of the death of Christ

applied by the Spirit, unto every soul in whom he dwelleth, as a

spirit of sanctification; then such a giving of the Spirit unto us

must needs be a certain mark and proof of our special interest in

Christ; but the decree of God's electing love is executed, and the

benefits of the blood of Christ are applied to every soul in whom he

dwelleth, as a spirit of sanctification. This is plain from 1 Pet.

1: 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:" Where you see both God's election

executed, and the blood of Jesus sprinkled or applied unto us by the

Spirit, which is given to us as a Spirit of sanctification. There is

a blessed order of working observed as proper to each person in the

Godhead; the Father electeth, the Son redeemeth, the Spirit

sanctifieth. The Spirit is the last efficient in the work of our

salvation; what the Father decreed, and the Son purchased, that the

Spirit applieth; and so puts the last hand to the complete salvation

of believers. And this some divines give as the reason why the sin

against the Spirit is unpardonable, because he being the last agent,

in order of working, if the heart of a man be filled with enmity

against the Spirit, there can be no remedy for such a sin; there is

no looking back to the death of Christ, or to the love of God for

remedy. This sin against the Spirit is that obex infernalis, the

deadly stop and bar to the whole work of salvation; Oppositely,

where the Spirit is received, obeyed, and dwelleth in the way of

sanctification; into that soul the eternal love of God, the

inestimable benefits of the blood of Christ run freely, without any

interruption; and, consequently, the interest of such a soul in

Jesus Christ is beyond all dispute.

Fifthly, The giving of the Spirit to us, or his residing in us,

as a sanctifying Spirit, is everywhere in scripture made the pledge

and earnest of eternal salvation, and consequently must abundantly

confirm and prove the soul's interest in Christ, Eph. 1: 13, 14. "In

whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy

Spirit of promise; which is the earnest of our inheritance," &c. So,

2 Cor. 1: 22. "who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the

Spirit in our hearts." And thus you have the point opened and

confirmed. The use of all followeth:

Use. Now the only use I make of this point shall be that which

lieth directly, both in the view of the text, and of the design for

which it was chosen; namely, by it to try and examine the truth of

our interest in, and the validity of our claim to Jesus Christ. In

pursuance of which design, I shall first lay down some general

rules, and then propose some particular trials.

First, I shall lay down some general rules for the due

information of our minds in this point, upon which so much depends.

Rule 1. Though the Spirit of God be given to us, and worketh in

us, yet he worketh not as a natural and necessary, but as a free and

arbitrary agent: He neither assists, nor sanctifies, as the fire

burneth, ad ultimuam sui posse, as much as he can assist or

sanctify, but as much as he pleaseth: dividing to every man

severally as he will," 1 Cor. 12: 11. Bestowing greater measures of

gifts and graces upon some than upon others; and assisting the same

person more at one season than another; and all this variety of

operation floweth from his own good pleasure. His grace is his own,

he may give it as he pleaseth.

Rule 2. There is a great difference in the manner of the

Spirit's working before and after the work of regeneration. Whilst

we are unregenerate, he works upon us as upon dead creatures that

work not at all with him; and what motion there is in our souls, is

a counter-motion to the Spirit; but after regeneration it is not so,

he then works upon a complying and willing mind; we work, and he

assists, Rom. 8: 26. Our conscience witnesseth, and he beareth

witness with it, Rom. 8: 16. It is therefore an error of dangerous

consequence to think that sanctified persons are not bound to stir

and strive in the way of duty, without a sensible impulse, or

preventing motion of the Spirit, Isa. 64: 7.

Rule 3. Though the Spirit of God be given to believers, and

worketh in them, yet believers themselves may do or omit such things

as may obstruct the working, and obscure the very being of the

Spirit of God in them. Ita notis tractat, ut a nobis tractatus: He

dealeth with us in his evidencing and comforting work, as we deal

with him in point of tenderness and obedience to his dictates; there

is a grieving, yea, there is a quenching of the Spirit by the lusts

and corruptions of those hearts in which he dwelleth; and though he

will not forsake his habitation, as a Spirit of sanctification, yet

he may for a time desert it as a Spirit of consolation, Psa]. 2: 11.

Rule 4. Those things which discover the indwelling of the

Spirit in believers are not so much the matter of their duties, or

substance of their actions, as the more secret springs, holy aims,

and spiritual manner of their doing or performing of them. It is not

so much the matter of a prayer, the neat and orderly expressions in

which it is uttered, as the inward sense and spiritual design of the

soul; it is not the choice of elegant words, whereby our conceptions

are clothed, or the copiousness of the matter with which we are

furnished, for even a poor stammering tongue, and broken language,

may have much of the Spirit of God in it. This made Luther say, he

saw more excellency in the duty of a plain rustic Christian, than in

all the triumphs of Caesar and Alexander. The beauty and excellency

of spiritual duties is an inward hidden thing.

Rule 5. All the motions and operations of the Spirit are always

harmonious, and suitable to the written word, Isa. 8: 20. "To the

law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word,

it is because there is no light in them." The scriptures are by the

inspiration of the Spirit, therefore this inspiration into the

hearts of believers must either substantially agree with the

scriptures, or the inspiration of the Spirit be self repugnant, and

contradictory to itself. It is very observable, that the works of

grace wrought by the Spirit in the hearts of believers, are

represented to us in scripture, as a transcript, or copy of the

written word, Jer. 31: 33. "I will write my law in their hearts."

Now, as a true copy answers the original, word for word, letter for

letter, point for point; so do the works of the Spirit in our souls

harmonise with the dictates of the Spirit in the scriptures;

whatsoever motion therefore shall be found repugnant thereto, must

not be fathered upon the Spirit of God, but laid at the door of its

proper parents, the spirit of error and corrupt nature.

Rule 6. Although the works of the Spirit, in all sanctified

persons, do substantially agree, both with the written word, and

with one another, (as ten thousand copies, penned from one original,

must needs agree within themselves;) yet as to the manner of

infusion and operation, there are found many circumstantial

differences. The Spirit of God does not hold one and the same method

of working upon all hearts: The work of grace is introduced into

some souls with more terror and trouble for sin, than it is in

others; he wrought upon Paul one way, upon Lydia in another way; he

holds some much longer under terrors and troubles than he does

others; inveterate and more profane sinners find stronger troubles

for sin, and are held longer under them, than those are, into whose

heart grace is more early and insensibly infused by the Spirit's

blessing upon religious education; but as these have less trouble

than the other at first, so commonly they have less clearness, and

more doubts and fears about the work of the Spirit afterwards.

Rule 7. There is a great difference found betwixt the

sanctifying and the comforting influences of the Spirit upon

believers, in respect of constancy and permanency. His sanctifying

influences abide for ever in the soul, they never depart; but his

comforting influences come and go, and abide not long upon the

hearts of believers. Sanctification belongs to the being of a

Christian, consolation only to his well-being: The first is fixed

and abiding, the latter various and inconstant. Sanctification

brings us to heaven hereafter, consolation brings heaven unto us

here; our safety lies in the former, our cheerfulness only in the

latter. There are times and seasons, in the lives of believers,

wherein the Spirit of God does more signally and eminently seal

their spirits, and ravish their hearts with joy unspeakable. But

what Bernard speaketh is certainly true in the experience of

Christians: "It is a sweet hour, and it is but an hour; a thing of

short continuance: the relish of it is exceeding sweet, but it is

not often that Christians taste it." And so much may suffice for the

general rules about the inbeing and workings of the Spirit in

believers, for the better information of our understandings, and

prevention of mistakes in this matter: I shall next, according to

promise, lay down the particular marks and trials by which we may

discern whether God has given us his Spirit or no, by which grown

Christians, when they are in a due composed frame, may, by the

assistance of the Spirit of God, (for which therefore they are bound

to pray), discern his indwelling and working in themselves.

Evidence 1. In whomsoever the Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of

sanctification, to that man or woman he has been, more or less, a

Spirit of conviction and humiliation. This is the order which the

Spirit constantly observes in adult or grown converts, John 16: 8,

9. "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of

righteousness, and of judgement: of sin because they believe not on

me." This, you see, is the method he observes all the world over; he

shall reprove or convince the world of sin. Conviction of sin has

the same respect unto sanctification, as the blossoms of trees have

to the fruits that follow them: A blossom is but fructus

imperfectus, et ordinabilis; an imperfect fruit in itself, and in

order to a more perfect and noble fruit. Where there are no

blossoms, we can expect no fruit; and where we see no conviction of

sin, we can expect no conversion to Christ. Has then the Spirit of

God been a Spirit of conviction to thee? Hath he more particularly

convinced thee of sin, because thou hast not believed on him? i. e.

has he shown thee thy sin and misery, as an unbeliever? Not only

terrified and affrighted thy conscience with this or that more

notorious act of sin, but fully convinced thee of the state of sin

that thou art in by reason of thy unbelief, which, holding thee from

Christ, must needs also hold thee under the guilt of all thy other

sins. This gives, at least, a strong probability that God hath given

thee his Spirit, especially when this conviction remains day and

night upon thy soul, so that nothing but Christ can give it rest,

and consequently the great enquiry of thy soul is after Christ, and

none but Christ.

Evidence 2. As the Spirit of God has been a convincing, so he

is a quickening Spirit, to all those to whom he is given; Rom. 8: 2.

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from

the law of sin and death:" He is the Spirit of life, i. e. the

principle of spiritual life in the souls whom he inhabiteth; for,

uniting them to Christ, he unites them to the fountain of life, and

this spiritual life, in believers, manifests itself as the natural

life does in vital actions and operations. When the Spirit of God

comes into the Soul of a man that was dead and senseless under sin,

"O (saith he) now I begin to feel the weight and load of sin, Rom.

7: 24. now I begin to hunger and thirst after Christ and his

ordinances, 1 Pet. 2: 2. now I begin to breathe after God in

spiritual prayer", Acts 9: 11. Spiritual life has its spiritual

senses, and suitable operations. O think upon this you that cannot

feel any burden in sin, you that have no hungerings or thirstings

after Christ; how can the Spirit of God be in you? I do not deny but

there may, at some times, be much deadness and senselessness upon

the hearts of Christians, but this is their disease, not their

nature; it is but at some times, not always, and when it is so with

them, they are burdened with it, and complain of it as their

greatest affliction in this world; their spirits are not easy and at

rest, in such a condition as yours are; their spirits are as a bone

out of joint, an arm dislocated, which cannot move any way without

pain.

Evidence 3. Those to whom God giveth his Spirit bare a tender

sympathy with all the interests and concernments of Christ. This

must needs be so, if the same Spirit which is in Christ dwelleth

also in thy heart; if thou be a partaker of his Spirit, then what he

loves, thou lovest, and what he hates, thou hatest. This is a very

plain case; even in nature itself, we find that the many members of

the same natural body being animated by one and the same spirit of

life, "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or

one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it: Now ye are

the body of Christ, and members in particular," 1 Cor. 12: 26, 27.

For look, as Christ, the head of that body is touched with a tender

sense and feeling of the miseries and troubles of his people, he is

persecuted when they are persecuted, Acts 9: 4. so they that have

the Spirit of Christ in them, cannot be without a deep and tender

sense of the reproach and dishonours that are done to Christ: This

is as it were a sword in their bones," Psal. 42: 3. If his public

worship cease, or the assemblies of his people are scattered; it

cannot but go to the hearts of all, in whom the Spirit of Christ is:

"They will be sorrowful for the solemn assemblies; the reproach of

them will be a burden," Zeph. 3: 18. Those that have the Spirit of

Christ do not more earnestly long after any one thing in this world,

than the advancement of Christ's interest by conversion and

resonation in the kingdoms of the earth, Psal. 14: 8, 4. Paul could

rejoice that Christ was preached, though his own afflictions were

increased, Phil. 1: 16, 18. and John could rejoice that Christ

increased, though he himself decreased; yet therein was his joy

fulfilled, John 3:!!9. So certainly the concernments of Christ must

and will touch that heart which is the habitation of his Spirit. I

cannot deny, but even a good Baruch may be under a temptation to

seek great things for himself, and be too much swallowed up in his

own concernments, when God is plucking up and breaking down, Jer.

14: 4, 5. But this is only the influence of a temptation: the true

temper and spirit of a believer inclines him to sorrow and mourning,

when things are in this sad posture: Ezek. 9: 4. "Go through the

midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark

upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the

abominations that be done in the midst thereof."

O reader, lay thine hand upon thine heart: Is it thus with

thee? Dost thou sympathise with the affairs and concernments of

Christ in the world? or, carest thou not which way things go with

the people of God, and gospel of Christ, so long as thine own

affairs prosper, and all things are well with thee?

Evidence 4. Wherever the Spirit of God dwelleth, he does in

some degree, mortify and subdue the evils and corruptions of the

soul in which he resides. This Spirit lusteth against the flesh,

Gal. 5: 7. and believers, "through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds

of the body," Rom. 8: 13. This is one special part of his

sanctifying work. I do not say he kills and subdues sin in

believers, as that it shall never trouble or defile them any more:

No; that freedom be longs to the perfect state in heaven, but its

dominion is taken away, though its life be prolonged for a season.

It lives in believers still, but not upon the provision they

willingly make to fulfil the lust of it, Rom. 13: 27. The design of

every true believer, is co-incident with the design of the Spirit,

to destroy and mortify corruption: They long after the extirpation

of it, and are daily in the use of all sanctified means and

instruments, to subdue and destroy it; the workings of their

corruption are the afflictions of their souls, Mom. 7: 21. "O

wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this

death?" And there is no one thing that sweetens the thoughts of

death to believers (except the sight and full enjoyment of God) more

than their expected deliverance from sin does.

Evidence 5. Wherever the spirit of God dwelleth in the way of

sanctification, in all such he is the Spirit of prayer and

supplication, Rom. 8: 26. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our

infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought,

but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings

which cannot be uttered:" Wherever he is poured out as the Spirit of

grace, he is also poured out as the Spirit of supplication, Zech.

12: 10. His praying and his sanctifying influences are undivided.

There is a threefold assistance that the Spirit gives unto

sanctified persons in prayer. He helps them before they pray, by

setting an edge upon their desires and affections: He helps them in

prayer, by supplying matters of request to then, teaching them what

they should ask of God: He assisteth them in the manner of prayer,

supplying them with suitable affections, and helping them to be

sincere in all their desires to God. It is he that humbles the pride

of their hearts, dissolves, and breaks the hardness of their hearts;

Out of deadness makes them lively; out of weakness makes them

strong. He assisteth the spirits of believers after prayer, helping

them to faith and patience, to believe, and wait for the returns and

answers of their prayers. O reader, reflect upon thy duties,

consider what spirituality, sincerity, humility, broken-heartedness,

and melting affections after God, are to be found in thy duties: Is

it so with thee? Or dost thou hurry over thy duties as all

interruption to thy business and pleasures? Are they an ungrateful

task, imposed upon thee by God, and thy own conscience? Are there no

hungerings and thirstings after God in thy soul? Or, if there be any

pleasure arising to thee out of prayer, is it not from the

ostentation of thy gifts? If it be so, reject sadly upon the carnal

state of thy heart; these things do not speak the Spirit of grace

and supplication to be given thee.

Evidence 6. Wherever the Spirit of grace inhabits, there is an

heavenly, spiritual frame of fining accompanying, and evidencing the

indwelling of the Spirit, Rom. 8: 5, 6. "For they that are after the

flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the

Spirit, the things of the Spirit: for to be carnally minded is

death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. By the mind,

understand the musings, reasonings, yea, and the cares, fears,

delights and pleasures of the soul, which follow the workings and

meditations of the mind. As these are, so are we; if these be

ordinarily and habitually taken up, and exercised about earthly

things, then is the frame and state of the man carnal, and earthly:

The workings of every creature follow the being and nature of it. If

God, Christ, heaven, and the world to come, engage the thoughts and

affections of the soul, and the temper of such a soul is spiritual,

and the Spirit of God dwelleth there; this is the life of the

regenerate, Phil. 3: 20. "Our conversation is in heaven;" and such a

frame of heart is life and peace: A serene, placid, and most

comfortable life. No pleasures upon earth, no gratifications of the

senses, do relish and savour, as spiritual things do. Consider,

therefore, which way thy heart ordinarily works, especially in thy

solitudes and hours of retirement. These things will be a great

evidence for, or against thy soul. David could say "How precious are

thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them: if I

should count them, they, are more in number than the sand; when I

awake, I was still with thee," Psal. 139: 17, 18. Yet it must be

acknowledged, for the relief of weaker Christians, that there is a

great difference and variety found in this matter, among the people

of God: For the strength, steadiness, and constancy of a spiritual

mind, result from the depth and improvement of sanctification: The

more grace, still the more evenness, spirituality, and constancy

there is in the motions of the heart after God. The minds of weak

Christians are more easily entangled in earthly vanities, and more

frequently diverted by inward corruptions; yet still there is a

spiritual Pondus, inclination and bent of their hearts towards God;

and the vanity and corruption which hinders their communion with him

are their greatest grief and burthen under which they groan in this

world.

Evidence 7. Those to whom the Spirit of grace is given, are led

by the Spirit, Rom. 8: 11. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God,

they are the sons of God:" Sanctified souls give themselves up to

the government and conduct of the Spirit; they obey his voice, beg

his direction, follow his motions, deny the solicitations of flesh

and blood, in obedience to him, Gal. 1: 16. And they that do so,

they are the sons of God. It is the office of the Spirit to guide us

into all truth; and it is our great duty to follow his guidance.

Hence it is, that in all enterprises and undertakings, the people of

God so earnestly beg direction and counsel from him. "Lead me, O

Lord, in thy righteousness, (saith David) make thy way straight

before my face," Psal. 5: 8. They dare not, in doubtful cases, lean

to their own understandings; yea, in points of duty, and in points

of sin, they dare not neglect the one, or commit the other, against

the convictions and persuasions of their own consciences; though

troubles and sufferings be unavoidable in that path of duty, when

they have balanced duties with sufferings, in their most serious

thoughts, the conclusion and result wily still be, it is better to

obey God, than man, the dictates of the Spirit, rather than the

counsels of flesh and blood.

But, before I leave this point, I reckon myself a debtor unto

weak Christians, and shall endeavour to give satisfaction to some

special doubts and fears, with which their minds are ordinarily

entangled in this matter; for it is a very plain case, that many

souls have the presence and sanctification of the Spirit without the

evidence and comfort thereof. Divers thing are found in believers,

which are so many fountains of fears and doubts to them. And,

Objection 1. First, I greatly doubt the Spirit of God is not in

me, (saith a poor Christian) because of the great darkness and

ignorance which clouds my soul; for I read, 1 John 2: 27. that he

enlighteneth the soul which he inhabiteth. "The anointing which ye

have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man

teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things,"

&c. but alas, my understanding is weak and cloudy, I have need to

learn of the meanest of God's people: This only I know, that I know

nothing as I ought to know.

Sol. Two things are to be regarded in spiritual knowledge; viz.

the quantity, and the efficacy thereof. Your condition does not so

much depend upon the measures of knowledge; for, haply, you are

under many natural disadvantages, and want those helps and means of

increasing knowledge, which others plentifully enjoy. It may be you

have wanted the helps of education, or have been incumbered by the

necessities and cares of the world, which have allowed you but

little leisure for the improvement of your minds: But if that which

you do know, be turned into practice and obedience, Col. 1: 9, 10.

If it have influence upon your hearts, and transform your affections

into a spiritual frame and temper, 2 Cor. 3: 17, 18. If your

ignorance humble you, and drive you to God daily for the increase of

knowledge, one drop of such knowledge of Christ, and yourselves as

this, is more worth than a sea of human, moral, unsanctified, and

speculative knowledge. Though you know but little, yet that little,

being sanctified, is of great value: Though you know but little,

time was when you knew nothing of Jesus Christ, or the state of your

own souls. In a word, though you know but little, that little you do

know will be still increasing, "like the morning light, which

shineth more and more unto the perfect day," Prov. 4: 18. If thou

knowest so much as brings thee to Christ, thou shalt shortly be

where thy knowledge shall be as the light at noon day.

Object. 2. I sometimes find my heart raised, and my affections

melted in duties, but I doubt it is in a natural way, and not from

the Spirit of God: could I be assured those motions of my heart were

from the Spirit of grace, and not merely a natural thing, it would

be a singular comfort and satisfaction to me.

Sol. First, Consider whether this be not the ground of your

fear and doubting, because you are fain to take pains in the way of

meditation, prayer, and other duties, to bring your hearts to relish

and savour the things of God; whereas, it may be, you expect your

spiritual enlargements and comforts should flow in upon you

spontaneously, and drop from heaven immediately of their own accord,

without any pains or industry of yours. Here may be, (and probably

is) a great mistake in this matter; for the Spirit of God works in

the natural method, wherein affections use to be raised, and makes

use of such duties as meditation and prayer, as instruments to do

that work by, Ezek. 36: 57. So David was forced to reason with, and

chide his own heart, Psal. 42: 5. Thy comfort and enlargement may

nevertheless be the fruit of the Spirit, because God makes it spring

up, and grow upon thy duties.

Secondly, Take this as a sure rule, Whatsoever rises from self,

always aims at, and terminates in self. This stream cannot be

carried higher than the fountain; if therefore thy aim, and end in

striving for affections and enlargements in duty, be only to win

applause from men, and appear to be what in reality thou art not,

this, indeed, is the fruit of nature, and a very corrupt and

hypocritical nature; but if thy heart be melted, or desire to be

melted in the sense of the evil of sin, in order to the further

mortification of it; and, under the apprehensions of the free grace

and mercy of God in the pardon of sin. in order to the engaging of

thy soul more firmly to him; if these, or such like, be thy ends and

designs, or be promoted and furthered by thine enlargements and

spiritual comforts, never reject them as the mere fruits of nature:

A carnal root cannot bring forth such fruits as these.

Object. 3. Upon the contrary, spiritual deadness, and

indisposedness to duties, and to those especially which are more

secret, spiritual, and self-denying than others, is the ground upon

which many spiritual souls, who are yet truly gracious, do doubt the

indwelling of the Spirit in them. 0, saith such a soul, if the

Spirit of God be in me, Why is it thus? Could my heart be so dead,

so backward and averse to spiritual duties? No; these things would

be my meat and my drink, the delights and pleasures of my life.

Sol. First, These things indeed are very sad, and argue thy

heart to be out of frame, as the body is, when it cannot relish the

most desirable meats or drinks: But the question will be, how thy

soul behaves itself in such a condition as this is? whether this be

easy or burdensome to he borne by thee? and if thou complain under

it as a burden; then what pains thou takest to ease thyself, and get

rid of it?

Secondly, Know also, that there is a great difference betwixt

ritual death, and spiritual deadness; the former is the state of the

unregenerate, the latter is the disease and complaint of many

thousand regenerate souls: If David had not felt it as well as thee,

he would never have cried out nine times in the compass of one

Psalm, Quicken me, quicken me. Besides,

Thirdly, Though it be of ten, it is not so always with thee;

there are seasons wherein the Lord breaks in upon thy heart,

enlarges thy affections, and sets thy soul at liberty; to which

times thou wilt do well to have an eye, in these dark and cloudy

days.

Object. 4. But the Spirit of God is the comforter, as well as a

sanctifier: He does not only enable men to believe, but after they

believe, he also seals them, Eph 1: 13. But I walk in darkness, and

am a stranger to the sealing and comforting work of the Spirit: How

therefore can I imagine the Spirit of God should dwell in me, who go

from day to day in the bitterness of my soul, mourning as without

the sun?

Sol. There is a twofold sealing, and a two-fold comfort: The

Spirit sealeth both objectively, in the work of sanctification; and

formally, in giving clear evidence of that work. Thou mayest be

sealed in the first, whilst thou art not yet sealed in the second

sense: If so, thy condition is safe, although it be at present

uncomfortable. And, as to comfort, that also is of two sorts, viz.

seminal, or actual: in the root, or in the fruit; Light is sown for

the righteous, Psal 97: 11. though the harvest to reap and gather in

that joy and comfort be not yet come. And there are many other ways

beside that of joy and comfort, whereby the indwelling of the Spirit

may evidence itself in thy soul: If he do not enable thee to

rejoice, yet if he enable thee sincerely to mourn for sin; if he do

not enlarge thy heart in comfort, yet if he humble and purge thy

heart by sorrows: if he deny thee the assurance of faith, and yet

give thee the dependence of faith, thou hast no reason to call in

question, or deny the indwelling of the Spirit in thee for that

cause.

Object. 5. But the apostle saith, "They that walk in the

Spirit, do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," Gal. 5: 16. but I

find myself entangled, and frequently overcome by them: Therefore I

doubt the Spirit of God is not in me.

Sol. It is possible the ground of your doubting may be your

mistake of the true sense and meaning of that scripture: It is not

the apostle's meaning in that place, that sin in believers does not

work, tempt, and oftentimes overcome, and captivate them; for then

he wound contradict himself in Rom. 7: 28. where he thus complains,

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my

mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in

my members." But two things are meant by that expression, "Ye shall

not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

First, That the principle of grace will give a check to sin in

its first motions, and cause it to miscarry in the womb, like an

untimely birth, before it come to its full maturity; it shall never

be able to gain the full consent of the will, as it does in the

unregenerate.

Secondly, If, notwithstanding all the opposition grace makes to

hinder the birth or commission of it, it does yet prevail, and break

forth into act; yet such acts of sin, as they are not committed

without regret, so they are followed with shame, sorrow, and true

repentance: And those very surprisals, and captivities of sin at one

time, are made cautions and warnings to prevent it at another time

If it be so with thee, thou cost not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

And now, reader, upon the whole, if upon examination of thy

heart by these rules, the Lord shall help thee to discern the saving

work of the Spirit upon thy soul, and thereby thine interest in

Christ, What a happy man or woman art thou! what pleasure will arise

to thy soul from such a discovery! look upon the frame of thine

heart absolutely as it is in itself at present, or comparatively,

with what once it was, and others still are, and thou wilt find

enough to transport and melt thy heart within thee: Certainly this

is the most glorious piece of workmanship that ever God wrought in

the world upon any man, Eph. 2: 10. The Spirit of God is come down

from heaven, and has hallowed thy soul to be a temple for him self

to dwell in; as he has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in

them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," 2 Cor.

7: 16. Moreover, this gift of the Spirit is a sure pledge and

earnest of thy future glory: Time was, when there was no such work

upon thy soul. And, considering the frame and temper of it, the

total aversation, strong opposition, and rooted enmity that was in

it; it is the wonder of wonders, that ever such a work as this

should be wrought upon such a heart as thine: that ever the Spirit

of God, whose nature is pure and perfect holiness, should chuse such

an unclean, polluted, abominable heart to frame an habitation for

himself there to dwell in; to say of thy soul (now his spiritual

temple) as he once said of the material temple at Jerusalem, Psal.

132: 13, 14. &c. The Lord has chosen it, he has desired it for his

habitation. This is my rest for ever: Here will I dwell; for I have

desired it." O what has God done for thy soul!

Think, reader, and think again: Are there not many thousands in

the world of more ingenuous, sweet, and amiable dispositions than

thyself, whom yet the Spirit of God passeth by, and leaveth them as

tabernacles for Satan to dwell in? Such a one thou lately wast, and

hadst still remained, if God had not wrought for thee, beyond all

the expectations and desires of thine own heart. O bless God that

you have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which

is of God; that ye might know the things which are freely given unto

you of God.

Sermon 25.

Of the Nature and Necessity of the New Creature.

2 Cor. 5: 17.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things

are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

You have seen one trial of an interest in Christ, in our last

discourse, namely, by the donation of the Spirit. We have here

another trial of the same matter, from one of the greatest, and most

noble effects of the Spirit upon our souls; namely, his work of

renovation, or new creation: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new

creature." The apostle's scope in the immediate context, is to

dissuade Christians from a carnal, sinful partiality, in their

respects to men: Not to despise them after the manner of the world,

according to the external differences, but the real internal worth

and excellency that is in men. This the apostle presses by two

arguments; one drawn from the end of Christ's death, ver. 15. which

was to take off from these selfish designs and carnal ends by which

the whole world is swayed. Secondly, From the new spirit, by which

believers are actuated: they that are in Christ are to judge and

measure all things by a new rule: "If any man be in Christ, he is a

new creature: Old things are passed away;" q. d. we have done with

that low, selfish spirit of the world, which was wholly governed by

carnal interest; we are now to judge by a new rule, to be actuated

from a new principle, aim at a new and more noble end; "Behold, all

things are become new." In these words we have three general parts,

to be distinctly considered, viz.

1. The great question to be determined, "If any man be in

Christ?"

2. The rule by which it may be determined, viz. "he is a new

creature."

3. This general rule more particularly explained, "Old things

are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

First, We have here the great question to be determined,

Whether a man be in Christ? A question upon the determination

whereof, we must stand, or fall for ever. By [being in Christ] the

apostle does not here mean the general profession of Christianity,

which gives a man the reputation of an interest in him; but by being

in Christ, he means an interest in him, by vital union with his

person, and real participation of his benefits. Now this is the

question to be determined, the matter to be tried; than which,

nothing can be more solemn and important in the whole world.

Secondly, The rule by which this great question may be

determined, viz. The new creation; "If any man be in Christ, he is a

new creature." By this rule all the titles and claims made to Christ

in the professing world, are to be examined. [If any man] be he what

he will, high or low, great or small, learned or illiterate, young

or old, if he pretend interest in Christ, this is the standard by

which he must be tried: if he be in Christ, he is a new creature;

and if he be not a new creature, he is not in Christ, let his

endowments, gifts, confidence, and reputation be what they will: [A

new creature] not new physically, he is the same person he was; but

a new creature, that is, a creature renewed by gracious principles,

newly infused into him from above, which sway him and guide him in

another manner, and to another end than ever he acted before; and

these gracious principles not being educed out of any thing which

was pre-existent in man, but infused de novo, from above, are

therefore called, in this place, a new creature: This is the rule by

which our claim to Christ must be determined.

Thirdly, This general rule is here more particularly explained;

"Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." He

satisfies not himself to lay down this rule concisely, or express it

in general terms, by telling us, the man in Christ must be a new

creature; but more particularly, he shews us what this new creature

is, and what the parts thereof are, viz. Both

1. The privative part; "Old things are passed away."

2. The positive part thereof; "All things are become new."

By old things, he means all those carnal principles, self-ends,

and fleshly lusts belonging to the carnal state, or the old man: all

these are passed away; "not simply, and perfectly, but only in part

at present, and wholly in hope and expectation hereafter." So much

briefly of the privative part of the new creature, "Old things are

passed away." A word or two must be spoken of the positive part;

"All things are become new. He means not that the old faculties of

the soul are abolished, and new ones created in their room; but as

our bodies may be said to be new bodies, by reason of their new

endowments and qualities super induced, and bestowed upon them in

their resurrection, so our souls are now renewed by the infusion of

new gracious principles into them, in the work of regeneration.

These two parts, viz. the privative part, the passing away of old

things; and the positive part, the renewing of all things, do,

betwixt them, comprise the whole nature of sanctification, which, in

other scriptures, is expressed by equivalent phrases; sometimes by

putting off the old, and putting on the new man, Eph. 4: 24.

sometimes by dying unto sin, and living unto righteousness, Rom. 6:

11. which is the self-same thing the apostle here intends, by the

passing away of old things, and making all things new. And because

this is the most excellent, glorious, and admirable work of the

Spirit, which is, or can be wrought upon man in this world;

therefore the apostle asserts it with an ecce, a note of special

remark and observation, "Behold, all things are become new;" q. d.

Behold and admire this surprising, marvellous change which God has

made upon men; they are come out of darkness into his marvellous

light, 1 Pet. 2: 9. out of the old, as it were, into a new world;

"Behold, all things are become new". Hence note,

Doct. That Gods creating of a new supernatural work of grace in

the soul of any mart, is that man's sure, and infallible

evidence of a saving interest in Jesus Christ.

Suitable hereunto are those words of the apostle, Eph. 4: 20,

21, 22, 23, 24. "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye

have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in

Jesus: That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old

man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts: and be

renewed in the Spirit of your mind: and that ye put on the new man,

which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Where we have, in other words of the same importance, the very self-

same description of the man that is in Christ, which the apostle

gives us in this text. Now, for the opening and stating of this

point, it will be necessary that I shew you,

1. Why the regenerating work of the Spirit is called a new

creation.

2. In what respect every soul that is in Christ is renewed, or

made a new creature.

3. What are the remarkable properties and qualities of this new

creature.

4. The necessity of this new creation to all that are in

Christ.

5. How this new creation evidences our interest in Christ.

6. And then apply the whole in the proper uses of it.

First, Why the regenerating work of the Spirit is called a new

creation. This must be our first enquiry. And, doubtless, the reason

of this appellation is the analogy, proportion, and similitude which

is found betwixt the work of regeneration, and God's work in the

first creation. And their agreement and proportion will be found in

the following particulars.

First, The same almighty Author who created the world, createth

also this work of grace in the soul of man, 2 Cor. 4: 6. "God, who

commanded the light to thine out of darkness, has shined into our

hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in

the face of Jesus Christ." The same powerful word which created the

natural, createth also the spiritual light. It is equally absurd for

any man to say, I make myself to repent, or to believe, as it is to

say, I made myself to exist, and be.

Secondly, The first thing that God created in the natural

world, was light, Gen. 1:3. and the first thing which God createth

in the new creation, is the light of spiritual knowledge, Col. 3:

10. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge

after the image of him that created him."

Thirdly. Creation is out of nothing; it requires no pre-

existent matter; it does not bring one thing out of another, but

something out of nothing; it gives a being to that which before had

no being: So it is also in the new creation, 1 Pet. 2: 9, 10. "Who

has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; which in

time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which

had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." The work of

grace is not educed out of the power and principles of nature, but

it is a pure work of creation. The Heathen philosophers could

neither understand, nor acknowledge the creation of the world,

because that notion was repugnant to this maxim of reason, en nihilo

nihil fit, out of nothing, nothing can be made. Thus did they

insanire cum ratione, befool themselves with their own reasonings;

and after the same manner some great pretenders to reason among us,

voting it an absurdity to affirm, that the work of grace is not

virtually and potentially contained in nature, the new creation in

the old.

Fourthly, It was the virtue and efficacy of the Spirit of God,

which gave the natural world its being by creation; Gen. 1: 2. the

Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; it hovered over the

chaos, as the wings of a bird do over her eggs, as the same word is

rendered, Deut. 32: 11. cherishing, as it were by incubation, that

rude mass by a secret quickening influence, by which it drew all

creatures into their several forms, and particular natures: So it is

in the new creation; a quickening influence must come from the

Spirit of God, or else the new creation can never be formed in us;

John 3: 8. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." And ver. 6.

"That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit."

Fifthly, The word of God was the instrument of the first

creation; Psal. 33: 6, 9. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens

made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth: For he

spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." The word

of God is also the instrument of the new creation, or work of grace

in man; 1 Pet. 1: 23. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed,

but of incorruptible; by the word of God, which liveth, and abideth

for ever." So James 1: 18. "Of his own will begat he us, with the

word of truth." Of his own will; that was the impulsive cause; with

the word of truth; that was the instrumental cause. Great respect

and honour, love, and delight, is due to the word upon this account,

that it is the instrument of our regeneration, or new creation.

Sixthly, The same power which created the world, still

underprops and supports it in its being: the world owes its

conservation, as well as its existence, to the power of God, without

which it could not subsist one moment. Just so it is with the new

creation, which entirely depends upon the preserving power, which

first formed it; Jude ver. 1. "Preserved in Christ Jesus," and 1

Pet. 1: 5. "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto

salvation." As in a natural way "we live, move, and have our being

in God," Acts 17: 28. so in a spiritual way, we continue believing,

repenting, loving, and delighting in God; without whose continued

influence upon our souls, we could do neither.

Seventhly, In a word, God surveyed the first creation with

complacence and great delight; he beheld the works of his hands, and

approved them as very good, Gen. 1: 31. So this also in the second

creation; nothing pleaseth and delights God more than the works of

grace in the souls of his people. It is not an outward privilege of

nature, or gift of providence, which commends any man to God;

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but a new

creature," Gal. 6: 15. And thus you see upon what grounds the work

of regeneration in man is stiled a new creature; which was the first

thing to be opened.

Secondly, Next we must enquire, in what respects every soul

that is in Christ is renewed, or made a new creature: and here we

shall find a threefold renovation of every man that is in Christ,

viz.

1. In his state and condition.

2. In his frame and constitution.

3. In his practice and conversation.

First, He is renewed in his state and condition: for he passeth

from death to life in his justification, 1 John 3: 14. He was

condemned by the law, he is now justified freely by grace, through

the redemption which is in Christ: he was under the curse of the

first covenant; he is under the blessing of the new covenant: he was

afar off, but is now made nigh unto God; an alien, a stranger once,

now of the household of God, Eph. 2: 12, 13. 0 blessed change, from

a sad to a sweet and comfortable condition! "There is therefore no

condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," Rom. 8: 1.

Secondly, Every man in Christ is renewed in his frame and

constitution; all the faculties and affections of his soul are

renewed by regeneration: his understanding was dark, but now is

light in the Lord, Eph. 5: 8. his conscience was dead and secure, or

full of guilt and horror, but is now become tender, watchful, and

full of peace, Heb. 9: 11. his will was rebellious, stubborn, and

inflexible; but is now made obedient and complying with the will of

God, Psal. 110: 2. his desires did once pant and spend themselves in

the pursuit of vanities, now they are set upon God, Isa. 26: 8. his

love did fondly dote upon ensnaring earthly objects, now it is

swallowed up in the infinite excellencies of God and Christ, Psal.

119: 97. his joy was once in trifles and things of nought, now his

rejoicing is in Christ Jesus, Phil. 3: 3. his fears once were about

noxious creatures, now God is the object of the fear of reverence,

Acts 9: 31. and sin the object of the fear of caution, 2 Cor. 7: 11.

his hopes and expectations were only from the world present, but now

from that to come, Heb. 6: 19. Thus the soul in its faculties and

affections is renewed; which being done, the members and senses of

the body must needs be destinated and employed by it in new

services; no more to be the weapons of unrighteousness, but

instruments of service to Jesus Christ, Rom. 6: 19. And thus all

that are in Christ are renewed in their frame and constitution.

Thirdly, The man in Christ is renewed in his practice and

conversation: the manner of operation always follows the nature of

beings. Now the regenerate not being what they were, cannot walk and

act as once they did; Eph. 2: 1, 2, 3. "And you has he quickened,

who were once dead in trespasses and sins, wherein ye walked

according to the course of this world." They were carried away, like

water by the strength of the tide, by the influence of their own

corrupt natures, and the customs and examples of the world; but the

case is now altered. So in 1 Cor. 6: 11. the apostle shews believers

their old companions in sin, and tells them, "Such were some of you,

but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified," &c. q. d. the world is

now well altered with you, thanks be to the grace of God for it.

This wonderful change of practice, which is so universal and

remarkable in all the regenerate, and immediately consequent upon

their conversion, sets the world a wondering at them; 1 Pet. 4: 4.

Wherein they think it strange, that you run not "with them into the

same excess of riot, speaking evil of you. They think it strange:"

The word signifies to stand and gaze, as the hen does which has

brooded, and hatched partridge eggs, when she sees the chickens

which she has brought forth, take the wing and fly away from her.

Thus do the men of the world stand amazed to see their old

companions in sin, whose language once was vain and earthly, it may

be, profane and filthy, now to be praying, speaking of God, heaven,

and things spiritual, having no more to do with them, as to sin,

except by way of reprehension and admonition: this amazes the world,

and makes them look with a strange admiring eye upon the people of

God.

Thirdly, In the next place let us enquire into the properties

and qualities of this new creature, and shew you, as we are able,

what they are; yet, reader, expect not here an exact and accurate

account of that which is so great a mystery; for if questions may be

moved about a silly fly, which may puzzle the greatest philosopher

to resolve them; how much more may we conceive this great and

marvellous work of God, the most mysterious and admirable of all his

works, to surmount the understandings of the most illuminated

Christians? O how little do we know of the nature, properties, and

operations of this new creature! So far as God has revealed it to

our weak understandings, we may speak of it. And,

First, The scripture speaks of it as a thing of great

difficulty to be conceived by man, John 3: 8. "The wind bloweth

where it listed, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not

tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: So is every one that is

born of the Spirit." The original of winds is a question of great

difficulty in philosophy: We hear the voice of the wind, feel its

mighty force, and behold its strange effects; but neither know

whence it comes, or whither it goes. Ask a man, Do you hear the wind

blow? Yes. Do you feel it blow? Yes, very sensibly. Do you see the

effects of it, rending and overturning the trees? Yes, very plainly.

But can you describe its nature, or declare its original? No, that

is a mystery which I do not understand. Why just so it is with him

that is born of the Spirit. The holy Spirit of God, whose nature and

operations we understand but little of, comes from heaven, quickens

and influences our souls, beats down and mortifies our lusts by his

Almighty Power: These effects of the Spirit in us we experimentally

feel, and sensibly discern: But how the Spirit of God first entered

into, and quickened our souls, and produced this new creature in

them, we understand little more of it than how the bones do grow in

the womb of her that is with child, Eccles. 11: 5. Therefore is the

life of the new creature called a hidden life, Col. 3: 3. The nature

of that life is not only hidden totally from all carnal men, but in

a very great measure it is hidden and unknown life unto spiritual

men, though themselves be the subjects of it.

Secondly, But though this life of the new creature be a great

mystery, and secret in some respects; yet so far as it is known, and

appears unto us, the new creature is the most beautiful and lovely

creature that ever God made; for the beauty of the Lord himself is

upon it: "The new man is created after God", Eph. 4: 24. As the

picture is drawn after the man, it is a draught of God himself

delineated by the Spirit, that admirable Artist, upon the soul of

man. Holiness is the beauty and glory of God; and in holiness the

new creature is created after God's own image, Col. 3: 10. The

regenerate soul hereby becomes holy, 1 John 3: 3. not essentially

holy, as God is, nor yet efficiently holy; for the regenerate soul

can neither make itself, nor others holy: But the life of the new

creature may be said to resemble the life of God in this, that as

God lives to himself, so the new creature wholly lives to God; as

God loves holiness, and hates the contrary, so does the new

creature; it is in these things formed after the image of God that

created it. When God creates this creature in the soul of man, we

are said then to be "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. 1: 4.

So that there can be nothing communicated unto men which beautifies

and adorns their souls as this new creation does: Men do not

resemble God as they are noble, and as they are rich, but as they

are holy: no gift, no endowment of nature embellishes the soul as

this new creature does: An awful Majesty sits upon the brow of the

new creature, commanding the greatest and worst of men to do homage

to it, Mark 6: 20. Yea, such is the beauty of the new creature, that

Christ, its author, is also its admirer, Cant. 4: 2. "Thou hast

ravished mine heart with one of thine eyes."

Thirdly, This new creature is created in man, upon the highest

design that ever any work of God was wrought: the end of its

creation and infusion is high and noble: salvation to the soul in

which it is wrought; this is both the finis operis, and the finis

operantis: It is the design both of the work and of the workman that

wrought it. When we receive the end of our faith, we receive the

salvation of our souls; salvation is the end of faith: as death is

the end of sin, so life eternal is the end of grace. The new

creature does, by the instinct and steady direction of its own

nature, take its course as directly to God, and to heaven, the place

of its full enjoyment, as the rivers do to the ocean; it declares

itself to be made for God, by its restless workings after him; and

as salvation is the end of the new creature, so it is the express

design and end of him that created it. 2 Cor. 5: 5. "Now he that has

wrought us for the self same thing, is God;" by this workmanship of

his upon our souls, he is now polishing, preparing, and "making them

meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,"

Col. 1: 12.

Fourthly, This new creation is the most necessary work that

ever God wrought upon the soul of man: the eternal well being of his

soul depends upon it; and without it no man shall see God, Heb. 12:

14. and John 1: 3, 5. "Except ye be regenerate, and born again, you

cannot see the kingdom of God." Can you be saved without Christ? You

know you cannot. Can you have interest in Christ without the new

creature? My text expressly tells you it can never be; for, "If any

man be in Christ, he is a new creature." O reader, whatever slight

thoughts of this matter, and with what a careless and unconcerned

eye soever thou readest these lines; yet know thou must either be a

new creature, or a miserable and damned creature for ever. If

civility without the new creature could save thee, why are not the

moral Heathens saved also? If strictness of life without the new

creature could save thee, why did it not save the Scribes and

Pharisees also? If an high profession of religion without the new

creature can save thee, why did it not save Judas, Hymenaeus and

Philetus also? Nothing is more evident than this, that no

repentance, obedience, self-denial, prayers, tears, reformations or

ordinances, without the new creation, avail any thing to the

salvation of thy soul: The very blood of Christ himself, without the

new creature, never did, and never will save any man. Oh how

necessary a work is the new creation! "Circumcision avails nothing,

and uncircumcision nothing: but a new creature."

Fifthly, The new creature is a marvellous and wonderful

creature: there are many wonders in the first creation, "The works

of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure

therein," Psal. 111: 2. But there are no wonders in nature, like

those in grace. Is it not the greatest wonder that ever was seen in

the world, (except the incarnation of the Son of God) to see the

nature and temper of man so altered and changed as it is by grace?

to see lascivious Corinthians, and idolatrous Ephesians, become

mortified and heavenly Christians? to see a fierce and cruel

persecutor, become a glorious confessor and sufferer for Christ?

Gal. 1: 23. to see the carnal mind of man, which was lately fully

set in a strong bent to the world, to be wholly taken off from its

lusts, and set upon things that are spiritual and heavenly?

Certainly it was not a greater miracle to see dead Lazarus come out

of his sepulchre, than it is to see the dead and carnal mind coming

out of its lusts to embrace Jesus Christ; it was not a greater

wonder to see the dead and dry bones in the valley to move and come

together, than it is to see a dead soul moving after God, and moving

to Christ in the way of faith.

Sixthly, The new creature is an immortal creature, a creature

that shall never see death, John 4: 14. it is in the soul of man, a

well of water, springing up unto eternal life. I will not adventure

to say, it is immortal in its own nature, for it is but a creature,

as my text calls it; and we know, that essential interminability is

the in communicable property of God: The new creature has both a

beginning and succession; and therefore might also have an end, as

to any thing in itself, or its own nature. Experience also shows us,

that it is capable both of increasing and decreasing, and may be

brought nigh into death, Rev. 3: 2. The work of the Spirit in

believers, may be ready to die; but though its perpetuity flow not

out of its own nature, it flows out of God's covenant and promises,

which make it an immortal creature: when all other excellencies in

man go away, as at death they will, Job 4: 21. this excellency only

remains: our gifts may leave us, our friends leave us, our estates

leave us, but our graces will never leave us; they ascend with the

soul (in which they inhere) into glory, when the stroke of death

separates it from the body.

Seventhly, The new creature is an heavenly creature; "It is not

born of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God,"

John 1: 13. its descent and original is heavenly, it is spirit born

of spirit, John 3: 6. its centre is heaven, and thither are all its

tendencies, Psal. 63: 8. its proper food, on which it lives, are

heavenly things, Psal. 4: 6, 7. It cannot feed, as other creatures

do, upon earthly things; the object of all its delight and love is

in heaven, Psal. 123: 26. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" The

hopes and expectations of the new creature are all from heaven; it

looks for little in this world, but waits for the cooling of the

Lord. The life of the new creature upon earth, is a life of patient

waiting for Christ; his desires and longings are after heaven, Phil.

1: 93. The flesh indeed lingers, and would delay, but the new

creature hastens, and would fain be gone, 2 Cor. 5: 2. It is not at

home whilst it is here; it came from heaven, and cannot be quiet,

nor suffer the soul, in which it dwells, to be so, until it comes

thither again.

Eighthly, The new creature is an active and laborious creature;

no sooner is it born, but it is acting in the soul. Acts 9: 6.

Behold he prayeth! Activity is its very nature. Gal. 5: 25 "If we

live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit." Nor is it to be

admired, that it should be always active and stirring in the soul,

seeing activity in obedience was the very end for which it was

created. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto

good works," Eph. 2: 10. and he that is acted in the duties of

religion, by this principle of the new creature, or nature, will (so

far as that principle acts him) delight to do the will of God;

rejoice in the way of his commandment, and find the sweetest

pleasure in the paths of duty.

Ninthly, The new creature is a thriving creature, growing from

strength to strength, 1 Pet. 2: 2. and changing the soul in which it

is subjected, from glory unto glory, 2 Cor. 3: 18. The vigorous

tendencies, and constant striving of this new creature, are to

attain its just perfection and maturity, Phil. 3: 11. It can endure

no stints and limits to its desire, short of perfection; every

degree of strength it attains, does but whet and sharpen its desires

after higher degrees: Upon this account, it greatly delights in the

ordinances of God, duties of religion, and society of the saints; as

they are helps and improvements to it, in order to its great design.

Tenthly, The new creature, is a creature of wonderful

preservations: There are many wonders of divine providence in the

preservation of our natural lives, but none like those whereby the

life of the new creature is preserved in our souls: There are

critical times of temptation and desertion, in which it is ready to

die, Rev. 3: 2. the degrees of its strength and liveliness, are

sometimes sadly abated, and its sweet and comfortable workings

intermitted, Rev. 2: 4. the evidences by which its being in us was

wont to be discovered, may be, and often are darkened, 2 Pet. 1: 9.

and the soul in which it is may draw very sad conclusions about the

issue and event; concluding its life not only to be hazarded, but

quite extinguished, Psal. 51: 10, 11, 12. but though it be ready to

die, God wonderfully preserves it from death; it has as well its

reviving, as its fainting seasons. And thus you see, what are the

lovely and eximious properties of the new creature. In the next

place,

Fourthly, We will demonstrate the necessity of this new

creation to all that are in Christ, and by him expect to attain

salvation; and the necessity of the new creature will appear divers

ways.

First, From the positive and express will of God, revealed in

scripture, touching this matter: Search the scriptures, and you

shall find God has laid the whole stress and weight of your eternal

happiness, by Jesus Christ, upon this work of the Spirit in your

souls. So our Saviour tells Nicodemus, John 3: 5. "Verily, verily, I

say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he

cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Agreeable whereunto are those

words of the apostle, Heb. 12: 14. "Without holiness no man shall

see the Lord." And whereas some may think, that their birth-right

privileges, enjoyment of ordinances, and profession of religion, may

commend them to God's acceptance, without this new creation; he

shews then how fond and ungrounded all such hopes are. Gal. 6: 15.

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor

uncircumcision, but a new creature." Christ and heaven are the gifts

of God, and he is at liberty to bestow them, upon what terms and

conditions he pleaseth: and this is the way, the only way, and

stated method in which he will bring men, by Christ, unto glory. Men

may raze out the impressions of these things from their own hearts,

but they can never alter the settled course and method of salvation.

Either we must be new creatures, as the precept of the word command

us, or lost, and damned creatures, as the threatenings of the word

plainly tell us.

Secondly, This new creation, is the inchoative part of that

great salvation which we expect through Christ, and therefore,

without this, all hopes and expectations of salvation must vanish.

Salvation, and renovation, are inseparably connected. Our glory in

heaven, if we rightly understand its nature, consisteth in two

things; namely, our assimilation to God, and our fruition of God:

and both these take their beginning and rise from our renovation in

this world. Here we begin to be changed into his image, in some

degree, 2 Cor. 3: 18 for the new man is created after God, as was

opened above. In the work of grace, God is said to begin that good

work, which is to be finished, or consummated, in the day of Christ,

Phil. 1: 6. Now nothing can be more irrational, than to imagine that

ever that design, or work should be finished or perfected, which

never had a beginning.

Thirdly, So necessary is the new creation to all that expect

salvation by Christ, that without this, heaven would be no heaven,

and the glory thereof no glory to us, by reason of the

unsuitableness and aversion of our carnal minds hereunto; "The

carnal mind is enmity against God", Rom. 8: 7. and enmity is

exclusive of all complacency and delight. There is a necessity of a

suitable and agreeable frame of heart to God, in order to that

complacential rest of our souls in him: And this agreeable temper is

wrought by our new creation. 2 Cor. 5: 5. "He that has wrought us

for the self-same thing, is God." Renovation, you see, is the

working or moulding of a man's spirit into an agreeable temper, or

as it is in Col. 1: 12. the making of us meet for the inheritance of

the saints in light.

From all which, it follows, that seeing there can be no

complacence, or delight in God, without suitableness and conformity

to him, as it is plain, from 1 John 3: 2. as well as from the reason

and nature of the thing itself; either God must become like us,

suitable to our sinful, corrupt and vain hearts, which were but a

rude blasphemy once to imagine; or else we must be made agreeable

and suitable to God, which is the very thing I am now proving the

necessity of.

Fourthly, There is an absolute necessity of the new creature to

all that expect interest in Christ, and the glory to come, since all

the characters, marks, and signs of such an interest, are constantly

taken from the new creature wrought in us. Look over all the marks

and signs of interest in Christ, or salvation by him, which are

dispersed through the scriptures, and you shall still find purity of

heart, Mat. 5: 8. Holiness both in principle and practice, Heb. 12:

14. Mortification of sin, Rom. 8: 13. Longing for Christ's

appearance, 2 Tim. 4: 8. with multitudes more of the same nature, to

be constantly made the marks and signs of our salvation by Christ.

So that either we must have a new bible, or a new heart; for if

these scriptures be the true and faithful words of God, no unrenewed

creature can see his face; which was the fourth thing to be opened.

Fifthly, The last thing to be opened is, how the new creation

is an infallible proof and evidence of the soul's interest in

Christ; and this will appear divers ways.

First, Where all the saving graces of the Spirit are, there

interest in Christ must needs be certain; and where the new creature

is, there all the saving graces of the Spirit are: For what is the

new creature but the frame or system of all special saving graces?

It is not this or that particular grace, as faith, or hope, or love

to God, which constitutes the new creature; for these are but as so

many particular limbs or branches of it; but the new creature is

comprehensive of all the graces of the Spirit, Gal. 5: 22, 28. "The

fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," &c. Any one of the saving,

special graces of the Spirit gives proof of our interest in Christ:

how much more, then, the new creature, which is the complex frame or

system of all the graces together?

Secondly, To conclude; Where all the causes of an interest in

Christ are found, and all the effects and fruits of an interest in

Christ do appear; there, undoubtedly, a real interest in Christ is

found: but wherever you find a new creature, you find all the causes

and all the facets of an interest in Christ: For there you shall

find,

First, The impulsive cause, viz. The electing love of God, from

which the new creature is inseparable, 1 Pet. 1: 2. with the new

creature also, the meritorious, efficient, and final causes of

interest in Christ, and union with him, are ever found, Eph. 2: 10.

chap. 1: 4, 5, 6.

Secondly, All the collects and fruits of interest in Christ are

found in the new creature; there are all the fruits of obedience,

for we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, Eph. 2: 10. Rom.

7: 4. there is true spiritual opposition to sin. 1 John 5: 18. "He

that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one

toucheth him not." There is love to the people of God; 1 John 4: 7.

"Every one that loveth is born of God." There is a conscientious

respect to the duties of both tables; for the new creature is

created after God in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. 4: 25.

There is perseverance in the ways of God to the very end, and

victory over all temptations; for whosoever is born of God,

overcometh the world, 1 John 5: 4. It were easy to run over all

other particular fruits of our union with Christ, and shew you every

one of them in the new creature. And thus much of the doctrinal part

of this point.

Sermon 26.

2 Cor. 5: 17.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things

are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

After the explication of the sense of this scripture, we

observed,

Doct. That God's creating of a new supernatural work of grace

in the soul of any man, is that man's sure and infallible

evidence of a saving interest in Jesus Christ.

You have heard why the regenerating work of the Spirit is

called a new creation; in what respect every soul in Christ is

renewed; what the eximious properties of this new creature are; the

indispensableness and necessity thereof have been also proved; and

how it evidences our interest In Christ, was cleared in the

doctrinal part: Which we now come to improve, in the several uses

serving for our

1. Information.

2. Conviction.

3. Examination.

4. Exhortation.

5. Consolation.

First use, for information.

Is the new creature the sure and infallible evidence of our

saving interest in Christ? From hence then we arc informed,

Inference 1. How miserable and deplorable an estate all

unrenewed souls are in; who can lay no claim to Christ during that

state, and therefore are under an impossibility of salvation. O

reader! if this be the state of thy soul, better had it been for

thee not to have been God's natural workmanship as a man, except

thou be his spiritual workmanship also, as a new man. I know the

schoolmen determine otherwise, and say, that damnation is rather to

be chosen than annihilation: a miserable being is better than no

being: and it is very true, with respect to the glory of God, whose

justice shall triumph for ever in the damnation of the unregenerate;

but, with respect to us, it is much better never to have been his

creatures, in the way of generation, than not to be his new

creatures, in the way of regeneration. So Christ speaks of Judas,

that son of perdition, Mark 14: 21. "Good had it been for that man

if he had never been born:" For what is a being without the comfort

of it? What is life without the joy and pleasure of it? A damned

being is a being without comfort; no glimpse of light shines into

that darkness; they shall, indeed, see and understand the felicity,

light, and joy of the saints in glory; but not partake, in the least

measure, of the comfort, Luke 13: 28. "They shall see Abraham, and

Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, but they themselves shut

out:" Such a sight is so far from giving any comfort, that it will

be the aggravation and increase of torment. O it is better to have

no being at all, than to have a being only to capacitate a man for

misery; to desire death, while death flies from him, Rev. 4: 6. The

opinion of the schoolmen will never pass for sound doctrine among

the damned. Think on it, reader, and lay it to thine heart, better

thou hadst died from the womb, better the knees kind prevented thee,

and the breasts which thou hast sucked, than that thou shouldst live

and die a stranger to the new birth, or that thy mother should bring

thee forth only to increase, and fill up the number of the damned.

Inf. 2. And, on the contrary, we may hence learn, what cause

regenerate souls have to bless God, for the day wherein they were

born. O what a privileged state does the new birth bring men into!

It is possible, for the present, they understand it not; for many

believers are like a great heir lying in the cradle, that knows not

to what an estate and honour he is born: nevertheless, on the same

day wherein we become new creatures by regeneration, we have a firm

title and solid claim to all the privileges of the sons of God, John

1: 12, 13. God becomes our Father by a triple title, not only the

Father of our beings by nature, which was all the relation we had to

him before, but our Father by adoption, and by regeneration: which

is a much sweeter, and more comfortable relation. In that day the

image of God is restored, Eph. 4: 24. this is both the health and

beauty of the soul. In that day we are begotten again to a lively

hope, 1 Pet. 1: 3. a hope more worth than ten thousand worlds, in

the troubles of life, and in the straits of death: this is a

creature which lives for ever, and will make thy life happy for

ever. Some have kept their birth day as a festival, a day of

rejoicing; but none have more cause to rejoice that ever they were

born, than those that are new-born.

Inf. 3. Learn frown hence, that the work of grace is wholly

supernatural; it is a creation, and a creation-work is above the

power of the creature. No power but that which gave being to the

world, can give a being to the new creature: Almighty Power goes

forth to give being to the new creature. This creature is not born

of flesh, or of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God, John 1:

13. The nature of this new creature speaks its original to be above

the power of nature; the very notion of a new creation spoils the

proud boasts of the great asserters of the power and ability of the

will of man. When God, therefore, puts the question, who maketh thee

to differ? And what hast thou that thou hast not received? Let thy

soul, reader, answer it with all humility and thankfulness. It is

thou, Lord, thou only, that madest me to differ from another; and

what I have received, I have received from thy free grace.

Inf. 4. If the work of grace be a new creation, let not the

parents, and friends of the unregenerate utterly despair of the

conversion of their relations, how great soever their present

discouragements are. If it had been possible for a man to have seen

the rude and undigested chaos before the Spirit of God moved upon

it, would he not have said, Can such a beautiful order of beings,

such a pleasant variety of creatures, spring out of this dark lump?

Surely it would have been very hard for a man to have imagined it.

It may be, you see no dispositions or hopeful inclinations in your

friends towards God and spiritual things; nay, possibly they are

totally opposite, and filled with enmity against them; they deride

and jeer all serious piety wherever they behold it; this, indeed, is

very sad; but yet remember the work of grace is creation-work:

though there be no disposition at all in their wills, no tenderness

in their consciences, no light or knowledge in their minds; yet God,

that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into

their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory

of God in the face of Jesus Christ: he can say to the dry bones,

live; to the proud and stubborn heart, come down and yield thyself

to the will of God; and if he command, the work is done. God can

make thee yet to rejoice over thy most uncomfortable relations; to

say with the father of the prodigal, Luke 15: 24. "This my son was

dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found; and they began

to be merry." Difficulties are for men, but not for God: he works,

in conversion, by a power which is able to subdue all things unto

itself.

Inf. 5. If none but new creatures be in Christ, how small a

remnant among men belong to Christ in this world! Among the

multitude of rational creatures inhabiting this world, how few, how

very few, are new creatures? It is the observation of the learned

Mr. Brerewood, that if the world be divided into thirty parts,

nineteen parts are heathenish Idolaters; six parts Mahometans, and

only five out of thirty which may be, in a large sense, called

Christians; of which the far greater part is overspread with Popish

darkness: separate from the remainder, the multitudes of profane,

merely civil, and hypocritical professors of religion; and how few

will remain for Jesus Christ in this world? Look over the cities,

towns, and parishes in this populous kingdom, and how few shall you

find that speak the language or do the works of new creatures? How

few have ever had any awakening convictions on them? And how many of

those that have been convinced have miscarried, and never come to

the new birth? The more cause have they, whom God has indeed

regenerated, to admire the riches of God's distinguishing mercy to

them.

Inf. 6. If the change by grace be a new creation, how universal

and marvellous a change does regeneration make upon men! The new

creation speaks a marvellous and universal alteration, both upon the

state and tempers of men; they come out of darkness, gross, hellish

darkness, into light, a marvellous and heavenly light, 1 Pet. 2: 9.

Eph. 5: 8. their condition, disposition, and conversation, (as you

have heard) are all new; and yet this marvellous change, as great

and universal as it is, is not alike evident, and clearly

discernible in all new creatures: and the reasons are,

First, Because the work of grace is wrought in divers methods

and manners in the people of God. Some are changed from a state of

notorious profaneness unto serious godliness; there the change is

conspicuous and very evident; all the neighbourhood rings ofit: but

in others it is more insensibly distilled in their tender years, by

the blessing of God, upon religious education, and there it is more

indiscernible.

Secondly, Though a great change be wrought, yet much natural

corruption still remains for their humiliation and daily exercise;

and this is a ground of fear and doubting; they see not how such

corruptions are consistent with the new creature.

Thirdly, In some, the new creature shews itself mostly in the

affectionate part, in desires and breathings after God; and but

little in the clearness of their understandings, and strength of

their judgements; for want of which they are entangled and kept in

darkness most of their days.

Fourthly, Some Christians are more tried, and exercised by

temptation from Satan than others are; and these clouds darken the

work of grace in them.

Fifthly, There is great difference and variety found in the

natural tempers and constitutions of the regenerate; some are of a

more melancholy, fearful, and suspicious temper than others are; and

are therefore much longer held under doubtings and trouble of

spirit; nevertheless, what differences soever these things make, the

change made by grace is a marvellous change.

Inf. 7. Lastly, How incongruous are carnal ways and courses to

the spirit of Christians! who being new creatures, can never delight

or find pleasure in their former sinful companions and practices.

Alas! those things are now most unsuitable, loathsome and

detestable, how pleasant soever they once were; that which they

counted their liberty, would now be reckoned their greatest bondage;

that which was their glory, is now their shame; Rom. 6: 21. "What

fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed; for

the end of those things is death:" they need not be pressed by

others, but will freely confess of themselves, what fools and mad

men they once were. None can censure their former conversation more

freely than themselves do, 1 Tim. 13, 14.

Second use, for conviction.

If none be in Christ but new creatures, and the new creation

makes such a change, as has been described; this may convince us,

how many of us deceive ourselves, and run into dangerous and fatal

mistakes, in the greatest concernment we have in this world. But

before I urge this use, I desire none may make a perverse and ill

use of it; let not the wicked conclude, from hence, that there is no

such thing as true religion in the world, or that all who do profess

it, are but hypocrites; neither let the godly injure themselves by

that which is designed for their benefit: let none conclude, that

seeing there are so many mistakes committed about this near

creature, that therefore assurance must needs be impossible, as the

Papists affirm it to be. The proper use that should be made of this

doctrine, is, to undeceive false pretenders, and to awaken all to a

more deep and thorough search of their own conditions; which being

precautioned, let all men be convinced of the following truths:

First, That the change made by civility, upon such as were lewd

and profane, is, in its whole kind and nature, a different thing

from the new creature; the power and efficacy of moral virtue is one

thing, the influence of the regenerating Spirit is quite another

thing, however some have studied to comfort them. The Heathens

excelled in moral and homolitical] virtues: Plato, Aristides,

Seneca, and multitudes more, have outvied many professed Christians,

in justice, temperance, patience, &c. yet were perfect strangers to

the new creation. A man may be very strict and temperate, free from

the pollutions of the world, and yet a perfect stranger to

regeneration all the while, John 3: 10.

Secondly, That many strong convictions and troubles for sin may

be found where the new creature is never formed. Conviction, indeed,

is an antecedent unto, and preparative for the new creature, as the

blossoms of the tree are to the fruit that follows them; but as

fruit does not always follow where those blossoms and flowers

appear, so neither does the new creature follow all convictions and

troubles for sin. Conviction is a common work of the Spirit both

upon the elect and reprobate; but the new creature is formed only in

God's elect. Convictions may be blasted, and vanish away, and the

man that was under troubles for sin, may return again, with "the dog

to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the

mire," 2 Pet. 2: 22. but the new creature never perishes, nor can

consist with such a return to sin.

Thirdly, That excellent gifts and abilities, fitting men for

service in the church of God, may be where the new creature is not;

for these are promiscuously dispensed by the Spirit both to the

regenerate and unregenerate: Math. 7: 22. "Many will say unto me, in

that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" Gifts are

attainable by study; prayer and preaching are reduced to an art; but

regeneration is wholly supernatural. Sin, in dominion, is consistent

with excellent gifts, but wholly incompatible with the new creature.

In a word, these things are so different in nature from the new

creature, that they oft-times prove the greatest bars and obstacles

in the world to the regenerating work of the Spirit. Let no man,

therefore, trust to things whereby multitudes deceive and destroy

their own souls. Reader, it may cost thee many an aking head to

attain gifts, but thou wilt find an aking heart for sin if ever God

make thee a new creature.

Fourthly, Be convinced that multitudes of religious duties may

be performed by men, in whom the new creature was never formed.

Though all new creatures perform the duties of religion, yet all

that perform the duties of religion, are not new creatures;

regeneration is not the only root from which the duties of religion

spring, Isa. 58: 2. "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my

ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the

ordinances of their God, they ask of me the ordinances of justice,

they take delight in approaching to God." These are but weak and

slippery foundations for men to build their confidence and hopes

upon.

The third use, for examination.

Next, therefore, let me persuade every man to try the state of

his own heart in this matter, and closely consider and weigh this

great question: Am I really and indeed a new creature? or am I an

old creature still, in a new creature's dress and habit? Some light

may be given for the discovery hereof, from the consideration of the

1. Antecedents, of the new creation.

2. Concomitants, of the new creation.

S. Consequents, of the new creation.

First, Weigh and consider well the antecedents of the new

creature; have those things passed upon your souls, which ordinarily

make way for the new creature, in whomsoever the Lord forms it?

1. Has the Lord opened the eyes of your understanding in the

knowledge of sin and of Christ? Has he showed you both your disease

and remedy, by a new light shining from heaven into your souls! Thus

the Lord does wherever he forms the new creature, Acts 26: 18.

2. Has he brought home the word with mighty power and efficacy

upon your hearts to convince and humble them? This is the method in

which the new creature is produced, Rom. 7: 9. 1 Thes. 1: 5.

3. Have these convictions over-turned your vain confidences,

and brought you to a great concern and inward distress of soul,

making you to cry, What &hall we do to be saved? These are the ways

of the Spirit, in the formation of the new creature, Acts 16: 29.

Acts 2: 37. If no such antecedent works of the Spirit have passed

upon your hearts, you have no ground for your confidence, that the

new creature is formed in you.

Secondly, Consider the concomitant frames and workings of

spirit which ordinarily attend the production of the new creature,

and judge impartially betwixt God and your own souls, whether they

have been the very frames and workings of your hearts.

1. Have your vain spirits been composed to the greatest

seriousness, and most solemn consideration of things eternal, as the

hearts of all those are whom God regenerates? When the Lord is about

this great work upon the soul of man, whatever vanity, levity, and

sinful jollity was there before, it is banished from the heart at

this time; for now heaven and hell, life and death, are before a

man's eyes, and these are the most awful and solemn things that ever

our thoughts conversed with in this world. Now a man of the most

airy and pleasant constitution, when brought to the sight and sense

of those things, saith of "laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What

does it?" Eccl. 2: 2.

2. A lowly, meek, and humble frame of heart accompanies the new

creation; the soul is weary and heavy laden, Mat 11: 28. Convictions

of sin have plucked down the pride and loftiness of the spirit of

man, emptied him of his vain conceits; those that were of lofty,

proud, and blustering humours before, are meekened and brought down

to the very dust now: it is with them (to speak allusively) as it

was with Jerusalem, that lofty city, Isa. 29: 1, 4. "Wo to Ariel, to

Ariel, the city where David dwelt; thou shalt be brought down, and

shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of

the dust" Ariel signifies the Lion of God: so Jerusalem in her

prosperity was; other cities trembled at her voice; but when God

brought her down, by humbling judgements, then she whispered out of

the dust. So it is in this case.

3. A longing, thirsting frame of spirit accompanies the new

creation; the desires of the soul are ardent after Christ; never did

the hireling long for the shadow, as the weary soul does for Christ,

and rest in him: if no such frames have accompanied that which you

take for your new birth, you have the greatest reason in the world

to suspect yourselves under a delusion.

Thirdly, Weigh well the effects and consequents of the new

creature, and consider whether such fruits as these are found in

your hearts and lives.

1. Wherever the new creature is formed, there a man's course

and conversation is changed: Eph. 4: 22. "That ye put off,

concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt,

according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of

your mind", the new creature cannot but blush and be ashamed of the

old creature's conversation, Rom. 6: 21.

2. The new creature continually opposes and conflicts with the

motions of sin in the heart; Gal. 5: 17. "The spirit lusteth against

the flesh". Grace can no more incorporate with sin, than oil with

water: contraries cannot consist in the same subject longer than

they are fighting with each other; if there be no conflict with sin

in thy soul, or if that conflict be only betwixt the conscience and

affections, light in the one, struggling with lust in the other;

thou wantest that fruit which should evidence thee to be a new

creature.

S. The mind and affections of the new creature are set upon

heavenly and spiritual things, Col. 3: 1, 2. Eph. 4: 23. Rom. 8: 5.

If, therefore, thy heart and affections be habitually earthly and

wholly intent upon things below, driving eagerly after the world, as

the great business and end of thy life, deceive not thyself, this is

not the fruit of the new creature, nor consistent with it.

5. The new creature is a praying creature, living by its daily

communion with God, which is its livelihood and subsistence, Zech.

12: 10. Acts 9: 11. If, therefore, thou be a prayerless soul, or if,

in all thy prayers, thou art a stranger to communion with God; if

there be no brokenness of heart for sin in thy confessions, no

melting affections for Christ and holiness in thy supplications;

surely Satan does but baffle and delude thy over-credulous soul, in

persuading thee that thou art a new creature.

Fifthly, The new creature is restless, after falls into sin,

until it have recovered peace and pardon; it cannot endure itself in

a state of defilement and pollution, Psal. 51: 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. It

is with the conscience of a new creature, under sin, as it is with

the eye, when any thing offends it; it cannot leave twinkling and

watering till it have wept it out: and in the very same restless

state it is, under the hiding of God's face and divine

withdrawments, Cant. 5: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. If, therefore, thou

canst sin and sin again without such a burdensome sense of sin, or

restlessness, or solicitude how to recover purity and peace, with

the light of God's countenance shining, as in days past, upon thy

soul; delude not thyself, thou hast not the signs of a new creature

in thee.

Fourth use, of exhortation.

If the new creation be a sound evidence of our interest in

Christ, then hence let me persuade all that are in Christ, to

evidence themselves to be so, by walking as it becomes new

creatures.

The new creature is born from above, all its tendencies are

heavenward; accordingly, Get your affections on things that are

above, and let your conversation be in heaven: if you live earthly

and sensual lives, as others do, you must cross your new nature

there in; and can those acts be pleasant unto you which are done

with so much regret? wherein you must put a force upon your own

spirits, and offer a kind of violence to your own hearts. Earthly

delights and sorrows are suitable enough to the unregenerate and

sensual men in the world, but exceedingly contrary unto that Spirit

by which you are renovated. If ever you will act becoming the

principles and nature of new creatures, then seek earthly things

with submission, enjoy them with fear and caution, resign them with

cheerfulness and readiness; and thus "let your moderation be known

unto all men," Phil. 4: 5. Let your hearts daily meditate, and your

tongues discourse about heavenly things; be exceeding tender of sin,

strict and punctual in every duty; and hereby convince the world

that you are men and women of another spirit.

Fifth use, for consolation.

Let every new creature be cheerful and thankful: if God has

renewed your natures, and thus altered the frame and temper of your

hearts, he has bestowed the richest mercy upon you that heaven or

earth affords. This is a work of the greatest rarity; a new

creature, may be called, One among a thousand: it is also an

everlasting work, never to be destroyed, as all other natural worlds

of God (how excellent soever) must be: it is a work carried on by

Almighty Power, through unspeakable difficulties and mighty

oppositions, Eph. 1: 12. The exceeding greatness of God's power goes

forth to produce it; and indeed no less is required to enlighten the

blind mind, break the rocky heart, and bow the stubborn will of man;

and the same Almighty Power which at first created it, is necessary

to be continued every moment to preserve and continue it, 1 Pet. 1:

5. The new creature is a mercy which draws a train of innumerable

and invaluable mercies after it, Eph. 2: 13, 14. 1 Cor. 3: 20. When

God has given us a new nature, then he dignifies us with a new name,

Rev. 2: 17. brings us into a new covenant, Jer. 31: 33. begets us

again to a new hope, 1 Pet. 1: 8. entitles us to a new inheritance,

John 1: 12, 13. It is the new creature which through Christ makes

our persons and duties acceptable with God, Gal. 6: 15. In a word,

it is the wonderful work of God, of which we may say, "This is the

Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." There are

unsearchable wonders in its generation, in its operation, and in its

preservation. Let all therefore, whom the Lord has thus renewed,

fall down at the feet of God, in an humble admiration of the

unsearchable riches of free grace, and never open their mouths to

complain under any adverse or bitter providences of God.

Sermon 27.

Of the Nature, Principle, and Necessity of Mortification.

Gal. 5: 24.

And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the

affections and lusts.

Two great trials of our interest in Christ are finished; we now

proceed to the third, namely, The mortification of sin: "They that

are Christ's have crucified the flesh." The scope of the apostle in

this context is, to heal the unchristian breaches among the

Galatians, prevailing, by the instigation of Satan, to the breach of

brotherly love. To cure this, he urges four weighty arguments.

First, From the great commandment, to love one another; upon

which the whole law, i.e. all the duties of the second table do

depend, ver. 15.

Secondly, He powerfully dissuades them from the consideration

of the sad events of their bitter contests, calumnies, and

detractions, viz. mutual ruin, and destruction, ver. 15.

Thirdly, He dissuades them from the consideration of the

contrariety of these practices unto the Spirit of God, by whom they

all profess themselves to be governed, from ver. 17. to ver. 23.

Fourthly, He powerfully dissuades them from these animosities,

from the inconsistency of these, or any other lusts of the flesh,

with an interest in Christ: "They that are Christ's, have crucified

the flesh," &c. q. d. You all profess yourselves to be members of

Christ, to be followers of him; but how incongruous are these

practices to such a profession? Is this the fruit of the dove-like

Spirit of Christ? Are these the fruits of your faith and professed

mortification? Shall the sheep of Christ snarl and fight like rabid

and furious beasts of prey? Tantaene animis caelestibus irae? So

much rage in heavenly souls? O how repugnant are these practices

with the study of mortification!, which is the great study and

endeavour of all that are in Christ! "They that are Christ's have

crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." So much for the

order of the words; the words themselves are a proposition wherein

we have to consider, both

1. The subject.

2. The predicate.

First, The subject of the proposition, they that are Christ's,

viz. "True Christians, real members of Christ; such as truly belong

to Christ, such as have given themselves up to be governed by him,"

and are indeed acted be his Spirit. such, all such persons (for the

indefinite is equipollent to an universal) all such, and none but

such.

Secondly, The predicate; "They have crucified the flesh, with

the affections and lusts." By flesh we are here to understand carnal

concupiscence, the workings and motions of corrupt nature; and by

the affections we are to understand, not the natural, but the

inordinate affections; for Christ does not abolish and destroy, but

correct and regulate the affections of those that are in him: And by

crucifying the flesh, we are not to understand the total extinction

or perfect subduing of corrupt nature, but only the deposing of

corruption from its regency and dominion in the soul; its dominion

is taken away, though its life be prolonged for a season; but yet,

as death surely, though slowly, follows crucifixion, (the life of

crucified persons gradually departing frown them, with their blood)

it is just so in the mortification of sin; and therefore what the

apostle in this place calls crucifying, he calls in Rom. 8: 13.

mortifying. "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify," "tanatoute"; if

ye put to death the deeds of the body: But he chuses, in this place,

to call it crucifying, to show not only the conformity there is

betwixt the death of Christ and the death of sin, in respect of

shame, pain, and lingering slowness; but to denote also the

principal means and instruments of mortification, viz. the death, or

cross of Jesus Christ, in the virtue whereof believers do mortify

the corruptions of their flesh; the great arguments and persuasives

to mortification being drawn from the sufferings of Christ for sin.

In a word, he does not say, They that believe Christ was crucified

for sin, are Christ's; but they, and they only, are his, who feel as

well as profess the power and efficacy of the sufferings of Christ,

in the mortification and subduing of their lusts and sinful

affections. And so much, briefly, of the parts and sense of the

words.

The observation followeth.

Doct. That a saving interest in Christ may be regularly and

strongly inferred and concluded frown the mortification of

the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

This point is fully confirmed by those words of the apostle.

Rom. 6: 5, 6, 7, 8. "For if we have been planted together in the

likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his

resurrection, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him,

that the body of it might be destroyed, that henceforth we should

not serve sin: for he that is dead is free from sin: Now if we be

dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.

Mark the force of the apostle's reasoning; if we have been

planted into the likeness of his death, viz. by the mortification of

sin, which resembles, or has a likeness to the kind and manner of

Christ's death (as was noted above) then we shall be also in the

likeness of his resurrection; and why so, but because the

mortification of sin is an undoubted evidence of the union of such a

soul with Christ, which is the very ground-work and principle of

that blessed and glorious resurrection: And therefore he saith, ver.

11. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive

unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" q. d. Reason thus with

yourselves, these mortifying influences of the death of Christ are

unquestionable presages of your future blessedness, God never taking

this course with any but those who are in Christ, and are designed

to be glorified with him. The death of your sin is as evidential as

any thing in the world can be of your spiritual life for the

present, and of your eternal life with God hereafter. Mortification

is the fruit and evidence of your union, and that union is the firm

ground-work and certain pledge of your glorification; and so you

ought to reckon or reason the case with yourselves, as the word

"ligidzeste" there signifies. Now for the stating and explication of

this point, I shall, in the doctrinal part, labour to open and

confirm these five things,

1. What the mortification or crucifixion of sin imports.

2. Why this work of the Spirit is expressed by crucifying.

3. Why all that are in Christ must be so crucified or mortified

unto sin.

4. What is the true evangelical principle of mortification.

5. How the mortification of sin evinces our interest in Christ.

And then apply the whole.

First, What the mortification or crucifixion of sin imports.

And, for clearness sake, I shall speak to it both negatively

and positively, showing you what is not intended, and what is

principally aimed at by the Spirit of God in this expression.

First, "The crucifying of the flesh does not imply the total

abolition of sin in believers, or the destruction of its very being

and existence in them for the present; sanctified souls so put off

their corruptions with their dead bodies at death:" This will be the

effect of our future glorification, not of our present

sanctification. Sin does exist in the most mortified believer in the

world, Rom. 7: 17. it still acteth and lusteth in the regenerate

soul, Gal. 5: 17. yea, notwithstanding its crucifixion in believers,

it still may, in respect of single acts, surprise and captivate

them, Psal. 65: 3. Rom. 7: 23. This, therefore, is not the intention

of the Spirit of God in this expression.

Secondly, Nor does the crucifixion of sin consist in the

suppression of the external acts of sin only: for sin may reign over

the souls of men, whilst it does not break forth into their lives in

gross and open actions, 2 Pet. 3: 20. Mat. 12: 43. Morality in the

Heathens (as Tertullian well observes) did absconders, sed non

abscindere vitia, hide them, when it could not kill them: Many a

mull shows a white, and fair hand, who yet has a very foul and black

heart.

Thirdly, The crucifixion of the flesh does not consist in the

cessation of the external acts of sin; for, in that respect, the

lusts of men may die of their own accord, even a kind of natural

death. The members of the body are the weapons of unrighteousness,

as the apostle calls them; age or sickness may so blunt or break

those weapons, that the soul cannot use them to such sinful purposes

and services as it was wont to do in the vigorous and healthful

seasons of life; not that there is less sin in the heart, but

because there are less strength and activity in the body. Just as it

is with an old soldier, who has as much skill, policy, and delight

as ever in military actions; but age and hard services have so

enfeebled him, that he can no longer follow the camp.

Fourthly, The crucifixion of sin does not consist in the severe

castigation of the body, and penancing it by stripes, fasting, and

tiresome pilgrimages. This may pass for mortification among Papists,

but never was any lust of the flesh destroyed by this rigour.

Christians, indeed, are bound not to indulge and pamper the body,

which is the instrument of sin; nor yet must we think that the

spiritual corruptions of the soul feel those stripes which are

inflicted upon the body: See Col. 2: 23. it is not the vanity of

superstition, but the power of true religion, which crucifies and

destroys corruption; it is faith in Christ's blood, not the spilling

of our own blood, which gives sin the mortal wound.

Secondly, But if you enquire, what then is implied in the

mortification or crucifixion of sin, and wherein it does consist? I

answer,

First, It necessarily implies the soul's implantation into

Christ, kind union with him: without which it is impossible that any

one corruption should be mortified: They that are [Christ's] have

crucified the flesh: The attempts and endeavours of all others are

vain and ineffectual: "When we were in the flesh, (saith the

apostle) the motions of sin which were by the law did work; in our

members, to bring forth fruit unto death," Rom. 7: 5. sin was then

in its full dominion, no abstinence, rigour, or outward severity; no

purposes, promises, or solemn vows could mortify or destroy it;

there must be an implantation into Christ before there can be any

effectual crucifixion of sin: What believer almost has not in the

days of his first convictions, tried all external methods and means

of mortifying sin, and found all in experience to be to as little

purpose as the binding of Samson with green withs or cords? But when

he has once come to act faith upon the death of Christ, then the

design of mortification has prospered and succeeded to good purpose.

Secondly, Mortification of sin implies the agency of the Spirit

of God in that work, without whose assistances and aids, all our

endeavours must needs be fruitless: Of this work we may say as it

vas said in another case, Zech. 4: 6. "Not by might, nor by power,

but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." When the Apostle therefore would

shew by what hand this work of mortification is performed, he thus

expresseth it, Rom. 8: 50: S. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify

the deeds of the body, ye shall live:" The duty is ours, but the

power whereby we perform it is God's: The Spirit is the only

successful combatant against the lusts that war in our members, Gal

5: 17. It is true, this excludes not, but implies our endeavours;

for it is we through the Spirit who mortify the deeds of the body;

but yet all our endeavours without the Spirit's aid and influence

avail nothing.

Thirdly, The crucifixion of sin necessarily implies the

subversion of its dominion in the soul: A mortified sin cannot be a

reigning sin, Rom. 6: 12, 13, 14. Two things constitute the dominion

of sin, viz. the fulness of its power, and the soul's subjection to

it. As to the fulness of its power, that rises from the suitableness

it has, and pleasure it gives to the corrupt heart of man: It seems

to be as necessary as the right hand, as useful and pleasant as the

right-eye, Mat. 5: 29. but the mortified heart is dead to all

pleasures and profits of sin; it has no delight or pleasure in it;

it becomes its burden and daily complaint. Mortification presupposes

the illumination of the mind and conviction of the conscience; by

reason whereof sin cannot deceive and blind the mind, or bewitch and

ensnare the will and affections as it was wont to do, and

consequently its dominion over the soul is destroyed and lost.

Fourthly, The crucifying of the flesh implies a gradual

weakening of the power of sin in the soul. The death of the cross

was a slow and lingering death, and the crucified person grew weaker

and weaker every hour; so it is in the mortification of sin: The

soul is still "cleansing itself from all filthiness of the flesh and

spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. 7: 1.

And as the body of sin is weakened more and more; so the inward man,

or the new creature, is "renewed day by day," 2 Cor. 4: 16. For

sanctification is a progressive work of the Spirit: And as holiness

increases and roots itself deeper and deeper in the soul; so the

power and interest of sin proportionately abates and sinks lower and

lower, until at length it be swallowed up in victory.

Fifthly, The crucifying of the flesh notes to us the believers'

designed application of all spiritual means and sanctified

instruments for the destruction of it: There is nothing in this

world which a gracious heart more vehemently desires and longs for

than the death of sin and perfect deliverance from it, Rom. 7: 24.

the sincerity of which desires does accordingly manifest itself in

the daily application of all God's remedies: such are daily watching

against the occasions of sin, Job 31: 1. "I have made a covenant

with mine eyes;" more than ordinary vigilance over their special or

proper sin, Psal. 18: 23. "I kept myself from mine iniquity:"

Earnest cries to heaven for preventing grace. Psal. 19: 13. "Keep

back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have

dominion over me:" Deep humblings of soul for sins past, which is an

excellent preventive unto future sins, 2 Cor. 2: 11. "in that ye

sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness wrought it?" Care to

give no furtherance or advantage to the design of sin by making

provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, as others do,

Rom. 13: I3, 14. Willingness to bear due reproofs for sin, Psal.

141: 5. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness:" These,

and such like means of mortification, regenerate souls are daily

using and applying, in order to the death of sin. And so much of the

first particular, what the mortification of sin, or crucifying of

the flesh implies.

Secondly, In the next place we shall examine the reasons why

this work of the Spirit is expressed under that trope, or figurative

expression of crucifying the flesh. Now the ground and reason of the

use of this expression, is the resemblance which the mortification

of sin bears unto the death of the cross: And this appears in five

particulars.

First, The death of the cross was a pained death, and the

mortification of sin is a very painful work, Mat. 25: 29. it is as

the cutting off our right and plucking out our right eyes; it will

cost many thousand tears and groans, prayers and strong cries to

heaven, before one sin will be mortified. Upon the account of the

difficulty of this work, and mainly upon this account, the scripture

saith, "narrow is the way, and strait is the gate that leadeth unto

life, and few there be that find it," Mat. 7: 14. and that the

righteous themselves are scarcely saved.

Secondly, The death of the cross was universally painful; every

member, every sense, every sinew, every nerve, was the seat and

subject of tormenting pain. So it is in the mortification of sin; it

is not this or that particular member or act, but the whole body of

sin that is to be destroyed, Rom. 6: 6. and accordingly the conflict

is in every faculty of the soul; for the Spirit of God, by whose

hand sin is mortified, does not combat faith this or that particular

lust only, but with sin, as sin; and for that reason with every sin,

in every faculty of the soul. So that there are conflicts and

anguish in every part.

Third, The death of the cross was a slow, and lingering death;

denying unto them that suffered it the favour of a quick dispatch;

just so it is in the death of sin: though the Spirit of God be

mortifying it day by day, yet this is a truth sealed by the sad

experience of all believers in the world, that sin is long a dying:

And if we ask a reason of this dispensation of God, among others,

this seems to be one; corruptions in believers, like the Canaanites

in the land of Israel, are left to prove and to exercise the people

of God, to keep us watching and praying, mourning and believing;

yea, wondering and admiring at the riches of pardoning and

preserving mercy all our days.

Fourthly, The death of the cross was a very opprobrious, or

shameful death: they that died upon the cross were loaded with

ignominy; the crimes for which they died were exposed to the public

view; after this manner dieth sin, a very shameful and ignominious

death. Every true believer draws up a charge against it in every

prayer, aggravates and condemns it in every, confession, bewails the

evil of it with multitudes of tears and groans; making sin as vile

and odious as he can find words to express it, though not so vile as

it is in its own nature. "O my God, (saith Ezra) I am ashamed, and

even blush to look up unto thee," Ezra 9: 6. So Daniel in his

confession, Dan. 9: 7. "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee,

but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day." Nor can it grieve

any believer in the world, to accuse, condemn, and shame himself for

sin, whilst he remembers and considers, that all that shame and

confusion of face which he takes to himself goes to the vindication,

glory and honour of his God. As David was content to be more vile

still for God, so it pleaseth the heart of a Christian to magnify

and advance the name and glory of God, by exposing his own shame, in

humble and broken hearted confessions of sin.

Fifthly, In a word, the death of the cross was not a natural,

but a violent death: Such also is the death of sin: sin dies not of

its own accord, as nature dieth in old men, in whom the balsamum

radicale, or radical moisture is consumed: for if the Spirit of God

did not kill it, it would live to eternity in the souls of men; it

is not the everlasting burnings, and all the wrath of God which lies

upon the damned for ever, that can destroy sin. Sin, like a

salamander, can live to eternity in the fire of God's wrath; so that

either it must die a violent death by the hand of the Spirit, or it

never dieth at all. And thus you see, why the mortification of sin

is tropically expressed by the crucifying of the flesh.

Thirdly, Why all that are in Christ must be so crucified, or

mortified unto sin: And the necessity of this will appear divers

ways.

First, From the inconsistency and contrariety that there is

betwixt Christ and unmortified lust, Gal. 5: 17. "These are contrary

the one to the other." There is a threefold inconsistency betwixt

Christ and such corruptions; they are not only contrary to the

holiness of Christ, 1 John 3: 6. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth

not; whosoever sinneth has not seen him, neither known him"; i.e.

whosoever is thus ingulphed and plunged into the lust of the flesh,

can have no communion with the pure and holy Christ; but there is

also an inconsistency betwixt such sin and the honour of Christ, 2

Tim. 2: 19. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart

from iniquity." As Alexander said to a soldier of his name,

recordare nominis Alexandri, remember thy name is Alexander, and do

nothing unworthy of that name. And unmortified lusts are also

contrary to the dominion and government of Christ, Luke 9: 23. "If

any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his

cross daily, and follow me:" These are the self denying terms upon

which all men are admitted into Christ's service: And without

mortification and self-denial, he allows no man to call him Lord and

Master.

Secondly, The necessity of mortification appears from the

necessity of conformity betwixt Christ, the Head, and all the

members of his mystical body; for how incongruous and uncomely would

it be to see a holy, heavenly Christ, leading a company of unclean,

carnal, and sensual members? Mat. 11: 29. "Take my yoke upon you,

and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly," q. d. it would be

monstrous to the world, to behold a company of lions and wolves

following a meek and harmless lamb: Men of raging and unmortified

lusts, professing and owning me for their head of government. And

again, 1 John 2: 6. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself

also to walk, even as he walked," q. d. either imitate Christ in

your practice, or never make pretensions to Christ in your

profession. This was what the apostle complained of, Phil. 3: 18.

for "many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even

weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Men

cannot study to put a greater dishonour and reproach upon Christ,

than by making his name and profession a cloke and cover to their

filthy lusts.

Thirdly, The necessity of crucifying the flesh appears from the

method of salvation, as it is stated in the gospel. God every where

requires the practice of mortification, under pain of damnation.

Mat. 18: 8. "Wherefore if thy hand, or thy foot, offend thee, cut

them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter

into life, halt or maimed, rather than having two hands, or two

feet, to be cast into everlasting fire." The gospel legitimates no

hopes of salvation, but such as are accompanied with serious

endeavours of mortification. 1 John 3: 3. "Every man that has this

hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." It was one

special end of Christ's coming into the world, "to save his people

from their sins," Mat. 1: 21. nor will he be a saviour unto any who

remain under the dominion of their own lusts.

Fourthly, The whole stream and current of the gospel, puts us

under the necessity of mortification; gospel precepts have respect

unto this, Col. 3: 5. "Mortify your members, therefore, which are

upon the earth." 1 Pet. 1: 15. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Gospel-

precedents have respect unto this, Heb. 12: 1. "Wherefore seeing we,

also, are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us

lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us,"

&c. Gospel-threatenings are written for this end, and do all press

mortification in a thundering dialect, Rom. 8: 13. "If ye live after

the flesh, ye shall die". Rom. 1: 18. "The wrath of God is revealed

from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men."

The promises of the gospel are written designedly to promote it, 2

Cor. 7: 1. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit,

perfecting holiness in the fear of God." But in vain are all these

precepts, precedents, threatenings, and promises written in the

scriptures, except mortification be the daily study and practice of

professors.

Fifthly, Mortification is the very scope and aim of our

regeneration, and the infusion of the principles of grace. "If we

live in the spirit, let us walk in the spirit," Gal. 5: 25. In vain

were the habits of grace planted, if the fruits of holiness and

mortification be not produced; yea, mortification is not only the

design and aim, but it is a special part, even the one half of our

sanctification.

Sixthly, If mortification be not the daily practice and

endeavour of believers, then the way to heaven no way answers to

Christ's description of it in the gospel. He tells us, Mat. 7: 13,

14. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to

destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: because strait is

the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few

there be that find it." Well then, either Christ must be mistaken in

the account he gave of the way to glory, or else all unmortified

persons are out of the way; for what makes the way of salvation

narrow, but the difficulties and severities of mortification?

Seventhly, In a word, he that denies the necessity of

mortification, confounds all discriminating marks betwixt saints and

sinners; pulls down the pale of distinction, and lets the world into

the church, and the church into the world: It is a great design of

the gospel to preserve the boundaries betwixt the one and the other,

Rom. 2: 7, 8. Rom. 8: 1, 4, 5, 6, 13. But if men may be Christians

without mortification, we may as well go into the taverns, ale-

houses, or brothel-houses, among the roaring or sottish crew of

sinners, and say, here are those that are redeemed by the blood of

Christ; here are his disciples and followers as to go to seek them

in the purest churches, or most strictly religious families: by all

which the necessity of mortification, unto all that are in Christ,

is abundantly evidenced.

Fourthly, In the next place, we are to enquire into the true

principle of mortification it is true, there are many ways attempted

by men for the mortification of sin, and many rules laid down, to

guide men in that great work; some of which are very trifling and

impertinent things: such are those prescribed by Popish Votaries.

But I shall lay down this as a sure conclusion, that the sanctifying

Spirit is the only effectual principle of mortification; and,

without him, no resolutions, vows, abstinences, castigations of the

body, or any all or external endeavours, can ever avail to the

mortification of one sin. The moral Heathens have prescribed many

pretty rules and helps for the suppression of vice: Aristides,

Seneca, and Cato, were renowned among them upon this account:

formal. Christians have also gone far in the reformation of their

lives, but could never attain true mortification; formality pares

off the excrescences of vice, but never kills the root of it: it

usually recovers itself again, and their souls, like a body not well

purged, relapses into a worse condition than before, Mat. 12: 43,

44. 2 Pet. 2:20.

This work of mortification is peculiar to the Spirit of God,

Rom. 8: 13. Gal. 5: 17. and the Spirit becomes a principle of

mortification in believers two ways, namely,

1. By the implantation of contrary habits.

2. By assisting those implanted habits in all the times of

need.

First, The Spirit of God implants habits of a contrary nature,

which are destructive to sin, and are purgative of corruption, 1

John 5: 4. Acts 15: 9. Grace is to corruption what water is to fire;

betwixt which, there is both abnormal and selective opposition; a

contrariety both in nature and operation, Gal 5: 17. There is a

threefold remarkable advantage given us by grace, for the

destruction and mortification of sin. For,

First, Grace gives the mind and heart of man a contrary bent

and inclination; by reason whereof spiritual and heavenly things

become connatural to the regenerate soul. Rom. 7: 22. "For I delight

in the law of God after the inner man." Sanctification is in the

soul as a living spring running with a kind of central force heaven-

ward, John 4: 14.

Secondly, Holy principles destroy the interest that sin once

had in the love and delight of the soul; the sanctified soul cannot

take pleasure in sin, or find delight in that which grieves God, as

it was wont to do; but that which was the object of delight, hereby

becomes the object of grief and hatred. Rom. 7: 15. What I hate,

that I do.

Thirdly, From both these follow a third advantage for the

mortification of sin, in as much as sin being contrary to the new

nature, and the object of grief and hatred, cannot possibly be

committed without reluctancy and very sensible regret of mind; and

actions done with regret are neither done frequently nor easily. The

case of a regenerate soul under the surprisals and particular

victories of temptation, being like that of a captive in war, who

marches not with delight, but by constraint among his enemies. So

the apostle expresseth himself, Rom. 7: 28. "But I see another law

in my members warring against the law of my mind; and bringing me

into captivity unto the law of sin which is in my members." Thus the

Spirit of God promotes the design of mortification, by the

implantation of contrary habits.

Secondly, By assisting those gracious habits in all the times

of need, which he does many ways; sometimes notably awakening and

rousing grace out of the dull and sleepy habit, and drawing forth

the activity and power of it into actual and successful resistances

of temptations. As Gen. 39: 9. "How can I do this great wickedness

and sin against God?" Holy fear awakens first and raises all the

powers of grace in the soul to make a vigorous resistance of

temptation: the Spirit also strengthens weak grace in the soul. 2

Cor. 12: 9. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is

made perfect in weakness:" And, by reason of grace thus implanted

and thus assisted, he that is born of God keepeth himself, and the

wicked one toucheth him not."

Fifthly, The last query to be satisfied is, how mortification

of sin solidly evinceth the soul's interest in Christ; and this it

does divers ways, affording the mortified soul many sound evidences

thereof. As,

Evidence 1. Whatsoever evidences the indwelling of the Holy

Spirit of God in us, must needs be evidential of a saving interest

in Christ, as has been fully proved before; but the mortification of

sin does plainly evidence the indwelling of the Spirit of God; for,

as we proved but now, it can proceed from no other principle. There

is as strong and inseparable a connection betwixt mortification and

the Spirit, as betwixt the effect and its proper cause; and the self-

same connection betwixt the inbeing of the Spirit and union with

Christ: So that to reason from mortification to the inhabitation of

the Spirit, and from the inhabitation of the Spirit to our union

with Christ, is a strong scriptural way of reasoning.

Evidence 2. That which proves a soul to be under the covenant

of grace, evidently proves its interest in Christ; for Christ is the

head of that covenant, and none but sound believers are under the

blessings and promises of it: but mortification of sin is a sound

evidence of the soul's being under the covenant of grace, as is

plain from those words of the apostle, Rom. 6: 12, 13, 14. "Let not

sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in

the lust thereof; neither yield ye your members as instruments of

unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those

that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of

righteousness unto God: for sin shall not have dominion over you;

for ye are not under the law, lint under grace." Where the apostle

presseth believers unto mortification by this encouragement, that it

will be a good evidence unto them of a new covenant interest; for

all legal duties and endeavours can never mortify sin: it is the

Spirit in the new covenant, which produces this. Whoever, therefore,

has corruptions mortified, has his interest in the covenant, and

consequently in Christ, so far cleared unto him.

Evidence 3. That which is the fruit and evidence of saving

faith, must needs be a good evidence of our interest in Christ; but

mortification of sin is the fruit and evidence of saving faith. Acts

15: 9. "Purifying their hearts by faith." 1 John 5: 4. "This is the

victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith." Faith

overcomes both the allurements of the world on the one hand, and the

terrors of the world on the other hand, by mortifying the heart and

affections to all earthly things: a mortified heart is not easily

taken with the ensnaring pleasures of the world, or much moved with

the disgraces, losses, and sufferings it meets with from the world;

and so the strength and force of its temptations are broken, and the

mortified soul becomes victorious over it; and all this by the

instrumentality of faith.

Evidence 4. In a word, there is an intimate and indissoluble

connection betwixt the mortification of sin, and the life of grace.

Rom. 6: 11. "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive

unto God, through Jesus Christ:" and the life of Christ must needs

involve a saving interest in Christ. By all which is fully proved

what was asserted in the observation from this text. The application

follows in the next sermon.

Sermon 28.

Gal. 5: 24.

And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the

affections and lusts.

From hence our observation was,

That a saving interest in Christ, may be regularly and strong(y

inferred and concluded from the mortification of the flesh, with its

affections and lusts.

Having opened the nature and necessity of mortification in the

former sermon, and shown how regularly a saving interest in Christ

may be concluded from it; we now proceed to apply the whole, by way

of

1. Information.

2. Exhortation.

3. Direction.

4. Examination.

5. Consolation.

First use, for information.

Inference 1. If they that be Christ's have crucified the flesh,

Then the life of Christians is no idle or easy life: the corruptions

of his heart continually fill his hands with work, with work of the

most difficult nature; sin-crucifying work, which the scripture

calls the cutting off the right hand, and plucking out of the right

eye: sin crucifying work is hard work, and it is constant work

throughout the life of a Christian; there is no time nor place freed

from this conflict; every occasion stirs corruption, and every

stirring of corruption calls for mortification: corruptions work in

our very best duties, Rom. 7: 23. and put the Christian upon

mortifying labours. The world and the devil are great enemies, and

fountains of many temptations to believers, but not like the

corruptions of their own hearts; they only tempt objectively and

externally, but these tempt internally, and therefore are much more

dangerous; they only tempt at times and seasons; these continually,

at all times and seasons: besides, whatever Satan or the world

attempts upon us, would be altogether ineffectual were it not for

our own corruptions, John 14: 30. So that the corruptions of our own

hearts, as they create us most danger, so they must give us more

labour; our life and this labour must end together; for sin is long

a dying in the best heart: those that have been many years exercised

in the study of mortification, may haply feel the same corruption

tempting and troubling them now, which put them into tears, and many

times brought them to their knees twenty or forty years ago. It may

be said of sin as it was said of Hannibal, that active enemy, that

it will never be quiet, whether conquering or conquered and until

sin cease working, the Christian must not cease mortifying.

Inf. 2. If mortification be the great work of a Christian, then

certainly those that give the corruptions of Christians an occasion

to revive, must reeds do them a very ill office; they are not our

best friends that stir the pride of our hearts by the flattery of

their lips. The graces of God in others, I confess, are thankfully

to be owned, and under discouragements, and contrary temptations, to

be wisely and modestly spoken of; but the strongest Christians do

scarcely shew their own weakness in any one thing more than they do

in hearing their own praises. Christian, thou knowest thou carriest

gun-powder about thee, desire those that carry fire to keep at a

distance from thee; it is a dangerous crisis when a proud heart

meets with flattering lips; auferte ignem, &c. take away the fire,

(said a holy divine of Germany, when his friend commended him upon

his death bed) for I have yet combustible matter about me; faithful,

seasonable, discreet reproofs are much more safe to us, and

advantageous to our mortifying work: but alas, how few have the

boldness or wisdom duly to administer them? It is said of Alexander,

that he bid a philosopher (who had been long with him) to be gone;

for, said he, so long thou hast been with me, and never reproved me;

which must needs be thy fault; for either thou sawest nothing in me

worthy of reproof which argues thy ignorance, or else thou durst not

reprove me, which argues thy unfaithfulness. A wise and faithful

reprover is of singular use to him that is heartily engaged in the

design of mortification; such a faithful friend, or some malicious

enemy, must be helpful to us in that work.

Inf. 3. Hence it follows, that manifold and successive

afflictions are no more than what is necessary for the best of

Christians: the mortification of our lusts require them all, be they

never so many, 1 Pet. 1: 5. "If need be, ye are in heaviness:" it is

no more than need, that one loss should follow another, to mortify

an earthly heart; for so intensely are our affections set upon the

world, that it is not one, or two, or many checks of providence,

that will suffice to wean and alienate them. Alas, the earthliness

of our hearts will take all this, it may be much more than this, to

purge them: the wise God sees it but necessary to permit frequent

discoveries of our own weakness, and to let loose the tongues of

many enemies upon us, and all little enough to pull down our pride,

and the vanity that is in our hearts. Christian, how difficult

soever it be for thee to bear it; yet the pride of thy heart

requires all the scoffs and jeers, all the calumnies and reproaches,

that ever the tongues or pens of thy bitterest enemies, or mistaken

friends, have at any time thrown upon thee. Such rank weeds as grow

in our hearts, will require hard frosts and very sharp weather to

rot them; the straying bullock needs a heavy clog, and so does a

Christian whom God will keep within the bounds and limits of his

commandments, Psal. 119: 67. Dan. 11: 35.

Inf. 4. If they that be Christ's have crucified the flesh, then

the number of real Christians is very small. It is true, if all that

seem to be meek, humble, and heavenly, might pass for Christians,

the number would be great; but if no more must be accounted

Christians, than those who crucify the flesh, with its affections

and lusts, O how small is the number! For, O how many be there under

the Christian name, that pamper and indulge their lusts, that

secretly hate all who faithfully reprove them, and really affect

none but such as feed their lusts, by praising and admiring them?

How many that make provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts, Who

cannot endure to have their corruptions crossed? How many are there

that seem very meek and humble, until an occasion be given them to

stir up their passion, and then you shall see in what degree they

are mortified: the flint is a cold stone, till it be struck, and

then it is all fiery. I know the best of Christians are mortified

but in part; and strong corruptions are oftentimes found in very

eminent Christians; but they love them not so well as to purvey for

them; to protect, defend, and countenance them; nor dare they

secretly hate such as faithfully reprove them; as many thousands

that go under the name of Christians do. Upon the account of

mortification it is said, Mat. 7: 13. "Narrow is the way, and strait

is the gate that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Inf. 5. If they that be Christ's have crucified the flesh, i.e.

if mortification is their daily work and study; then how falsely are

Christians charged as troublers of the world and disturbers of the

civil peace and tranquillity of the times and places they live in;

Justly may they retort the charge, as Elijah did to Ahab, "It is not

I that trouble Israel, but thou and thy father's house:" It is not

holy, meek, and humble Christians that put the world into confusion,

this is done by the profane and atheistical; or by the designing and

hypocritical world, and laid at the door of innocent Christians: as

all the public calamities which from the immediate hand of God, or

by foreign or domestic enemies befel Rome, were constantly charged

upon Christians; and they condemned and punished, for what the

righteous hand of God inflicted on the working heads of the enemies

of that state without their privily contrived. The apostle James

propounds and answers a question very pertinent to this discourse,

James 4: 1. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come

they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" O if

men did but study mortification and self denial, and live as much at

home in the constant work of their own hearts as some men do; what

tranquillity and peace, what blessed halcyon days should we quickly

see! It is true, Christians are always fighting and quarrelling, but

it is with themselves and their own corrupt hearts and affections;

they hate no enemy but sin; they thirst for the blood and ruin of

none but of that enemy; they are ambitious of no victory, but what

is over the corruptions of their own hearts; they carry no grudge

except it be against this enemy, sin; and yet these are the men who

are the most suspected and charged with disturbing the times they

live in; just as the wolf accused the lamb, which was below him, for

puddling and defiling the stream. But there will be a day when God

will clear up the innocency and integrity of his mistaken and abused

servants; and the world shall see, it was not preaching and praying,

but drinking, profaneness, and enmity unto true godliness, which

disturbed and broke the tranquillity and quietness of the times:

mean time let innocency commit itself unto God, who will protect,

and in due time vindicate the same.

Inf. 6. If they that be Christ's have crucified the flesh, then

whatsoever religion, opinion, or doctrine does in its own nature

countenance and encourage sin, is not of Christ. The doctrine of

Christ every where teacheth mortification: the whole stream of the

gospel runs against sin; the doctrine it teacheth is holy, pure, and

heavenly; it has no tendency to extol corrupt nature, and feed its

pride, by magnifying its freedom and power, or by stamping the merit

and dignity of the blood of Christ upon its works and performances;

it never makes the death of Christ a cloke to cover sin, but an

instrument to destroy it. And whatsoever doctrine it is which

nourishes the pride of nature, to the disparagement of grace, or

encourages licentiousness and fleshly lust, is not the doctrine of

Christ, but a spurious offspring begotten by Satan upon the corrupt

nature of man.

Inf. 7. If mortification be the great business and character of

a Christian, Then that condition is most eligible and desirable by

Christians, which is least of all exposed to temptation, Prov. 30:

8. "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food

convenient." That holy judicious man was well aware of the danger

lurking in both extremes, and how near they border upon deadly

temptations, and approach the very precipice of ruin that stand upon

either ground: few Christians have an head strong and steady enough

to stand upon the pinnacle of wealth and honour; nor is it every one

that can grapple with poverty and contempt. A mediocrity is the

Christian's best external security, and therefore most desirable:

and yet how do the corruption, the pride and ignorance of our hearts

grasp and covet that condition which only serves to warm and nourish

our lusts, and make the work of mortification much more difficult?

It is well for us that our wise Father leaves us not to our own

choice, that he frequently dashes our earthly projects, and

disappoints our fond expectations. If children were left to carve

for themselves, how often would they cut their own fingers?

Inf. 8. If mortification be the great business of a Christian,

then Christian fellowship and society duly managed and improved,

must needy be of singular use and special advantage to the people of

God. For thereby we have the friendly help and assistance of many

other hands to carry on our great design, and help us in our most

difficult business; if corruption be too hard for us, others this

way come in to our assistance, Gal. 6: 1. "Brethren, if a man be

overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in

the spirit of meekness." If temptations prevail, and overbear us

that we fall under sin, it is a special mercy to have the reproofs

and counsels of our brethren, who will not suffer sin to rest upon

us, Lev. 19: 17. Whilst we are sluggish and sleepy, others are

vigilant and careful for our safety: The humility of another

reproves and mortifies my pride: The activity and liveliness of

another awakens and quickens my deadness: The prudence and gravity

of another detects and cures my levity and vanity: The heavenliness

and spirituality of another may be exceeding useful, both to reprove

and heal the earthliness and sensuality of my heart. Two are better

than one, but wo unto him that is alone. The devil is well aware of

this great advantage, and therefore strikes with special malice

against embodied Christians, who are as a well disciplined army,

whom he therefore more especially endeavours to rout and scatter by

persecutions, that thereby particular Christians may be deprived of

the sweet advantages of mutual society.

Inf. 9. How deeply has sin fixed its roots in our corrupt

nature, that it should be the constant work of a Christian's whole

life, to mortify and destroy it? God has given us many excellent

helps, his Spirit within us, variety of ordinances and duties are

also appointed as instruments of mortification: And from the very

day of regeneration unto the last moment of dissolution, the

Christian is daily at work in the use of all sanctified means,

external and internal, yet can never dig up and destroy corruption

at the root all his life long. The most eminent Christians of

longest standing in religion, who have shed millions of tears for

sin, and poured out many thousand prayers for the mortification of

it, do, after all, find the remains of their old disease, that there

is still life and strength in those corruptions which they have

given so many wounds unto in duty. O the depth and strength of sin!

which nothing can separate from us, but that which separates our

souls and bodies. And upon that account, the day of a believer's

death is better than the day of his birth. Never till then do we put

off our armour, sheath our sword, and cry, victory, victory.

Second use, for exhortation.

If they who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, &c. Then as

ever we hope to make good our claim to Christ, let us give all

diligence to mortify sin; in vain else are all our pretences unto

union with him. This is the great work and discriminating character

of a believer. And seeing it is the main business of life, and great

evidence for heaven, I shall therefore press you to it by the

following motives and considerations.

1 Motive. And first, methinks the comfort and sweetness

resulting from mortification should effectually persuade every

believer to more diligence about it. There is a double sweetness in

mortification, one in the nature of the work, as it is a duty, a

sweet Christian duty; another as it has respect to Christ, and is

evidential of our union with him. In the first consideration there

is a wonderful sweetness in mortification, for dost thou not feel a

blessed calmness, cheeriness, and tranquillity in thy conscience,

when thou hast faithfully repelled temptations, successfully

resisted and overcome thy corruptions? Does not God smile upon thee;

conscience encourage and approve thee? Hast thou not an heaven

within thee? whilst others feel a kind of hell in the deadly gripes

and bitter accusations of their own consciences, are covered with

shame, and filled with horrors. But then consider it also as an

evidence of the soul's interest in Christ, as my text considers it;

and what an heaven upon earth must then be found in mortification!

These endeavours of mine to subdue and mortify my corruptions,

plainly speak the Spirit of God in me, and my being in (Christ! and

O what is this! What heart has largeness and strength enough to

receive and contain the joy and comfort which flow from a cleared

interest in Jesus Christ! Certainly, Christians, the tranquillity

and comfort of your whole life depend upon it; and what is life

without the comfort of life? Rom. 8: 13. "If ye through the Spirit

do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live, i.e. you shall live

a serene, placid, comfortable life; for it is corruption unmortified

which clouds the face of God, and breaks the peace of his people,

and consequently imbitters the life of a Christian.

2 Motive. As the comfort of your own lives, which is much, so

your instrumental fitness for the service of God, which is much

more, depends upon the mortification of your sins, 2 Tim. 2: 21. "If

a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto

honour; sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto

every good work." Where is the mercy of life but in the usefulness

and serviceableness of it unto God? It is not worth while to live

sixty or seventy years in the world to eat and drink, to buy and

sell, to laugh and cry, and then go down to the place of silence. So

far as any man lives to God an useful, serviceable life to his

praise and honour; so far only, and no farther, does he answer the

end of his being. But it is the purged, mortified soul which is the

vessel of honour, prepared, and meet for the Master's use. Let a

proud, or an earthly heart be employed in any service for God, and

you shall find that such an heart will both spoil the work, by

managing it for a self-end as Jehu did; and then devour the praise

of it by a proud boast: Come see my zeal. When the Lord would employ

the prophet Isaiah in his work and service, his iniquity was first

purged: and after that he was employed, Isa. 6: 6, 7, 8. Sin is the

soul's sickness, a consumption upon the inner man; and we know that

languishing consumptive persons are very unfit to be employed in

difficult and strenuous labours. Mortification, so far as it

prevails, cures the disease, recovers our strength, and enables us

for service to God in our generations.

3 Motive. Your stability and safety in the hour of temptation,

depend upon the success of your mortifying endeavours. Is it then a

valuable mercy in your eyes to be kept upright and stedfast in the

critical season of temptation, when Satan shall be wrestling with

you for the crown, and the prize of eternal life! Then give

diligence to mortify your corruptions. Temptation is a siege, Satan

is the enemy without the walls, labouring to force an entrance;

natural corruptions are the traitors within, that hold

correspondence with the enemy without, and open the gate of the soul

to receive him. It was the covetousness of Judas' heart which

overthrew him in the hour of temptation. They are our fleshly lusts

which go over unto Satan in the day of battle, and fight against our

souls, 1 Pet. 2: 11. the corruptions (or infectious atoms which fly

up and down the world in times of temptation, as that word

"miasmata", 2 Pet. 2: 20. imports) are through lusts, 2 Pet. 1: 4.

It is the lust within, which gives a lustre to the vanities of the

world without, and thereby makes them strong temptations to us, 1

John 4. 16. Mortify therefore your corruptions, as ever you expect

to maintain your station in the day of trial: cut off those

advantages of your enemy, lest by them he cut off your souls, and

all your hopes from God.

4 Motive. As temptations will be irresistible, so afflictions

will be unsupportable to you without mortification. My friends, you

live in a mutable work, providence daily rings the chances in all

the kingdoms, cities, and towns, all the world over. You that have

husbands or wives to-day, may be left desolate to-morrow: You that

have estates and children now, may be bereaved of both before you

are aware. Sickness will tread upon the heel of health, and death

will assuredly follow life as the night does the day. Consider with

yourselves; are you able to bear the loss of your sweet enjoyments

with patience? Can you think upon the parting hour without some

tremblings? 0 set a heart mortified to all these things, and you

will bless a taking as well as a giving God. It is the living world,

not the crucified world, that raises such tumults in our souls in

the day of affliction. How cheerful was holy Paul under all his

sufferings! and what think you gave him that peace and cheerfulness,

but his mortification to the world? Phil. 4: 12. "I know both how to

be abased, and I know how to abound; every where, and in all things

I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound

and suffer need." Job was the mirror of patience, in the greatest

shock of calamity, and what made him so, but the mortifiedness of

his heart, in the fullest enjoyment of all earthly things? Job 31:

25.

5 Motive. The reputation and honour of religion are deeply

concerned in the mortification of the professors of it: For

unmortified professors will, first or last, be the scandals and

reproaches of it. The profession of religion may give credit to you,

but to be sure you will never bring credit to it. All the scandals

and reproaches that fall upon the name of Christ in this world, flow

from the fountain of unmortified corruption. Judas and Demas,

Hymeneus, and Philetus, Ananias and Sapphira ruined themselves, and

became rocks of offence to others by this means. If ever you will

keep religion sweet, labour to keep your hearts mortified and pure.

6 Motive. To conclude, what hard work will you have in your

dying hour, except you get a heart mortified to this world, and all

that is in it? Your parting hour is like to be a dreadful hour,

without the help of mortification. Your corruptions, like glue,

fasten your affections to the world, and how hard will it be for

such a man to be separated by death? O what a bitter and doleful

parting have carnal hearts from carnal things! whereas the mortified

soul can receive the messengers of death without trouble, and as

cheerfully put off the body at death, as a man does his clothes at

night: Death need not pull and hale; such a man goes half way to

meet it, Phil. 1: 23. "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with

Christ, which is far better." Christian, wouldst thou have thy death-

bed soft and easy; wouldst thou have an "euthanasia", as the

philosopher desired for himself, an easy death, without pain or

terror; then get a mortified heart: the Surgeon's knife is scarce

felt when it cuts off a mortified member.

Third use, for direction.

Are you convinced, and fully satisfied of the excellency and

necessity of mortification, and inquisitive after the means, in the

use whereof it may be attained; then, for your help and

encouragement, I will in the next place, offer my best assistance in

laying down the rules for this work.

Rule 1. If ever you will succeed and prosper in the work of

mortification, then get, and daily exercise more faith. Faith is the

great instrument of mortification; "This is the victory, (or sword

by which the victory is won, the instrument) by which you overcome

the world, even your faith," 1 John 5: 4. By faith alone eternal

things are discovered to your souls, in their reality and excelling

glory, and these are the preponderating things, for the sake

whereof, self-denial and mortification become easy to believers; by

opposing things eternal to things temporal, we resist Satan, 1 Pet.

5: 8. This is the shield by which we quench the fiery darts of the

wicked one, Eph. 6: 16.

Rule 2. Walk in daily communion with God, if ever you will

mortify the corruptions of nature; that is the apostle's own

prescription, Gal. 1: 17. "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and

ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Spiritual and frequent

communion with God, gives manifold advantages for the mortification

of sin, as it is a bright glass wherein the holiness of God and the

exceeding sinfulness of sin, as it is opposite thereunto, are most

clearly and sensibly discovered, than which, scarce any thing can

set a keener edge of indignation upon the spirit of a man against

sin. Besides, all communion with God is assimilating and

transformative of the soul into his image; it leaves also a heavenly

relish and savour upon the soul; it darkens the lustre and glory of

all earthly things, by presenting to the soul a glory which

excelleth: it marvellously improves, and more deeply radicates

sanctification in the soul; by all which means it becomes singularly

useful and successful in the work of mortification.

Rule 3. Keep your consciences under the awe and in the fear of

God continually, as ever you hope to be successful in the

mortification of sin. The fear of God is the great preservative from

sin, without which all the external rules and helps in the world

signify nothing: "By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil,"

Prov. 16: 6. Not only from external and more open evils, which the

fear of men, as well as the fear of God, may prevent, but from the

most secret and inward evils, which is a special part of

mortification, Lev. 19: 14. It keeps men from those evils which no

eye nor ear of man can possibly discover. The fear of the Lord

breaks temptations, baited with pleasure, with profit, and with

secrecy. In a word, if ever you be cleansed from all filthiness of

flesh and spirit, it must be by the fear of God, 2 Cor. 7: 1.

Rule 4. Study the vanity of the creature, and labour to get

true notions of the emptiness and transitoriness thereof, if ever

you will attain to the mortification of your affections towards it.

It is the false picture and image of the world, in our fancy,

that crucifies us with so many cares, fears, and solicitudes about

it: and it is the true picture and image of the world, represented

to us in the glass of the word, which greatly helps to crucify our

affections to the world. O if we did but know and believe three

things about the world, we should never be so fond of it as we are,

viz. the fading, defiling, and destroying nature of it. The best and

sweetest enjoyments in the world, are but fading flowers and

withered grass, Isa. 14: 6. James 1: 10,11. yea, it is of a

defiling, as well as a fading nature, 1 John 5: 19. it lies in

wickedness, it spreads universal infection among all mankind, 2 Pet.

1: 4. yea, it destroys as well as defiles multitudes of souls,

drowning men in perdition, 1 Tim. 6: 9. Millions of souls will wish,

to eternity, they had never known the riches, pleasures, or honours

of it. Were this believed, how would men slacken their pace, and

cool themselves in t