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Title: The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, D.D. Vol. III.

Creator(s): Manton, Thomas (1620-1677)

Print Basis: London: James Nisbet & Co. (1871)

CCEL Subjects: All

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THE

WORKS OF THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

VOL. III.

COUNCIL OF PUBLICATION.

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THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF

THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

VOLUME III.

CONTAINING

EIGHTEEN SERMONS ON THE DESCRIPTION, RISE, GROWTH, AND FALL OF

ANTICHRIST.

AND

A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION UPON THE FIFTY-THIRD CHAPTER OF ISAIAH.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO, 21 BERNERS STREET.

1871.

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VOL. III.

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TO THE READER.

READER,--Dr Thomas Manton was not so unknown to London, nor is he so

much forgotten, as that his name or writings should need any of my

commendations. But booksellers expecting such an office, I have great

reason to be willing to serve thee in serving the memorial of such a

friend. What he was I need not tell even strangers, after the character

truly given of him by his friend and mine in his funeral sermon. How

sound in judgment against extremes in the controversies of these times,

a great lamenter of the scandalous and dividing mistakes of some

self-conceited men; how earnestly desirous of the healing of our

present breaches, and not unacquainted with the proper means and terms,

of which the author of his funeral sermon and I had more than ordinary

experience; how hard and successful a student he was, and how frequent

and laborious a preacher, and how highly and deservedly esteemed;--all

this, and more, is commonly here known. The small distaste that some

few had of him I took for part of his honour, who would not win

reputation with any by flattering them in their mistakes or

unwarrantable ways. He used not to serve God with that which cost him

nothing, nor was of their mind who cannot expect or extol God's grace

without denying those endeavours of man to which his necessary grace

exciteth them. He knew that without Christ we could do nothing, and yet

that by Christ's strengthening us we can do all things which God hath

made necessary to be done by us. He was not of their mind that thought

it derogatory to the honour of Christ to praise his works in the souls

or lives of any of his servants, and that it is the honour of his grace

that his justified ones are graceless; and that their Judge should

dishonour his own righteousness if he make his disciples more righteous

personally than scribes and pharisees, and will say to them, Well done,

good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things,

enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' He knew how to regard the

righteousness and intercession of Christ, with pardon of sin and divine

acceptance, instead of legal personal perfection, without denying

either the necessity or assigned office of our faith, repentance, or

evangelical sincerity in obeying him that redeemed and justifieth us.

He knew the difference between a man's being justified from the charge

of being liable to damnation as a Christless, impenitent unbeliever and

ungodly, and being liable to damnation for mere sin as sin, against the

law of innocency, which required of us no less than personal, perfect,

perpetual obedience. He greatly lamented the wrong which the truth and

church underwent from those that neither knew such differences, nor had

humility enough to suspect their judgments, nor to forbear reviling

those that had not as confused and unsound apprehensions and

expressions as themselves.

But he hath finished his course, and is gone before us, and hath left

here a dark, self-distracting world, and a church of such as Christ

will perfect; but, alas! yet lamentably imperfect, as their errors,

divisions, contentions, and scandals have these thirteen hundred years

too publicly declared. Children of the light we are, while the world is

in darkness; but, alas! yet how dim and clouded! With thousands it does

not so much as convince them of their ignorance, nor maketh them humbly

suspicious of an erring judgment; so that through the copulation of

pride and ignorance, few cry out so loud of error as the erroneous, or

of heresy as the heretical, or of schism as the schismatical; and false

conceptions are so common among men, that I think with almost all

mankind the number of false apprehensions in. comparison of the true

ones is far greater than unhumbled understandings will easily believe;

and yet, while mankind doth swarm with error, those that least know

their own cry down even the toleration of that which, alas! we cannot

cure; and if a multitude of errors must not be tolerated, I know not

the person that must be tolerated. And who then be they that shall be

the avengers of other men's mistakes? Christ knew that none are so

forward to reproach and so backward to bear with the motes in men's

eyes as they that have beams in their own.

Among such, what sort of men on earth hath more cried down, error,

heresy, and schism, than the Papal tribe? Away with them, exterminate

them, burn them, hath long been their cry, their laws and practice,

little thinking how they are polluted with error, heresy, and schism

themselves. The revived attempts of this consuming fiery spirit hath

made those that dispose of Dr Manton's papers take these against Popery

as now most seasonable; and their plainness, suited to common

capacities, may make them to many more useful than more argumentative

disputations. They that would have such may see errors that are

unanswerable (I should say unrefutable, for I find that men, and women

too, can answer anything). I confess myself not thoroughly studied in

these prophetical parts of the scriptures, and therefore none of the

fittest to commend such writings, any further than they commend

themselves. But I am hasting after this my dear departed brother to the

world of light, where all divine mysteries are unveiled, and life, and

light, and love are perfected; for which, even at the door, I am,

though weak, a believing and desiring expectant.

Rich. Baxter.

July 8, 1679.

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SERMON I

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,

and our gathering together unto him, that you be not soon shaken in

mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as

from us, that the day of Christ is at hand.--2 Thes. II. 1, 2.

THE former chapter was spent in a consolation against troubles, this in

a caution against error, or to rectify their judgments concerning the

time of Christ's second coming. In these two first verses, we have the

manner of proposal, ver. 1; the matter proposed, ver. 2.

1. The manner of proposal is very pathetical, by way of adjuration or

obtestation.

2. The matter. An error had crept in among the Thessalonians concerning

the speedy and immediate coming of Christ to judgment, while they were

yet alive; which error the devil set on foot to subvert their faith and

expose the whole Christian doctrine to contempt.

First, The manner or obtestation falleth first under our consideration,

in which two things are mentioned:--

1. The coming of Christ.

2. Their gathering together unto him. Obtestations are by those things

which have great reverence and respect with us, as most likely to

prevail. Now these two things are mentioned:--

[1.] As weighty: 2 Tim. iv. 1, I charge thee before God, and the Lord

Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearance

and his kingdom.'

[2.] This was the article mistaken and perverted as to one circum

stance, the time; but the thing is taken for granted as an

unquestionable truth, and the support of all their hopes: 2 Thes. i.

10, When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in

all them that believe.'

[3.] This was a famous Christian doctrine with which the apostles

usually began, in planting religion in any place: 1 Thes. v. 1-3, But

of the times and the seasons ye have no reason that I write unto you,

for ye yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as

a thief in the night,' &c.

[4.] It was of precious account with them: 2 Tim. iv. 8, Henceforth is

laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous

judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto them also

that love his appearing.' So that the obtestation implieth both the

certainty of their belief, and also their dear account of this article

of faith; and therefore the sense is: As you do assuredly expect him,

and love, and look, and long for this day, that it may go well with

you, and Christ appear to your glory, so be not troubled.

Doct. 1. That the coming of Christ to the judgment is a truth well

known, firmly believed, and earnestly desired by all true Christians.

Doct. 2. That when Christ shall come, all the saints shall be gathered

together unto him.

Doct 1. That the coming of Christ to the judgment is a truth well

known, firmly believed, and earnestly desired by all the saints.

1. That it is well known, the apostle produceth the testimony of Enoch:

Jude 14, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints.' David

often mentioneth it as a thing delighted in by believers; therefore, in

a poetical, or rather prophetical strain, he calleth upon the heavens,

earth, sea, and fields to rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh, for

he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with

righteousness, and the people with his truth,' Ps. xcvi. 13; and again,

Ps. xcviii. 9, he calleth upon the creatures to rejoice before the

Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall he

judge the world, and the people with equity;' passages which relate,

not only to the kingdom of the Messiah, as it is exercised now in the

world, but also to his final act of judging, till which time they are

not fully verified. Solomon bindeth the whole duty of man upon him by

this consideration: Eccles. xii. 13, 14, Let us hear the conclusion of

the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the

whole duty of man; for God shall bring every work into judgment, with

every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.' And the

apostles, when they went abroad to proselytise the world, usually began

with this point.

2. That this is firmly believed by all true Christians. This must needs

be so, because it is the grand inducement to all piety and godliness,

and none ever disbelieved it but those the interest of whose lusts

engaged them to question it: 2 Peter iii. 3-5, Knowing this first, that

there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own

lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the

fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the

beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of,'

&c. Willingly ignorant; their interest puts them upon it, rather than

their conscience, because this doctrine filleth them with unquiet

thoughts, that they cannot so securely follow their sinful practices

till they blot out the fear of it, or banish the thoughts of it out of

their hearts. But all that obey the teachings of grace (take it for

objective or subjective grace), they firmly believe it: Titus ii.

11-13, For the grace of God. that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to

all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we

should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,

looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great

God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' The sound belief of it is not so

much encountered with the doubts of the mind, as the inclinations of

their perverse hearts. Now, the seeming reasons of partial men are not

to be heard, especially as delivered in a scoffing, malicious way; and

on the other side, godliness and mortification standeth upon such

evident reason as man's unquestionable duty, that it needeth not to be

maintained by a lie and manifest falsehood. Certainly, they that deny

it do not so much reason against this article of our Christian faith as

scoff at it; and it is to be imputed to the malignity of their tempers,

rather than the acuteness or sharpness of their reason that they do not

believe it. Many things which they urge are a manifest token of the

contrary; as the calamities of the good: 2 Thes. i. 4, 5, So that we

glory in you for your faith and patience in all your persecutions and

tribulations that you endure, which is a manifest token of the

righteous judgment of God.' The perversion of justice: Eccles. iii. 16,

17, And moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that

wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was

there; I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the

wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every

work.' Things must be reviewed and judged over again. A state-engine to

serve order and government. Doth the benefit of mankind need a lie to

promote it? Doth carnal interest govern the world, or virtue? If mere

carnal interest, what a confusion would there be of all things? Then

men might commit all villany, take away men's lives and goods when it

is their interest, or they could do it safely and secretly, without

infringement of their interest; servants poison their masters, if they

could do it without discovery, and there were no sin in it; men prey

upon others, if it be in the power of their hands; and catch he that

catch can,' without impunity, would be the truest wisdom. Clear it is,

virtue cannot be supported without the thoughts of a world to come; and

it is unreasonable to imagine that God would make a world which cannot

be governed without falsehood and deceit.

3. That it is earnestly desired by all true Christians. That is of

chief respect here; for the apostle conjureth them by all that is dear

and sacred in their most holy faith; and upon this I will mainly spend

the first part of this discourse. I shall prove it by these two choice

pieces of scripture, which describe the communion of the church with

Christ, or the dispensations of Christ to the church; the one

concerneth God's internal, the other his external government--the

Canticles and Revelations. The book of Canticles is ended with this

desire, vote, and wish: Cant. viii. 14, Make haste my beloved, and be

like a young hart or roe upon the mountains of spices.' The bride's

last and great suit to the bridegroom is make haste,' as to his coming

in glory to judge the world; not that Christ is slack, but the church's

affections are strong. They that go a-whoring after the world neither

desire his coming, nor love his appearing; but the spouse would have

all things hastened that he might return. He cannot come soon enough to

set the world to rights and complete their happiness; it is that only

that will perfect their consolation, and therefore would have the

blessed and longed-for meeting hastened. In the other book, of the

Revelations, see how it is closed: Rev. xxii. 20, Christ saith, Surely

I come quickly;' and the church, like a quick echo, saith Even so,

come, Lord Jesus; come quickly.' It taketh the word out of Christ's

mouth, and presently improveth the promise into a prayer, and so

Christ's voice and the church's voice are unisons. The acclamation of

the saints answereth to his proclamation. Christ saith, I come,' as

desiring to meet with us. The church answereth, Even so, come,' as

desiring his fellowship and company. When once faith apprehendeth the

glorious coming of our Lord Jesus to judgment, love presently desireth

it, as the most comfortable thing which we can ask of him; that is the

farewell suit of the church to Christ. If he will grant this, all

complaints, and sorrow, and sighing will be no more.

Now I shall give you reasons why this is desired by all true

Christians.

1. In respect of him who is to come: his person, that we may see him

who is our great Lord and Saviour. All that believed anything of Christ

desired to see him; those that lived before his coming in the flesh:

John viii. 56, Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw

it, and was glad;' and the same affection possesseth us that live after

his coming in the flesh. We know him by hearsay, we have heard much of

him; he wooeth us by a proxy, as Eliezer, Abraham's servant, did

Rebekah. Now, Christians would fain see him of whom they have heard,

and whom they loved, and in whom they have believed: 1 Peter i. 8, Whom

having not seen, ye love, and^in whom, though now you see him not, yet

believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' They do

not see Christ, but they have a taste of his goodness: 1 Peter ii. 3,

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' They have felt his

comforts and live by his life; all that is wanting is but ocular

vision, that they may see him face to face; therefore they long for his

coming.

The excellency of Christ their head shall then be fully revealed;

therefore it is comfortable to his saints to think of his second

coming. It is called, the revelation of Christ,' 1 Peter i. 13. Christ

is now under a veil, retired within the curtain of the heavens. The

wicked often ask, Where is now your God? and our own unbelieving hearts

are apt to question the glory of his person and the truth of his

promises, when his most faithful servants are under disgrace. Christ is

a glorious king, but little of his glory is seen in the world;

therefore they desire that he may appear in glory and royalty; we pray

that his kingdom may come.

2. The persons desiring; there is somewhat in them to move them to it.

[1.] The Spirit of Christ: Rev. xxii. 17, The Spirit in the bride

saith, Come;' the Holy Ghost breedeth this desire in the church. Nature

saith, It is good to be here; but this is a disposition above nature.

The flesh saith, Depart; but the Spirit saith, Come. The great work of

the Spirit is to bring us and Christ together; he cometh from the

Father and the Son to bring us to the Father by the Son; his business

is to marry us to Christ; the promise being passed, the spouse longeth

to see her beloved. It is the Spirit kindleth a desire in us of his

second coming, when the marriage that is now contracted shall be

consummated; when the queen shall be brought unto the king in raiment

of needlework, and shall enter into the palace with him, there to abide

for ever. Well, then, though guilty sinners would have Christ stay away

still, and if it might go by voices, the carnal world would never give

their voice this way, Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;' no,

they are of the devils' mind, Why art thou come to torment us before

the time?' Mat. viii. 29. Thieves and malefactors, if they might have

the liberty to choose, they would never look nor long for the day of

assizes; but the Spirit in the bride is another thing, it giveth us

other inclinations: the sooner Christ cometh the better; they can never

be soon enough taken up to him, nor he come to them.

[2.] There are graces planted in us, faith, hope, and love, to move us

earnestly to desire his coming.

(I.) Faith believeth Christ will be as good as his word: I will come

again; if it were not so, I would have told you,' John xiv. 2. And if

Christ saith in a way of promise, I come,' the church saith, Amen,' in

a way of faith, even so, come.' If Christ had gone away in discontent,

and with a threat in his mouth, Ye shall never see my face more, we

should altogether despair of seeing him again; but he parted in love,

and left a promise with us, which upholdeth the hearts of believers

during his absence. Would Christ deceive us, and flatter us into a

fools' paradise? What need that? He can strike us dead in an instant if

we do not please him, and we have hitherto found him true in all

things, and will he fail us at last?

(2.) Hope, which is faith's handmaid; it looketh for that which we do

believe, it is the immediate effect of the new creature: 1 Peter i. 3,

Begotten to a lively hope;' as soon as grace is infused, it discovereth

itself by its tendency to its end and rest; it came from heaven, and

carrieth the soul thither.

(3.) Love is an affection of union; it desireth to be with the party

loved: Phil. i. 23, I desire to depart, and to be with Christ;'

therefore its voice is, Come, come.' He hath communion with us in our

houses of clay; therefore we desire presence with him in his palace of

glory. His voice now is very sweet when he saith, Come unto me, ye that

are weary and heavy laden,' but much more will it be so when he saith,

Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit a kingdom prepared for you

before the foundations of the world were laid.' Reconciliation with God

is comfortable, but what will fruition be!

[3.] Look upon a Christian's privileges; believers then find the fruit

of their interest in him, and have their reward adjudged to them: Rev.

xxii. 12, Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.' Christ

doth not come empty-handed: it is but maintenance we have from him now,

but then wages; earnest now, but then the full sum; it is our pay-day,

yea, rather, it is our crowning-day: 2 Tim. iv. 8, Henceforth is laid

up for me a crown of righteousness, which God the righteous Judge will

give me in that day;' 1 Peter v. 4, When the chief Shepherd shall

appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away.'

Those that have been faithful and diligent in their duty shall not need

to seek another paymaster; that which Christ giveth us in hand is worth

all the pains that we lay out in his service; grace and inward peace:

but then we shall have glory and honour; he will honour us in the sight

of those that have opposed, contradicted, and despised us: our comfort

is hidden, but our glory is sensible, and visible, and public before

all the world.

Object. But how can true Christians earnestly desire it, when so many

tremble at the thought of it, for want of assurance of God's love?

Ans. We suppose a Christian in a right frame, and one that doth prepare

for his coming; but--

1. The meanest saint hath some inclination this way. It was one of the

points of the apostolical catechism: Heb. vi. 2, The doctrine of

resurrection from the dead, and of eternal judgment:' and the

apostolical catechism was for the initiating or entering of Christians

into the faith and profession of the gospel: when they laid the

foundation, this was one truth which was never omitted, the coming of

Christ to judgment. Now faith is a believing, not with the mind only,

but the heart; they were to be affected with what they did

believe--sapida scientia was the qualification--and not with trembling

only, for that would deter them from Christianity; but with rejoicing

of hope, which did invite them to the practice of it: Heb. iii. 6,

Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of

hope firm unto the end;' and indeed what other affection can become the

thought of Christ's rewards which he will bring with him?

2. Sometimes there may be a drowsiness and indisposition in the

children of God when their lamps are not kept burning: Luke xii. 37,

Blessed are those servants whom, when the Lord cometh, he shall find

watching;' but the wise virgins slumbered as well as the foolish; and

so for a season they may be unprepared for his coming by carelessness

or remission of their watchfulness and neglect of preparation, yet the

spirit and inclination this way beginneth with the new birth. A wife

desireth her husband's coming home after a long journey, but it may be

all things are not ready and in so good order: sometimes all good

Christians desire the coming of Christ, but sometimes they are not so

exact and accurate in their walkings, and therefore their affections

are not so lively; security breedeth deadness, and God is fain to rouse

us up by sharp afflictions.

3. The church doth really and heartily desire Christ's coming, though

they tremble at some circumstances of his coming: there is a degree of

bondage that hindereth much of our confidence and boldness: 1 John iv.

17, 18, Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in

the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There

is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear

hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love.' While we

are imperfect there may be some fears how it shall go with us in the

judgment. The day of judgment may be considered in esse rei, or in esse

cognito,--the success of the day itself, that we may stand before

Christ in the judgment, or in our apprehension of it, that we may think

of it with boldness, confidence, and desire. All sincere persons shall

speed well in the judgment; but while we are thus weak and imperfect,

we have little confidence of our sincerity. Certainly the more holy we

are, the more we are emboldened against judgment to come; therefore we

must every day get a conscience soundly established against the fears

of hell and damnation.

4. To be of such a temper as not at all to value, and prize, and

delight in it, quencheth all sense of godliness and religion. Surely

they are not touched with any fear of God who wish it would never come,

who would be glad in their heart to hear such news; they have the

spirit of the devil in them who count his coming their burden and

torment; they cannot say the Lord's Prayer without a fear to be heard,

and pray, Thy kingdom come,' when they desire it may never be; the

thought of it casts a damp on their carnal rejoicing; and he that is

afraid lest his prayers prove true, can never pray heartily; no, not

with a moral sincerity.

Use. To press us to keep up a firm belief and an earnest desire of

Christ's coming; this will make you heavenly-minded: Phil. iii. 20, 21,

For our conversation is in heaven, where we look for the Saviour, the

Lord Jesus Christ.' It will engage you to fidelity in your duty; for

every one of us must give an account of himself to God: 1 John ii. 28,

And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we

may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' To

watchfulness as well as faithfulness: Luke xxi. 36, Watch ye,

therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape

all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son

of man.' Yea, to diligence, that you may clear up your title and

interest: Heb. ix. 28, And to them that look for him shall he appear

the second time, without sin unto salvation;' 2 Peter iii. 14,

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, be diligent

that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.' Oh,

therefore, let this be a precious truth to you, which you would not

forego for all the world; if others tremble at the mention of it, still

carry it so that it may be your comfort and solace. In short, believe

it strongly, think of it frequently, prepare for it diligently, improve

it^ fruitfully, to all holy conversation and godliness, yea, to get oil

not into your lamps only, but vessels,--grace in your hearts, as well

as profess yourselves to be Christians.

Doct. 2. That when Christ shall come, all the saints shall be gathered

together unto him.

For evidencing this, let me clear to you, that at the day of judgment

there shall be:--

1. A congregation.

2. A segregation.

3. An aggregation.

They are all intended, but principally the last.

1. A congregation: Mat. xxv. 32, Before him shall be gathered all

nations;' and not only all nations, but all persons: 2 Cor. v. 10, We

must all (collectiv�) appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that

every one (distributiv�) may receive according to the things done in

his body,' &c. All that have lived from the beginning of the world unto

that day shall, without exception of any one single person, from the

least unto the greatest, appear before the tribunal of Christ; no age,

no sex, or nation, or dignity, or greatness, can excuse us. In the

world some are too high to be questioned, others too low to be taken

notice of, but there all are brought forth to undergo their trial;

there is no shifting or avoiding this day of appearance: Adam will

there meet with all his posterity at once. Take all the distinctions of

man kind, infants, and grown persons; I mean infants who die before

they are in an ordinary way capable of the doctrine of life (the

scriptures are written for grown persons, the case of infants is more

obscure), those of them who are born within the church, God is their

God: Gen. xvii. 7, I will establish my covenant between me and thee,

and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting

covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' Good and

bad is the next distinction, both sorts come to receive their sentence;

only the one come to the judgment of condemnation, the other to the

judgment of absolution: John v. 28, 29, Those that have done good, to

the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil, to the

resurrection of condemnation;' Acts xxiv. 15, There shall be a

resurrection of the dead; both of the just and unjust.' The next

distinction is men of all callings,--apostles, ministers, private

Christians. Apostles: Paul expected to be judged: 1 Cor. iv. 4, I know

nothing of myself, yet am I not thereby justified, but he that judgeth

me is the Lord;' he speaketh with respect to the execution of the

apostolical office. Ordinary ministers: Heb. xiii. 17, They watch for

your souls, as those that must give an account.' If souls miscarry

through their negligence, they are answerable to God for it. Ordinary

Christians: Rom. xiv. 12, Every one must give an account of himself to

God.' Men of all conditions, poor or rich, weak or powerful, high and

low: Rev. xx. 12, I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God;' I

mean those that are so distinguished now; these distinctions do not

outlive time, there all stand on the same level; the ruffling men of

the world shall then be afraid, and call upon the mountains to cover

them from the wrath of him that sitteth upon the throne.' Rev. vi. 16.

The poor are not forgotten; they are God's creatures, and must undergo

his judgment. Thus shall all people that live scattered up and down in

the world, how much soever they differ from one another in rites,

tongues, customs of living, be brought together in one place.

2. There is a segregation: Mat. xxv. 32, 33, He shall separate the one

from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he

shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left.'

There may be now a confusion and mixture of the godly and the wicked,

as sheep and goats feed in the same pasture; and they may be all raised

together according to the places where they lived and died; but then a

perfect separation: good and bad are first gathered together, but the

good are drawn into a company by them selves, but no pure company, till

the great Shepherd will judge between cattle and cattle.' Ezek. xxxiv.

17; He will gather his saints together,' Ps. l. 5; Ps. i. 5, The

ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the

congregation of the righteous.' So Mat. xiii. 49, At the end of the

world the angels shall come, and sever the wicked from among the just.'

3. An aggregation: believers are gathered together to him for several

ends:--

[1.] To make up the number of Christ's train and attendants to wait on

him: Jude 14, en muriasin hagiais, with his holy ten thousands;' Zech.

xiv. 5, And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with him;' 1

Thes. iv. 17, The dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which are

alive shall be caught up together in the clouds with them, to meet the

Lord in the air.'

[2.] That after judgment we may be solemnly presented to God by head

and poll. We were given to Christ to be preserved unto the glory we

were designed for: John xvii. 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;' not by way of alienation, but oppignoration,

recompense, and charge. Christ is to give an account: John vi. 40, And

this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the

Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.; and I will raise

him up at the last day.' The form of presentation is, Heb. ii. 13,

Behold I and the children which God hath given me.'

[3.] That in one troop we may be brought into his heavenly kingdom:

John xiv. 3, And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come

again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be

also.' The whole flock shall then follow the great Shepherd of the

sheep into the everlasting fold.

Use 1. Believe this gathering together to him. We are joined to the

church of God's elect now by faith only: Heb. xii. 22, 23, Ye are come

to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written

in heaven,' &c. Pane'guris is a meeting made up of many different

persons gathered together from several countries into one body and one

place; as the meeting of all sorts of persons from all the corners of

Greece to see the Olympic Games was called the pane'guris; people of

all countries came to behold their agones; so the mystical state of the

church of the gospel is a general assembly, because it is not confined

to one nation, but extended to believers of all nations and ages; they

are drawn into a body, or heavenly society, into one fold, under one

Shepherd; but they never meet in an actual assembly until the last day,

which is the great congregation or rendezvous of the saints, so that

now it is matter of faith.

2. See you be of the number. When some are admitted, others are thrust

out: Luke xiii. 28, There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when

ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the

kingdom of God, and ye yourselves thrust out;' the wicked shall not

stand in this congregation. Oh, it is a blessed and a comfortable thing

when we are made members of the mystical body of Christ, and have hopes

that we shall be in the number of those that shall meet together in the

great assembly and congregation of the righteous; that we are trained

up in the church of Christ, which is the seminary of heaven; that we

are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the

saints.

3. Let us improve it many ways.

[1.] To comfort us against the paucity of serious walkers and real

Christians. Alas! now they are but like two or three berries upon the

top of the uppermost bough; here one, and there another; in some places

thinner, in others thicker, as God hath service for them; in

appearance, mikro`n poi'mnion, a little flock,' Luke xii. 32. But take

all together, they are a general assembly, that are redeemed out of

every kindred, tongue, and nation,' Rev. v. 9; yea, Rev. vii. 9, a

great multitude, which none can number, of all kindreds, tongues,

peoples, and nations.' As few as we are, and as despised as the

interest of the godly is, we shall not want company in heaven; we see

few going to heaven, but when we are gathered together we shall see

that our everlasting companions are many.

[2.] To comfort us against the distance of Christian friends. We are

often separated from the society of good Christians whom we love

dearly, but we shall be gathered together in one congregation. The

saints are now scattered by Providence; they live in various countries,

towns, houses, have little comfort of one another. They live where they

may be most useful; as stars do not shine in a cluster, but are

dispersed throughout the heaven; and as they are the light of the

earth, so they are the salt of the earth, which is sprinkled here and

there, not laid in a heap; sometimes by violence of men, persecution,

and banishment; sometimes by death, which parts friends, prefects est

quem putas mortuum, like people in a wreck, got to shore before us. Now

what a comfort is it to be united to all God's people, which have been,

are, or shall be, to the end of the world, and to meet in one assembly:

Mat. xxiv. 31, They shall gather together the elect from the four

winds, from one end of heaven to another.' The saints shall be gathered

from all quarters of the earth; though they live in several places,

several times, many we never saw in the flesh, Christ will assemble

them all, bring them in unto one place.

[3.] To comfort them under the degenerated and collapsed state of

Christianity. (1.) The mixture of the wicked; the good and bad are here

mixed, they live together in the same kingdoms, cities, societies,

visible church, family, bed (perhaps), but then a perfect separation:

Zech. xiv. 21, There shall no more be the Canaanite in the house of the

Lord of hosts;' Rev. xxi. 27, Nothing that defileth shall enter there:'

such a difference shall there be between the state of God's church in

this world, and the world to come: here tares are mingled with wheat,

good fish with bad in the drag-net; it is hard by discipline to keep

the sound from the infected. (2.) Discord; the saints are divided in

affection, but then perfect harmony; they are all gathered together to

Christ, and have no signs and badges of distinction to herd apart. (3.)

It is universal with all the saints. (4.) Perpetual, never to part

more.

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SERMON II.

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit,

nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at

hand.--2 Thes. II. 2.

WE come now to the matter of the apostle's caution, which is in the

second verse: That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled,

neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the

day of Christ is at hand.' In which words take notice:--

1. Of the error disproved: that the day of Christ is at hand.

2. The effect which this error might produce; trouble and unsettledness

of mind: that ye be not soon shaken in mind or troubled.

3. A removal of all the supposed foundations of this error, or the

means which these impostors used to entice them to embrace it. Three

are mentioned--spirit, word, and letter.

[1.] Nor by spirit; that is, pretence of spiritual revelation; be not

soon shaken in mind by it.

[2.] Nor by word; some word of the apostle, which they pretended to

have heard--and that is another sleight of deceivers; some tradition or

doctrine delivered by the apostle by word of mouth.

[3.] Nor by letter as from us. This may be understood--(1.) Either of

some passage in the former epistle; for the apostle saith there, I

Thes. iv. 17, Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up

together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air;' and

because he joins himself with them, they thought he should survive

until that day. Or else those warnings which the apostle gives them: 1

Thes. v. 1-3, Of the times and seasons I need not write unto them, for

yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in

the night,' &c. Now these warnings they might abuse; and this is one

way by which men may be unsettled and unshaken, i.e., by false glosses

and interpretations of scripture. (2.) Or rather the sense may be, some

spurious and counterfeit writings, which was one means of deceit used

in the primitive times; supposititious or apocryphal legends, wherein

the apostle might be said to write something, as if Christ should come

in that age wherein they lived. Now, to obviate this, the apostle is

supposed to insert that passage, chap. iii. 17, The salutation of Paul

with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.'

First, From the error disproved, observe:--

Doct. That the time of Christ's coming to judgment must be patiently

expected, not rashly defined or determined; for this is the error which

the apostle with such earnestness opposeth here.

But you will say, Is this such an error? Do not the holy apostles

themselves say, in effect, the same, as the apostle James, chap. v. 8,

The coming of the Lord draweth nigh;' and the apostle Peter, 1 Peter

iv. 7; The end of all things is at hand.' Yea, Paul himself, 1 Cor. x.

11, These are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the

world are come;' and Rom. xiii. 12, The night is far spent, and the day

is at hand;' where by night is meant the state of ignorance, sin, and

paganism before conversion; and by the day is meant the state of our

full regeneration and illumination in eternal glory, when the corrupt

world shall come to an end, and all shadows shall fly away. As if he

had said, The morning of the resurrection is at hand, the night is far

spent--not quite past--and the day is at hand; the night is not

thoroughly gone, nor the day wholly come, yet, he saith, it is at hand.

What evil was in this opinion, that the apostle should with such

vehemency argue and reason against it? Ans. There is some difference in

the words, for e'ngiken signifies, it draweth near; ene'steken it is

begun already. But the sense is vastly different; for by these and such

like expressions the apostle only did intend that the last dispensation

was then on foot--no other change of dispensation or worship was to be

expected till the coming of Christ. But I shall more clearly and

distinctly show--

1. What reason the apostle had to speak at this rate.

2. What little reason these seducers had to pervert this speech to

countenance their hypothesis or supposition.

1. For the first, the apostle had reason to say the day of the Lord was

at hand.

[1.] With respect of faith; for faith gives a kind of presence to

things: Heb. xi. 1, Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and

the evidence of things not seen;' that is, it gives a being, a kind of

existence, to things future and afar off, and sets them before the eyes

of our mind, and gives us some sight of them, as if they were already

come. And therein it agrees with the light of prophecy. Look, as by the

light of prophecy John saith, Rev. xx. 12, I saw the dead, small and

great, stand before God, and the books were opened,' &c., so faith doth

in effect see what it believes. Well, then, faith looking upon things

distant and absent as near at hand, the apostle had reason to use this

language to believers, as if the judge were at the door: Phil. iv. 5,

Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand,' not

only in regard of his present providence, but also with respect to his

second coming to judgment; it is as certain to faith as if he were

already come.

[2.] With respect of love: love will not account it long to endure the

hardships of this present world until Christ come to set all things at

rights. Jacob served seven years for Rachel for the love he bare to

her, and it seemed to him but a little while,' Gen. xxix. 20. If we had

any love for Christ, we should be contented to suffer a while for his

sake. The time is coming when the wicked shall persecute no more, when

the mouth of iniquity shall be stopped, when the desire and hope of all

believers shall be satisfied, when the Redeemer's work shall be

consummated, when the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father, when

those that made a jest of this day shall be fully confuted. Faith sees

the certainty of it, and love makes us hold out till the time come

about.

The apostle might speak so, as comparing time with eternity: Ps. xc. 4,

A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past,

and as a watch in the night;' 2 Peter iii. 8, One day is with the Lord

as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' The longest time

to eternity is but as a drop lost and spilt in the ocean; and all the

tediousness of the present life is but like one rainy day to an

everlasting sunshine: 2 Cor. iv. 17, Our light affliction, which is but

for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of

glory.' Though troubles are lengthened as long as our lives are, yet

they are but a moment in respect of eternity; we reckon by time, and

not by eternity, and therefore these expressions may seem strange to

us.

[4.] The apostle speaks this to particular men, whose abode in the

world is not very long. Eternity and the judgment is at hand, though

Christ tarry long till the church be completed, and the elect be

gathered: 2 Peter iii. 9, The Lord is not slack concerning his promise,

as some men count slackness.' Now, what is long, and what is afar off

to the whole church, considered in several successions of ages, it is

short to particular persons. Death soon puts an end to their conflict,

and then their triumph ensues. And so Christ is ready to judge at all

times, though the world be not ready to be judged. The coming of Christ

is uncertain, and hidden for this very purpose, that men in all ages

might be quickened to faithfulness and watchfulness, and make that

preparation which is necessary. Now, therefore, it concerns the

messengers of God to bind men's duty upon them, by showing the nearness

of it in all the fore-mentioned considerations, that they might be

always ready; for so we find our Lord himself pressing it: Luke xii.

40, Be ye therefore ready, for the Son cometh at an hour when ye think

not;' Mat. xxiv. 42, Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your

Lord cometh.' He may come in a moment; our duty is unquestionable, but

the time of his coming is uncertain. And to please ourselves with the

thoughts of a delay, is a mighty deadening thing, and quencheth our

duty; yea, it is an enticement to all evil; Mat. xxiv. 48, the wicked

servant took liberty to beat his fellow-servants because of his lord's

delay. We are bid to be sober and watchful, and always to be looking

for the coming of the Lord.

2. The seducers had little reason to pervert this speech to the

countenance of their hypothesis or supposition, and therefore the

apostle had very good reason to be zealous in the confutation of this

hypothesis of the seducers, who maintained that Christ would come in

that age.

[1.] To inquire after the time is curiosity: Acts i. 7, It is not for

you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put into

his own power.' Those things which God hath reserved to himself, for us

to inquire after is sinful. It is a great evil to pry into our Master's

secrets, when we have so many revealed truths to busy our minds about.

We take it to be a piece of ill-manners to pry into that which is

purposely concealed; as to break up a secret letter and the like. The

practising of known duties would prevent this curiosity. These things

tend not to our profit and edification.

[2.] Much more was it a sin to fix the time; it was an arrogant

presumption: Mat. xxiv. 36, For of that day and hour knoweth no man;

no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.' The peremptory time

of the day of judgment God keeps to himself, and it is arrogance for

any to define it and set a time, when God has resolved to keep it

secret.

[3.] The fixing of that time did a great deal of hurt.

(1.) For the present it drew away their minds from their calling,

because they expected a sudden coming of the Lord. Ill impressions

either destroy or weaken necessary duties.

(2.) The least error doth gratify Satan and the interest of his

kingdom, for he is the father of lies.

(3/) It might shake their faith in other things when their credulity

was disproved by the event; the gospel might be brought into contempt

when their error only was confuted; as many men, who have been

peremptory in fixing times, afterwards have thrown off their religion.

(4.) It showed a diseased mind, that they were sick of questions; as

the apostle speaks, 1 Tim. vi. 4, Doting about questions and strifes of

words, whereof cometh envy,' &c., when they had so much wholesome food

to feed upon.

(5.) It did but engender strife among Christians, begat wranglings and

disputes in the church: 1 Tim. vi. 4, He is proud, knowing nothing, but

doting (or sick) about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh

envy, strife, railing, evil surmisings.'

Use 1. Let us not fix times. Many of the ancients were too bold this

way, and we are apt to it. Lactantius peremptorily said, the world

would endure but two hundred years after his time. So many will fix the

time of the calling of the Jews, and the destruction of Antichrist

without evident grounds and reasons. What God hath revealed is enough

to bear us out in our duty and suffering. In other things let us

patiently wait; we see reason to do so, when we consider how many men

have proved false prophets.

2. Let us not put off the time, and set it at too great a distance.

Distant things, though never so great, will hardly move us; that which

men put off they do in effect put away; they put far off the evil day,

they would not let it come near their minds to have any operation upon

them. Look, as the stars, those vast globes of light, by reason of the

distance between us and them, do seem but as so many spangles, so we

have but a weak sight of what is set at a great distance, and their

operation on us will be but small; the closer things are, the more they

will work upon us. One that looks upon what God hath revealed of this

as sure and near, is more affected with it than others are. Therefore

set yourselves at the entrance of that world, where you: must

everlastingly be, and watch and be ready. They that put it off, are apt

to loiter in their work. If Christ's coming be not near at hand,

certainly the time of our departure is at hand, and it will not be long

ere it come about. But this is but introductive to the doctrine of

Antichrist. Therefore I come to the second thing.

Secondly, The effect that this error might produce, trouble and

unsettledness of mind: That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or

troubled.' In the words there is a twofold metaphor; the one taken from

a tempest, or sea-storm, as the word plainly implies, that ye be not

shaken in mind;' and the other word is taken from the sudden alarm of a

land-fight, which breeds trouble.

Doct. 1. That errors breed trouble of mind: they do not only trouble

the church's peace: Gal. v. 12, I would they were even cut off which

trouble you;' but they hinder tranquillity of mind: Gal. i. 7, There be

some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.'

How do errors hinder tranquillity of mind? Partly because it is an

unsound foundation; it can never yield solid peace. We only find rest

for the soul in a true religion, and there where it is purely

professed; others are left to great doubts and uncertainties. The Lord

seems direct us in this course when we are upon consultation about the

taking up of a religion: Jer. vi. 16, Stand in the ways, and see, and

ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye

shall find rest for your souls.' Soul-rest is only found in God's way,

and where it is most clearly professed. Partly because whatever false

peace is bred there, it will at last end in trouble. The apostle

compares seducers, Jude 13, to raging waves of the sea, foaming out

their own shame;' and we are told of the locusts that came out of the

bottomless pit, Rev. ix. 5, that they stung like scorpions.' Every

erroneous way of religion is comfortless; yea, their doctrine breeds

anxiety, and vexes the spirit; for they have no true way of quieting

the conscience; let us therefore detest error, because it is so much

our interest. It is the property of truth to beget a delectation of

mind; it is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.' Verum est bonum

intellectus--truth is the good of the understanding. Now when we

understand truth satisfyingly, it breeds an incredible delight; when we

have been in some perplexities, and begin to find out a truth: Prov.

xxiv. 13, 14, My son, eat thou honey, because it is good, and the

honeycomb, which is sweet unto thy taste: so shall the knowledge of

wisdom be when thou hast found it.' Honey is not so sweet to thy taste

as this is to thy understanding. When a man hath found out any truth,

though it be but a natural truth, it breeds its oblectation: much more

spiritual truth; it is very pleasing to the understanding, and most of

all when spiritual. Truth is obeyed and practised; for the

understanding gives us but a sight of it, but obedience gives a taste

thereof. Our Saviour saith, Mat. xi. 28-30, Come unto me, all ye that

are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon

you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart. For my yoke is

easy, and my burden is light.' If you will but come under Christ's

blessed yoke and sceptre, and that way of religion he hath recommended

to you, you will find an incredible peace, joy, and oblectation in your

mind.

Doct. 2. That Christians should be so established, and have such

constancy of mind, that they should not be easily shaken and moved from

the faith.

1. Let us see how this is pressed. Sometimes it is pressed from the

encouragement of your great hope: 1 Cor. xv. 58, Be stedfast, and

unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you

know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' First, he would have

them stedfast and unmoveable; these two words have their special

signification, the one is a degree above the other. A man may be

stedfast in a thing, though he be moved a little in some by-matters;

but now, since your innocency will bear you out, be not only stedfast

but immoveable, which is a higher degree; but take it thus, be stedfast

in yourselves, and unmoveable by the storms of temptation from without:

a man is stedfast in himself, settled upon his own foundation; and you

are unmoved when you are strengthened against outward assaults: Acts

xx. 24, None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto

me, so I might finish my course with joy.' A man may be settled in the

knowledge of the truth, but he is not unmoveable except he be fortified

against all temptations that may draw him off from his profession. Such

constancy of mind may be well enforced because of our great hope; thus

it is pleaded for there. Then the absolute necessity of it is urged at

other times, as Col. i. 23, If ye continue in the faith grounded and

settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.' The same

condition is required to continue as to begin our right in the

privileges of the gospel. There are some conditions required for the

beginning, others for the continuing of our right, Now this is

absolutely required for the continuing of our right, both for present

reconciliation with God, and future glory; it is upon this condition,

if ye continue in the faith.'

2. Let us inquire what is necessary to this constancy and establishment

of mind, that we may not be soon troubled and shaken; partly that our

minds may be enlightened to know the truth, and our hearts renewed to

believe and love the truth; for without this there can never be any

constancy of mind in religion.

[1.] A clear conviction of the truth, or certainty of knowledge, a

rooted assent, or well-grounded persuasion; not some fluctuating

opinion about it. A half light maketh us very uncertain in our course:

James i. 8, A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways'--dipsuchos

akatastatos; first try all things,' 1 Thes. v. 21, then hold fast that

which is good.' When men resolve upon evidence, or after due

examination, the truth sticketh the closer and faster by them; but when

they take up things hand-over-head, they have no firm principles, and

therefore waver hither and thither, as vessels without ballast are

tossed with every wave: 2 Peter iii. 16, 17, Beware lest ye also, being

led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own

stedfastness'--i'dion sterigmo`n, substantial grounds within

themselves. They do not stand by the knowledge of others, or the faith

of others, and consent of others: light chaff is carried about with

every wind, periphero'menoi: Eph. iv. 14, That ye henceforth be no more

children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of

doctrine.' They go through all parts of the compass; sometimes this

wind of error taketh them up, sometimes that; sometimes taking up one

opinion, then changing it for another: this is the fruit of

half-convictions.

[2.] The other part of our basis is a resolution to adhere to the

truth. What likelihood is there that we should continue, who are not so

much as resolved so to do? The heart must be established by grace, as

well as the mind soundly convinced: Heb. xiii. 9, Be not carried about

with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the

heart be established with grace;' as the apostle speaketh of a purpose

not to marry: 1 Cor. vii. 37, He that standeth stedfast in his own

heart,' &c. So here, Acts xxi. 13, I am ready not to be bound only, but

also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.' A

firm, thorough resolution is requisite to fortify us against all

changes in religion; otherwise we are but as trees without a root, or a

house without a foundation. Now this resolution of the heart is by

faith and love. Faith: Heb. iii. 12, Take heed lest there be in any of

you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.' Love:

2 Thes. ii. 10, They received not the love of the truth, that they

might be saved; and for this cause God shall send them strong

delusions, that they shall believe a lie.' We are not only rooted and

grounded in faith, but rooted and grounded in love:' Eph. iii. 17, That

Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and

grounded in love,' &c.

The opposite to this is levity and inconstancy of mind, that soon

quitteth truth without difficulty, or without much hesitancy and

resistance yields to the temptation. The scripture often taketh notice

of this sudden embracing of error: Gal. i. 6, I marvel that ye are so

soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto

another gospel;' and in the text, soon shaken in mind.' Credulity is a

lightness in believing, when we are like reeds shaken with every wind,

Mat. xi. 7, and have a faulty easiness, ready to be carried away with

every doctrine which pretendeth to truth: The simple believeth every

word,' Prov. xiv. 15. There is a readiness of mind which is good, but

it goeth on sufficient evidence; so the wisdom that is from above is

gentle, and easy to be entreated,' James iii. 17; and the Bereans were

pro'thumoi: Acts xvii. 11, They received the word with all readiness of

mind, and searched the scriptures, whether these things were so or no.'

But a readiness of mind differs from a weakness of mind, or a lightness

in believing upon slender and insufficient grounds: they never receive

the truth with thorough efficacy, and are prone to error.

4. The causes of this instability and inconstancy of mind are these:--

[1.] Lack of solid rooting in the truth; they receive it

hand-over-head, as the stony ground forthwith sprang up: Mat. xiii. 5,

20, Anon they receive it with joy;' they do not so soon receive the

word, but they as soon quit it.

[2.] Lack of mortification: 2 Tim. iv. 10, Demas hath forsaken us,

having loved this present world.' Lusts are uncertain; fear of men,

favour of men, carnal hopes will easily prevail.

[3.] A certain readiness of mind which disposeth men to conform and

comply with their company, as the looking-glass representeth every face

that looketh on it; so they are very changeable, and unstable as water;

as Zedekiah, Jer. xxxviii. 5, The king is not he that can say you nay;'

soon turned this way and that way.

[4.] Want of a thorough inclination to God, so that they are right for

a while, or in some things, yet they are not universally true to his

interest: 1 Kings ii. 28, Joab turned after Adonijah, though he turned

not after Absolom;' Hosea vii. 8, Ephraim is a cake not turned.'

[5.] Want of holiness and living up to the truths we know: 1 Tim. iii.

9, Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.' Choice liquors

are best kept in a clean vessel; men provoke God to desert them and

leave them to a giddy spirit.

[6.] Libertinism. Men think they may run from one sect of Christians to

another, as the wind of interest bloweth. If they were to turn to

Ethnicism, Turcism, or Judaism, they would die rather than change their

religion; but they think the differences among Christians are not of

such moment as to venture anything upon that account. Every truth is

precious, and must be owned in its season, and it is damnable in itself

to do anything against conscience, and he that giveth way to a small

temptation will entertain a greater; as a man that hangeth over a

precipice, when he lets go his hold, will sink further and further till

he come to the bottom; therefore, it is good to be faithful in a

little.

Use. Let us take heed of this evil credulity and lightness.

1. Till Christians get a settled and sound judgment they never have

peace within themselves, for fears and scruples arise in the dark, and

those that live in error are full of perplexities, and have not that

tranquillity of spirit which they have who are fully persuaded in their

own mind: Rom. xiv. 5, Let every man be fully persuaded in his own

mind.'

2. If hardened in error, consider your opinions will ordinarily have an

influence upon your whole religion, and will pervert your carriage

towards God and men; your prayers will smell of your opinions, and be

like Balaam's sacrifice, offered to God to engage him against his own

people; your love will be dispensed according to the interests of your

faction: 1 Cor. i. 12, 13, Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I

of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?'

3. The danger of error to others. Vice is like a duel, error a war: 2

Tim. ii. 17, Their word will eat as doth a canker;' All in Asia have

turned from me,' 2 Tim. i. 15.

4. There is danger to yourselves, though the error be not damnable, 1

Cor. iii. 13. You have not so full communion with God.

Thirdly, The third thing is the means which these impostors used to

seduce them from the faith,--spirit, word, letter; by all which the

apostle would not have them troubled and shaken in mind; none of these

engines which the seducers used should draw them from the truth. What

should poor Christians do thus assaulted? Ans. Stick to the apostolical

doctrine. I shall observe:--

Doct. That a Christian should be so persuaded in religion that neither

spirit, nor word, nor writing, should be able to shake or unsettle his

mind. I shall show you:--

1. What ways or what means God hath appointed whereby a man may settle

his choice as to opinions in religion.

2. That the word of God will sufficiently fortify him against all these

false ways by which error is wont to be insinuated.

1. For the first, if a Christian would be established and guided aright

in the choice of a religion, he must follow both the light of nature

and scripture.

[1.] The light of nature, antecedently to any external revelation, will

sufficiently convince us of the being of God and our dependence upon

him: Rom. i. 19, 20, That which may be known of God is manifest in

them, for God hath showed it to them; for the invisible things of him

from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by

the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' For I

must know there is a God, or else I cannot be certain that he hath

given us a rule or revelation of his mind. We begin with what is

natural, and then go on to what is spiritual. Nature will tell us that

there is one God, the first cause of all things, of infinite power,

wisdom, and goodness; that it is reasonable he should be served by

those whom he hath made; that he will reward and punish men as they

disobey or serve and please him: but how God will be served, how they

shall be rewarded or punished, or how they shall escape punishment, if

after a breach they are willing to return to their duty and obedience

to him, this is revealed in the word of God.

[2.] The written word shows us the true way of worshipping and pleasing

God, and being accepted with him; therefore it is a sufficient

direction to us: there is enough to satisfy conscience, though not to

please wanton curiosity; as that may quench the thirst of a sober man

that will not satisfy the lust of a drunkard: there we are made wise

unto salvation,' 2 Tim. iii. 15--Thou hast known the holy scriptures,

which are able to make thee wise unto salvation;' and Ps. cxix. 105,

Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lantern to my paths.' There we

have the knowledge of many things evident by the light of nature

discovered with more clearness and certainty; and that which could not

be found out by natural light, as salvation by a Redeemer, or the

remedy of our lapsed estate, which, depending on the sole will and good

pleasure of God, could not be known till it was manifested and revealed

by him. When man sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, it was

necessary that God should some way or other reveal his mind to him by

word of mouth or by writing. By word of mouth, that is, either by

oracles or extraordinary messengers. That sufficed while God saw fit to

reveal but a few truths, or such as did not much burden the memory; and

men were long-lived, and the church confined within a small compass of

ground, and not liable to so many miseries and changes as now in the

latter ages; and then he put it into writing, that men may not obtrude

upon us their own conceits, but we might have a standard or rule of

faith and manners: Gal. vi. 16, As many as walk according to this

rule,' &c.

[3.] The natural truths contained in the word of God are evident by

their own light. The supernatural truths, though they are above natural

light, yet they are not against it, or contrary to it, and do fairly

accord with those principles which are naturally known; and are

confirmed,--partly by an antecedent testimony, which is prophecy;

partly by an innate evidence in their own frame and contexture; partly

by a subsequent evidence, which is valuable testimony as to matter of

fact. The antecedent testimony: John v. 39, Search the scriptures, for

in them ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me;' 2

Peter i. 19, We have a more sure word of' prophecy, to which we do well

to give heed, as to a light shining in dark places.' The innate and

concomitant evidence: 2 Cor. iv. 2-4, We have renounced the hidden

things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word

of' God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending

ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. For if our

gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this

world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light

of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine

unto them.' The subsequent testimony, the apostles: Acts v. 32, We are

witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath

given to them that obey him.' They were eye and ear witnesses of great

fidelity and credit; their religion forbiddeth them to lie for God, and

they were accompanied with the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, not only

in giving them success in the face of the learned world, hunting out

the devil everywhere, but also by miracles, divers signs, and wonders;

and they and their followers endured all manner of torments and death

to witness to the truth of these things, and transmitted them to us

with assurance of God's owning this doctrine.

[4.] The word being thus stated and put into a sure record, it is

intelligible enough, in all necessary matters at least; for if God

should speak or write darkly to his people, especially in necessary

things, it is because he could not or would not speak otherwise. The

former is direct blasphemy: Exod. iv. 11, Who hath made man's mouth?

have not I, the Lord?' The latter cannot be said, because that is

contrary to his goodness: Ps. xxv. 8, Good and upright is the Lord,

therefore will he teach sinners the way.' It is not to be imagined that

the great and universal king should give a law to mankind, and speak so

darkly that we should have no sure direction from thence, nor be able

to know his mind in any of the duties God hath required of us, or

expose us to great difficulties and hardships in the world. And if he

had not plainly expressed his will to us, man would never leave writing

and distinguishing himself out of his duty. Surely he that will venture

his all for Christ's sake had need of a clear warrant to bear him out,

for none will hazard all that is near and dear to him but for weighty

reasons.

[5.] Besides, the illumination of the Holy Spirit doth accompany this

word, and make it effectual to us, to show us God as revealed in

Christ: 2 Cor. iv. 6, God, who commanded the light to shine out of

darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;' and for

heaven, Eph. i. 17, 18, Praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,

the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and

revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding

being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling,

and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' He

sanctifieth and healeth our souls, and prepareth us for the

entertainment of the truth, that as natural things are naturally

discerned, so spiritual things are spiritually discerned: 1 Cor. ii.

14, The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for

they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they

are spiritually discerned.'

[6.] There are promises of direction made to humble and sincere minds:

Ps. xxv. 9, The meek shall he guide in judgment, the meek shall he

teach his way;' to the industrious: Prov. ii. 4, 5, If thou seekest her

as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou

understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God;' to the

godly and well-disposed: John vii. 17, If any man will do his will, he

shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of

myself;' so to them that pray much: James i. 5, If any man lack wisdom,

let him ask it of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth

not, and it shall be given him.' They that thus sincerely endeavour to

know the will of God, will come to a sound, established judgment in the

truth.

2. A Christian that is thus established, is fortified against spirit,

word, or writing, or all suggestions that may perplex his mind.

[1.] Against pretended revelations, called here spirit.

(1.) Because having his mind thus settled, he may boldly defy all

revelations pretended to the contrary: Gal. i. 8, Though we, or an

angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than we have preached, let

him be accursed.' Any doctrine, if diverse, or different from, or

besides the written word, much more contrary to it, a Christian may

reject it, and account it cursed doctrine; therefore neither church,

nor angel, nor spirit is to be heard against it.

(2.) Because a Christian is upon better terms, having the written word,

than if God dealt with him by way of revelations: 2 Peter i. 19, We

have bebaio'teron lo'gon, a more sure word of prophecy;' comparing it

with the voice from heaven, of which he spake before; not as if there

could be any uncertainty in the Lord's voice speaking from heaven, but

because a transient voice is more easily mistaken or forgotten than an

authentic standing record; as Samuel thought Eli called him, when it

was the Lord. It is quoad nos; though God gave evidence of the truth of

such revelations as he made, yet we have more accommodate means. Our

Lord intimateth such a thing: Luke xvi. 3l, If they hear not Moses and

the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the

dead.' This is the surest ground for faith to rest upon of any that

ever hath been or can be given to sinners, subject to forgetfulness,

jealousies, and mistakes.

(3.) Because it is not rational to expect new revelation, now the canon

and rule of faith is closed up: Heb. ii. 1, 2, Therefore we ought to

give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at

any time we should let them slip,' &c.; Mat. xxviii. 20, Teaching them

to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you;' John xvii. 29,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them which shall believe on me

through their word.'

(4.) Because if any such be pretended, it must be tried by the word:

Isa. viii. 20, To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not

according to this word, it is because they have no light in them;' so 1

John iv. 1, Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits

whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone abroad

into the world.'

(5.) Because they that despise ordinary means, and pretend to vision,

revelation, or inspiration, are usually such as are given up by God to

a vertiginous spirit, and cast into the dungeon of error, for the

punishment of other sins: Micah ii. 11, If a man walking in the spirit

of falsehood do lie, he shall be the prophet of this people;' God will

permit those that are both deceivers and deceived themselves to come

amongst them for a plague to them. Sleidan giveth sad instances of some

given up to this fantastical frenzy, that killed their own relations on

pretence of inspiration, and of others that murdered fifty thousand in

one day.

[2.] By word or unwritten tradition. This also should not shake the

mind of settled Christian, for this hath no constat--no evidence of its

certainty, and would lay us open to the deceits of men, blinded by

their own interest and passions; and if such tradition could be

produced as hath unquestionable authority, it must be tried by the

scripture, which is everywhere commended as the public standard, and

true measure and rule, both of faith and manners.

[3.] Not by epistle as from us.

(1.) Supposititious writings, which the church in all ages hath

exploded, having received only those which are unquestionably theirs

whose names they bear.

(2.) False expositions. These are confuted by inspection of the

context, scope of the writer, comparing of obscure places with plain

and clear. Thus you see what certainty God hath provided for us to

guide us in the way to eternal life.

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SERMON III.

Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come except

there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the

son of perdition.--2 Thes. II. 3.

IN these words we have these two things:--

1. A caution against the error set afoot at that time concerning

Christ's sudden coming to judgment.

2. The confutation of it. It is disproved by two antecedents and

forerunners of his coming:--(1.) A general apostasy, or a defection of

the visible church from the true state of Christianity; (2.) The

revelation of Antichrist, described here by his names and proper

titles--1st, That man of sin; and 2dly, Son of perdition.

I. Let us speak of the general apostasy that must be before Christ's

coming to judgment; except there come a falling away first.

Now concerning it take these propositions:--

1. That apostasy is any defection from him to whom we owe and have

performed subjection, or a falling from that lord to whom we owe

fealty. I am sure, in religious matters, it importeth a defection from

our right and proper Lord. Thus the devil is an apostate, because he

abode not in his first estate: Jude 6, And the angels which kept not

their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in

everlasting chains,' &c.; abode not in the truth;' John viii. 44, Ye

are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.

He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth;' that

is, forsook his obedience to God, and so became the ringleader of all

rebellious creatures. So it is true of our first parents. They were

apostates, they did revolt from God and their obedience to him.

Therefore it is said, Rom. v. 19, By one man's disobedience many were

made sinners.' So of their posterity; their apostasy is described by

turning back from following the Lord,' Zeph. i. 6, and departing from

God,' that is, his worship and service; Isa. lix. 13, In transgressing

and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God.' Let us

then be agreed of this notion of apostasy, which is evident, that it is

a falling off from the obedience which we owe to our rightful Lord.

2. The apostasy mentioned in the text was not civil, the falling away

of many kingdoms from the Roman empire; but an apostasy of the visible

church from him who is Lord of the church. I prove it partly from the

persons to whom the apostle wrote, who did not intermingle themselves

with state affairs, or were not concerned in the interests of the Roman

empire further than that they lived within the bounds of it; and this

apostasy must be understood as they would conceive of apostasy with

respect to the main cause wherein they were concerned and engaged,

which was the profession of Christianity. Partly from the use of the

word in the Christian doctrine; falling away there is certainly falling

away from the faith and purity of the gospel: Luke viii. 13, Which for

a while believe and in time of temptation fall away.' And partly

because to them it was expressly foretold that ti'nes aposte`sontai,

Some shall fall away or depart from the faith,' 1 Tim. iv. 1. Lastly,

because those who are most concerned to maintain the notion of the

civil apostasy from the Roman empire are most notorious in this

defection. It is true the Roman empire lost Asia and the places

adjacent by the invasion of Eastern nations, but it was thrust out of

Rome by the rebellion of its subjects, and chiefly by the influence of

the Pope there, as histories manifest. So that this interpretation will

not help them a jot, but hurt them not a little. So that here is a

defection from our proper Lord, and a spiritual defection, not a civil.

3. The proper Lord of the Christian church is Jesus Christ, who hath

purchased it with his blood, and died, and rose again, and revived,

that he might be Lord of dead and living,' Rom. xiv. 9; and again, Eph.

v. 23, Christ is the head of the church, and the Saviour of the body.'

He that saveth and recovereth the church out of the general apostasy of

mankind, and restoreth them to their due obedience and proper

happiness, he only is fit to be head of the church; and this only is

Christ: we expect no opposition here.

4. The apostasy from the Lord will be determined chiefly by these two

things;--(1.) By undermining his authority; (2.) Or destroying the

interests of his kingdom. By these two we may understand the falling

away, which is to come first.

[1.] By undermining his authority. Certainly his authority is under

mined when others presume to usurp his place without his leave.

Therefore, to superinduce a universal head of the visible church, which

Christ never appointed, is manifestly to usurp his authority; though

the party so intruding should pretend to hold his sovereignty from

Christ, and under him, yet this is treason against Christ, for here is

an authority set up without, and therefore against, his consent. Put

the case in a temporal kingdom, and the thing will be clear. And thus

the Pope is the usurping head of a rebellion against Christ. Where did

Christ institute him to take this office? Tu es Petrus is such a stale

pretence, so often baffled and defeated, and pretended upon so small

grounds;--as that Christ hereby conveyed singular authority to Peter

above the rest of the disciples, that from Peter it descendeth to his

successors, and to those of Rome (if ever he were at Rome), and not

those of Antioch;--that it is endless to pursue the absurdities of this

impertinent allegation. The argument holdeth the more strongly when the

Pope condemneth all the churches that will not be his subjects, how

holy, good, and obedient to the laws of Christ soever they be. Surely,

if anything, this is an apostasy or a revolt from our rightful Lord;

and to consent to this rebellion and usurpation is to be drawn into a

conspiracy against Christ, to submit to the head of the most pernicious

schism that did ever rend the church of Christ, and to betray the

liberty of the people of oar Lord to a tyrannical usurpation.

[2.] Or corrupting and destroying the interests of his kingdom.

Certainly, wherever there is a degeneration from the purity and

simplicity of the gospel, the interests or Christ's kingdom are

destroyed. I fear,' saith the apostle, 2 Cor. xi. 3, lest by any means,

as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should

be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.' The ancient, pure,

apostolic Christianity doth only preserve the interests of Christ's

kingdom in the world; there is no way of safety but by keeping there;

for since godliness is a mystery, and we shall see afterwards the

iniquity that is contrary is a mystery also--2 Thes. ii. 7, The mystery

of iniquity doth already work'--we need to be exactly careful to keep

close to the doctrine, worship, and discipline of the first gospel

church; for if these had remained pure, Antichrist had never risen.

Christ's institutions would have preserved his interests in the world;

but as these were corrupted, the apostasy prevailed. When the faith of

the gospel was turned into dead opinions and curious questions, if not

direct errors, and the worship of the gospel was corrupted by giving

divine honour to saints and angels, and turned into a theatrical pomp

and the pageantry of empty ceremonies, which eclipse the majesty and

splendour of it; and the discipline of the church into a temporal

domination, and all is carried in the world by sides and interests,

that Christianity looketh like another thing, a design calculated for

the present world rather than a serious preparation for the world to

come; then certainly there is an apostasy and a defection from Christ;

how ever the corrupt manners of the church be varnished over with the

name of Christianity, there is a degeneration questionless; and that is

apostasy, in a mystery, such as this is, though not in open revolt from

Christ.

But to make this more evident to you, let us consider what the kingdom

of Christ is. The gospel kingdom is a kingdom of light, life, and love.

Opposite to light is ignorance and error; to life, a religion that

consists of shows, dead rites, and empty ceremonies; to love,

uncharitableness, malice, and especially hatred of the power of

godliness. Now where these prevail eminently, there is an opposite

kingdom set up to the kingdom of Christ; certainly a falling off from

his kingdom: that is to say, where, in opposition to light, error is

taught, and ignorance is counted the mother of devotion, and people are

restrained from the means of knowledge, as if the height of Christian

faith and obedience did consist in an implicit believing what the

church believeth; and where, instead of life, men place their whole

religion in superficial rites and ceremonies, and some trifling acts of

seeming devotion and exterior mortifications; and instead of love to

God and souls, all things are sacrificed to private ambition; and

forcing consciences with the highest penalties and persecutions to

submit to their corruptions--there is a manifest subversion of the

interests of Christ's kingdom. In short, God's witnesses were slain in

that city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, and where our

Lord was crucified,' Rev. xi. 8; that city which answereth to Sodom for

impurity, to Egypt for idolatry, and to Jerusalem for persecution of

the saints; there may you find the great apostasy.

5. This apostasy from our Lord's authority and the interests of his

kingdom is some notable and discernible apostasy, and the head patron

thereof is Antichrist. The defection is not of one, or a few, or many

in divers churches; there have always been backsliders from the faith:

1 John ii. 19, They went out from us, but they were not of us;' and the

spirit of Antichrist wrought in the apostles' days: 1 John ii. 18, As

you have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many

Antichrists;' and again, 1 John iv. 3, we are told of the spirit of

Antichrist: And this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have

heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world;'

then described to be afterwards (ver. 5) a worldly spirit: They are of

the world, and speak of the world, and the world heareth them.' Though

they profess Christianity, carnal, worldly hypocrites, which never

conquered the fleshly mind and interest, have the spirit of Antichrist;

these obscure the light, and obstruct the life and love of the

gospel--they that wholly affect a life of pomp and ease in the church.

Now, this hath always been in all the ages. The false Christians forget

their hopes are built upon a crucified Christ, and are to be derived to

them from a glorified Christ in the other world--crucified in this

world and glorified in the next,--which indeed are the two

considerations that keep Christianity pure and lively; that all was

purchased by a crucified Christ, and all is dispensed by a glorified

Christ; and I wish you would oftener think of it. But the great

apostasy is eminently found in some external visible church, where

these corruptions are generally received and defended. For the head of

that church is Antichrist, where doctrine is corrupted, and the worship

mingled with idolatry, and the government a usurpation, and bent

against the holy seed that desire to worship God in spirit and in

truth; there is this manifest revolt from and rebellion against God and

Christ, though they push with the horns of the lamb.

That the Papists are a corrupt sect of Christians is beyond dispute to

any that will try their religion by the scriptures; and that they are

far more corrupt than the Protestants or Reformed Churches, will also

soon appear by the comparison, or a view of both churches. But whether

they are so corrupt as to become the seat of Antichrist, is the matter

under debate. Therefore, let any one consider where the eminent

apostasy is to be found. Who are they that invade Christ's authority by

setting up a universal head over all Christians? Who are they that

establish the doctrine of demons, or revive the worship of a middle

sort of powers between God and mortal men? 1 Tim. iv. 1. Who through

hypocrisy invent so many lies to maintain it, and when Christians

should keep themselves from idols, 1 John v. 21, yet, in defiance of

this, worship angels and other creatures: Col. ii. 18, Let no man

beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of

angels,' &c.; and erect the images of saints, commanding and compelling

men to adore them, and pray to them? Who are they that are not

contented with the one only Mediator: 1 Tim. ii. 5, For there is one

God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ;' 1

Cor. viii. 5, For though there be that are called gods, whether in

heaven or in earth (as there be gods many, and lords many), but to us

there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in

him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by

him,'--but set up other mediators of intercession? Who are they that

plead for indulgences and the supererogatory satisfactions of the

saints, as gathered into the treasury of the church, and so profitable

for the remission of sins, and condemn them who think the contrary? Who

are they that keep believers from reading the scriptures, when they are

so expressly enjoined to do it? John v. 89, and Ps. i. 2, But his

delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day

and night.' That deny one part of the Lord's Supper to his disciples,

notwithstanding his institution to the contrary? 1 Cor. xi. 25, 26,

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying,

This is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink

it, in remembrance of me; for as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink

this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come.' It were

endless to instance in all: I shall speak more of it in the following

verses.

6. This apostasy is not only forbidden, but foretold as a thing that

would certainly come to pass. This consideration is necessary for

divers reasons.

[1.] Because the Papists ask how this can be consistent with Christ's

care of his church, that there should be a universal apostasy and decay

of Christian religion, who hath promised the gates of hell shall not

prevail against it'?

Ans. That promise is made chiefly to the invisible church, or community

of the elect, not to all the visible societies of the Christians,

against whom the devil can and hath prevailed, and doth daily, to the

destruction of many souls. And we say not that the whole visible church

did apostatise, though all are faulty.

[2.] Because some require the time when this apostasy began to be

particularly assigned and noted to them, and by what persons these

corruptions were first introduced, or else deny that any such thing

hath been. But the case is clear: it began to work betimes, only it

wrought in a mystery. But cannot we prove a man to be old, unless we

prove the first moment when his grey hairs began to appear, or his

natural force to be abated? Who can tell every step of the progress of

the corruption of the Jewish church? and why should the like be

required of the Christian? This dunghill of corruption was not raised

in one age: and suppose that in track of time authors be forgotten,

matters of faith are not to be contradicted because of the defect of

history. And yet histories are not altogether wanting in the case, only

in things that came in by degrees they are not necessary. In the

introducing of the general apostasy, some erred in the simplicity of

their hearts, as the people followed Absalom, 2 Sam. xv. 11. But shall

we deny a thing to be done because we cannot speak the particular

moments of time, and circumstances of them, when and how it was done?

Shall we say the pointer in the dial passeth riot, because we do not

see its motion? Might not the priests judge of a leprosy, though they

knew not how it was contracted? Iniquity mystical did by degrees

prevail.

[3.] Because some think, if we should grant such an apostasy, it would

interrupt the whole course of visible Christianity, and so deprive the

world of a ministry and ordinances, till Christ send some new nuncios

from heaven, or by miracle, at least, authorise a new ministry, that

may be owned by the world, and received by his people. A vain conceit!

for though this apostasy is foretold that it should come to pass, yet

it is also foretold that Christ will be with the apostles and their

successors to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20; and prayed for all

them that should believe in him through their word, John xvii. 20; and

though the church was corrupted by degrees, yet all this while it

ceased not to be a church, nor the officers thereof to be Christ's

ministers. When the ten tribes fell away, yet God till their

dissolution continued the spirit of prophecy amongst them; and in the

Christian church a ministry, though many had their calling from such

who consented to the encroachments of Antichrist. God had not so wholly

cast off his people, but that there was a ministry and ordinances;

their ministry was a true ministry, and the baptism a true baptism, to

be owned in foro externo: for these things remain whilst anything of

Christianity remaineth. In a body mangled with wounds, or all overgrown

with sores, there is life remaining; and so some functions and offices

of life. God called idolatrous Israel his people, and was not angry

with them for circumcising their children, but for offering them to

Moloch, Ezek. xvi. 20, 21. But of this in the next verse, where

Antichrist is said to sit in the church of God.

II. The revelation of Antichrist: and that man of sin shall be

revealed, the son of perdition; where two things are notable:--(1.) His

rise and appearing; (2.) The names and titles given to him.

1. His rise and appearing, expressed in the word revealed; that is,

that great and chief Antichrist, upon that apostasy or falling away,

shall be extant and show himself to the world. A thing is said to be

revealed two ways--either when it is in being, or when it is

discovered; both ways are proper here. He shall publicly appear,

exercising a tyranny in the world, or cast off his veil, and show

himself in his colours. God by his providence permitteth him to be, and

by the doctrine of the gospel discovereth his impostures to all those

who have no mind to be deceived.

2. The names or titles given to him; they are two:--(1.) The man of

sin,' wherein he is compared and likened to Antiochus; (2.) The son of

perdition,' wherein he is compared and likened to Judas.

[1.] For the first, the Jews called Antiochus the man of sin:' 1 Macch.

ii. 48, They gave not the power to the sinner;' in the Greek, to`

ke'ras amartolo. They gave riot the horn to the sinner.' The Syriac

version hath it, They suffered not the horn of the sinner to be lifted

up;' and ver. 62, Fear not the words of the man of sin,'--apo` lo'gon

andro`s amartolou me` phobethete, From the words of the man the sinner

be not afraid Now why did they call Antiochus the man of sin? Because

he sought to alter the religion of the people, and by cruelty to

introduce a change of worship and idolatry, and such laws as he would

set up. Now, according to this pattern, Antichrist is a man of sin;

that is, either a man given up to all sin eminently, a sinner addicted

unto sin, and a ringleader of others unto sin, either by fraud and

violence; or as he giveth encouragements and encitements to sin; or as

a special kind of sinner, a usurper and invader of the empire of the

Son of God. So was Antiochus. So was Antichrist. Now, how much open sin

is practised, allowed, and maintained in the Papacy, I list not now to

rake into; their own stories speak enough;--the sodomy, blasphemy,

incest, adulteries, sorceries, murders, treasons, parricides, which

they have authorised and countenanced. Histories witness that hardly

hath the world yielded a more abominable sort of men, than have sat in

that chair of pestilence. This I am sure of, that a man can sin nowhere

at so cheap a rate as in Popery, where, what by dividing their sins

into mortal and venial, and these expiated by a little penance,

accompanied with a single attrition, and bare grief and trouble,

because of the punishment; what by faculties, pardons, licenses,

dispensations, indulgences, sin is distinguished out of the conscience.

But because he is called the man of sin, here it cometh fitly to be

inquired whether Antichrist be an individual person? for that man of

sin' would seem to be some single person. No; he is put for a society

and succession of men, that make up the head of the apostate state. As

one lion figured the whole kingdom of the Babylonians, and one bear the

kingdom of the Medes and Persians, and one leopard the kingdom of the

Grecians, Dan. vii.,--and there the fourth beast is the fourth

kingdom,--so one person that succession of men that head the revolters

from Christ. So Dan. viii., a goat figured a succession of kings; so

the Assyrian, Isa. x. 5, several kings in that empire; so Isa. xiv. 9,

the king of Babylon, meaning not one but many. So this man of sin doth

not note a single man, but a succession of men, a body politic or

corporate, under one opposite head to the kingdom of Christ: so the man

of God' is put for all faithful ministers, 2 Tim. iii. 17; so honour

the king,' 1 Peter ii. 17, series regum. So o archiereu`s, Heb. ix. 25,

The high priest every year entereth into the holy place;' meaning not

one, but the succession of the order; and in reason it must needs be so

here. Because Antichrist, from his beginning to his end, from his rise

and revelation, till his ruin and destruction, will take up such a long

track of time, as cannot fall within the age of any one man, even from

the time of the apostles till the end of the world. Antichrist is the

head of the apostasy; for here the apostasy and the revelation of the

man of sin are conjunct; now the mysterious apostasy could not be

perfected in a short time.

[2.] The son of perdition, wherein he is likened to Judas: John xvii.

12, None of them is lost but the son of perdition.' Him he resembleth

in covetousness, treachery, and final destruction. The term may be

explained either passively, or actively:--(1.) Passively, as one

condemned to everlasting destruction; as the son of death,' is one

condemned to die: 2 Sam. xii. 5, He shall be a son of death;' we

translate it, He shall surely die.' So children of wrath,' Eph. ii. 3;

so here, son of perdition.' (2.) Actively, bringing destruction upon

himself and others; one that shall destroy others, and so he is called

Abaddon,' and Apollyon,' Rev. ix. 11, and is opposite to Christ, who is

the author of salvation.' Heb. v. 9, but Antichrist of destruction. And

let us see the parallel between him and Judas; for the person is a

type, as well as the name hath a significancy. Antichrist then is like

Judas--in profession, a disciple of Christ; in office, a governor of

the church; but in practice, a traitor. As they said of the blind man,

John ix. 9, Some said, This is he; others, He is very like him.' The

Pope boasteth that his seat is apostolical, his chair is Peter's chair,

and that he is the successor of the apostle. Grant it, but there is an

error of the person--not of Peter, but of Judas. Let us see the

parallel:--

(1.) Judas was not a stranger, but a pretended friend and apostle: Acts

i. 17, He was numbered with us, and obtained part of this ministry.'

Turks and infidels are enemies to Christ, but Antichrist seeketh to

undermine him, under a pretence of friendship; anti'christos is one in

show for, and in effect against Christ, and the beast in the Revelation

is said to push with the horns of the lamb.' Rev. xiii. 11. If he were

a professed enemy, what mystery were there in it? But mystery was

written upon the woman's forehead, Rev. xvii. 5; and here, ver. 7, The

mystery of iniquity.' It is wisdom to discern the false prophet, Rev.

xiii. 18, but there needeth no great wisdom to discover an open and

professed adversary.

(2.) He sold Christ for a small matter. Omnia Romae venalia: pardons,

indulgences, freedom from purgatory, all to be bought with money; and

it is a small matter, considering the things put to sale, the pardon of

sins, the souls of men redeemed with Christ's precious blood. The

antichristian state maketh a market of religion; truth is made to yield

to interest and profit.

(3.) Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss, under a pretence of honouring

him: Luke xxii. 48, Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son

of man with a kiss?' Antichrist is a true adversary of Christ, though

he pretend to adore him; as those that murdered the present prophets

would by all means beautify the tombs of the prophets deceased, and

bear a respect to their memories, Mat. xxiii. 30. He pretendeth to be

his servant, yea, a servant of servants, but is really his enemy. The

apostle telleth us of some that were enemies to the cross of Christ,'

Phil. iii. 18. Who to appearance such friends to the cross as the

rabble of nominal Christians? but they are opposers of his spiritual

kingdom, the virtue and power of the cross. You have crucifixes every

where, painted, carved, gilded; they are ready to worship the cross

with a holy worship; they set it in their temples, altars, wear it in

their bosoms, and wherever they meet it show it reverence, adorn it

with gold, silver, and precious stones. Their popes and prelates have

it carried before them; and are not these friends of the cross? No;

they live a worldly, sensual life, and all their religion tendeth there

unto; therefore enemies of the cross of Christ, because they mind

earthly things. This is right antichrist-like, to betray Christ under a

colour of adoration.

(4.) Judas was a guide to them that came to take Christ; and one main

work of Antichrist is to be a ringleader in persecuting for religion.

Christ is in heaven, death hath no more power over him; his natural

body is above abuse, but his mystical body still suffereth: Acts ix. 6,

Why persecutest thou me?' Antichrist is the head of the persecuting

state, others are his emissaries and agents, to take Christ in his

members. It is a politic religion, that must be carried on with worldly

artifices, with power and cruelty.

J5.) Lastly, The covetousness of Judas is set forth. He was a thief,

one that carried the bag, John xii. 6. England, to its bitter cost,

knoweth the polling exactions of the Papacy; all its dealings with us

were to fill the bag out of this puteus inexhaustus. Now all these

things should open our eyes; we may behold the man of sin, the son of

perdition; one egg is not more like to another than Judas and

Antichrist.

Use. Is to persuade us to a detestation of what is antichristian, and

to that end let us mark the progress of the text. (1.) The apostasy

made was for Antichrist; (2.) Antichrist, rising upon the apostasy,

becometh a man of sin; and (3.) The man of sin is also the son of

perdition.

1. Let me begin first with the falling away. There is a twofold falling

away--either from the power and practice of godliness, or from a true

religion to a false, particularly to Popery.

[1.] I begin with the falling away from the power and practice of

godliness, though the profession be not changed; and the rather, partly

because this disposeth to the entertainment of error. When a people

that are carried with great fervour and vigour of zeal for a while,

lose their affections to good, and return to a worldly, sensual life,

then the bias of their hearts doth easily prevail against the light of

their understandings. And so unsanctified men may the sooner be drawn

to apostasy; they never felt the quickening virtue of faith, and were

never wrought by it to the true love of God, or an holy and heavenly

mind and life. And partly, also, because if a lively Christianity had

been kept up, Antichrist had never risen in the world; and it is the

way to keep him out still: When the servants slept, the enemy sowed

tares.' Mat. xiii. A sleepy religion and corruption of manners made way

for corruption of doctrine, worship, and order. It was with the church

according to the spouse's complaint: I sleep, but my heart waketh.'

Cant. v. 2. Some care there was, but much drowsiness and deadness in

religion; and that produced the great apostasy. Partly too, because

there is such a compliance between the nature of antichristianism and

the temper of a carnal heart; for superstition and profaneness grow

both upon the same root. A lothness to displease the flesh, the sensual

nature of man, is such, that it is loth to be crossed; and that

breedeth profaneness. For wherefore do men ingulf themselves in all

manner of sensualities, but because they are loth to deny their natural

appetites and desires, and row against the stream of flesh and blood,

but will walk in the way of their own heart, and in the sight of their

own eyes'? Eccles. xi. 9. Again, if nature be to be crossed, it is only

a little; it shall only be in some external actions, and observances,

and dead rudiments, which never kill our lusts, nor promote the divine

life. And this pleasing superstition shall make up a religion which is

a fit pillow for a carnal heart to sleep upon. Popery is the easiest

religion for the flesh that can be found out, for it never biteth nor

disturbeth their lusts. The duties of it are like the pharisees'

fasting, which our Lord compareth to old wine, Mat. ix. 17, fit for

old, dried skin bottles. Well, take heed of falling away from a lively

godliness. No man entereth seriously upon religion but with some

tasting or rejoicing, Heb. vi.; now as this decayeth, we fall off. The

heavenly life is obstructed, if not choked and quite lost. Now, to

prevent this, observe two things:--(1.) Your coldness in duties; (2.)

Your boldness in sinning.

(1.) Coldness in duties, when the will and affections grow more

remiss^and the worship of God, which keepeth up the remembrance of mm,

is either omitted or performed perfunctorily, and in a careless and

stupid manner: Jer. ii. 32, My people have forgotten me days without

number;' Job xxvii. 10, Will he always call upon God? will he delight

himself in the Almighty?' God chargeth Israel with growing weary of

him; and it began in not calling upon him, Isa. xliii. 22. Now, when

you seldom think or speak of God, and do not keep up a delightful

communion with him, there is a falling away.

(2.) Boldness in sinning. When men lose their tenderness and

strictness, and the awe of God is lessened in their hearts, and they do

not only sin freely in thought, but freely in act, have not that hatred

of sin and watchfulness as formerly, but more abandon themselves to a

carnal life, they are falling off from God apace: 2 Peter ii. 20, For

if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the

knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again

entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than

the beginning.' At first the heart checked you for sin, but you did not

kindly come off, were not troubled about it, hoped God would pardon it;

and then you are bold to venture again, and so by degrees are entangled

in the sensual and worldly life. Now consider the causes of it:--I.

Want of faith in God: Heb. iii. 12, Take heed, brethren, lest there be

in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living

God.' You have not a sound belief of his being and presence. 2. Want of

love to God: Rev. ii. 4, 5, Nevertheless I have (some what) against

thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from

whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I

will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its

place, except thou repent.' Your hearts decline from that love you had

to him and his ways, and then your work is intermitted. 3. Want of a

due sense of the world to come: Heb. x. 39, But we are not of them who

draw back to perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of the

soul.' 4. The love of the present world: 2 Tim. iv. 10, For Demas hath

forsaken me, having loved this present world.' The more that is valued,

the more your hearts are taken off from things to come, and the care

about them; you have too great a liking, either to the profits of the

world--1 Tim. vi. 10, The love of money is the root of all evil, which

while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith'--or else

the pleasures of the world: 2 Tim. iii. 4, Lovers of pleasure more than

lovers of God.' As the inclination of the heart groweth stronger to

sensual pleasures, your thoughts of God are less serious and pleasing

to you. Now look to these things, lest you grow quite weary of God and

the holy life, which once you had an affection unto.

[2.] From a true religion to a false; which may be done two ways:--(1.)

Out of corruption of mind; (2.) Out of vile affection.

(1.) Out of weakness of mind, as those do that were never well grounded

in the truth: Eph. iv. 14, That we henceforth be no more children,

tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by

the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to

deceive;' 2 Peter iii. 16, In which are some things hard to be

understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they

do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.' Therefore we

need to be established; but the forsaking of a truth we were bred in

usually cometh from some falseness of heart. Some errors are so

contrary to the new nature, that they discern them by the unction: 1

John ii. 20, But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all

things.'

(2.) Out of vile affection, when they forsake the truth for the

advantages of a fleshly, worldly life, some places to be gotten by it,

&c., and as the whore of Babylon hath a golden cup, riches, and

preferments, wherewith it inviteth its proselytes. Now these are worse

than the former, for they sell the birthright: Heb. xii. 16, Lest there

be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of

meat sold his birthright.' O Christians! take heed to yourselves.

Apostasy brought Antichrist into the church. Let it not jure

postliminio, bring him back again into the land, or into your hearts.

2. The next step is the man of sin. As the first apostasy of Adam and

Eve brought sin into the world, so this great apostasy brought in a

deluge of sin into the church, and defiled the holy society which

Christ had gathered out of the world. Idolatry is often called adultery

or fornication; spiritual uncleanness disposeth to bodily, and bodily

to spiritual. Usually a corrupt state of religion and corrupt manners

go together; otherwise the dance and the fiddle would not suit. The

world cannot lie quiet in a course of sin, if there be not some

libertine, atheistical doctrine, and carnal worship to countenance it:

Rev. xi. 10, And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over

them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because

these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.'

3. The man of sin is also the son of perdition--(1.) Actively. False

religions strangely efferate the mind: Jude 11, These go in the way of

Cain;' and Hosea v. 2, Revolters are profound to make slaughter.' Men

think no cruelty nor dishonesty unlawful which serveth to promote the

interests of their sect, and lose all charity to those that are not of

their way. (2.) Passively, shall be destroyed. Sometimes grievous

judgments come in this world for the corruptions of religion; but in

the world to come, dreadful is the end of apostates: 2 Peter ii. 20,

21, For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through

the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again

entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than

the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the

way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the

holy commandment delivered unto them.'

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SERMON IV.

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is

worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing

himself that he is God.--2 Thes. II. 4.

IN this matter of Antichrist we have made this progress--First, That he

arose upon, and by a falling away from, the ancient pure state of

Christianity. Secondly, That the Holy Ghost points him out by his names

and titles, which are two:--the man of sin,' wherein he is resembled to

Antiochus; and the son of perdition,' wherein he is resembled to Judas.

As Antiochus, he is one that by force and power should change the laws

and ordinances, and compel men to his abominations. As Judas, he should

betray Christ by a kiss for worldly gain, and be one that is in

pretence an apostle, but indeed a real adversary to Christ. Now, after

the apostle had pointed at him by his names and titles, he describeth

him by his practices, wherein his names and titles are verified; for

here he proveth that he should be as Antiochus, by his exalting himself

above all that is called God, which is said of Antiochus, Dan. xi. 36,

And the king shall do according to his will, and he shall exalt and

magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things

against the God of gods;'--and as Judas, one sitting in the temple of

God; that is, he sitteth there as exercising a public ecclesiastical

office, yea, challenging the highest seat in it. He sitteth there

potestate regiminis, by the power of his government; he doth

Cathedratica potestate praesidere (Estius). His sitting there as chief

shows him as Judas; his sitting here as God, and exalting himself above

all that is called God, showeth him Antiochus.

But to handle the words more closely, Antichrist is here set forth:--

I. As opposite to Christ; o antikei'menos, one set to the contrary,

that is, in respect of pride chiefly. Christ was the pattern of

humility, Antichrist is the king of pride; Christ would not so much as

assume to himself an authority to divide the inheritance between two

brethren--Luke xii. 14, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over

you?'--but Antichrist will depose kings, and dispose of kingdoms.

II. The instances of his pride:--(1.) In exalting himself above all

human power: Who exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is

worshipped.' (2.) A usurpation of divine honour: He, as God, sitteth in

the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.'

Let us open these things more particularly:--

I. He is represented in the term antikei'menos as one diametrically

opposite to Christ, and contrary to him, who is the true head and Lord

of the church: Acts x. 36, He is Lord over all;' but Antichrist

opposeth himself, that is, showeth himself in a quite contrary

appearance. That which is most remarkable in Christ, and should be in

all his followers, is humility. He expressed a wonderful contempt of

the riches and greatness of the world, and all the honour which is of

man; taking the form of a servant, and making himself of no reputation,

and living a mean, inferior life. He came not to be ministered unto,

but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many,' Mat. xx. 28.

He kept no state, nor affected pomp of attendants; though he were Lord

of all, yet he became poor, to make us rich,' 2 Cor. viii. 9. But it

may be this was proper to him; doth he expect it from his servants and

officers in the church? Yes; this is the grace which he hath

recommended to all his followers: Mat. xi. 29, Learn of me, for I am

meek and lowly.' But especially to the ministers of the gospel: our

Lord foresaw what spirit would work in them, and therefore he

forewarned them of pride and lordliness: Mat. xx. 25, 26, Ye know that

the princes of the earth do exercise dominion over them, and they that

are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among

you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.'

Among Christ's servants, he that is chief must be chief in service,

even as a servant unto all: Luke xxii. 26, He that is chief, as he that

doth serve.' Domination, greatness, principality and power, is allowed

in the civil state, for there it is necessary; yet it is excluded the

church. This affecting of pre-eminence and chiefness is the bane of the

church--it is taxed as a great sin in Diotrephes, 3 John 9--be it

either over their fellow-labourers, or the people of the Lord. You see

how tender the apostles were in this point; everywhere they disclaim

this affectation of lordship: 2 Cor. i. 24, Not that we are lords of

your faith, but helpers of your joy.' And Peter recommendeth it to his

fellow-elders: 1 Peter v. 3, Neither as being lords over God's

heritage, but being examples to the flock.' And if the apostles would

not assume lordship, who may? It is true, there is a government in the

church, and the people are to obey their guides, Heb. xiii. 17, and to

have them highly in honour, for their works' sake,' 1 Thes. v. 13; but

yet the pastors of the church should govern by light and love, not by

pomp and force, and not be known by such pomp and authority as begets

fear. Well, now, let us see the opposite state. If humility and

meekness be in the very essence of Christianity, and woven throughout

the whole frame of it, then it is antichristian to be lordly and proud,

especially in them who pretend to be successors of Christ and his

apostles. Now, in the Pope and his adherents, you will see the most

odious pride set forth that ever the world was conscious unto, without

any cloak and shame. And all their business is to get power; what

designs they have for preferment in the world, how studiously they

have, and do prosecute it, they blush not to own openly before angels

or men. This worldly ambition to rise higher and higher is their design

and trade of life. As the bishop of Rome, at first, from the chief

pastor of that city, affected to be an archbishop over the suburban

towns and cities; then, a patriarch over many cities; and because two

opposed him in Italy a long time, Ravenna and Milan, he gets power over

them, and then he must be oecumenical bishop over all the world. But

Constantinople resisteth for a long time, yea, arrogateth within the

empire the same titles. Who more earnest against it than Gregory, whom

they call the Great, and more forward to charge the assuming of this

title as antichristian? But then, when once they began, by powerful

means and many indirect courses, to be owned as universal bishop, they^

enlarged their bounds, not only over the ecclesiastical power, but

civil, and all kings and princes must stoop to them, as well as

bishops. So that here was the progress and gradation:--First, from the

chief presbyter, a bishop over many presbyters in the same city; then,

a metropolitan over many bishops in one province; then, a patriarch

over many provinces in one diocese (for in the Roman division there

were seven provinces in one diocese); then, universal bishop in the

whole world; then, the only shepherd and bishop, and others but his

substitutes. Pretty steps of ambitious encroaching! But yet exalting

himself farther, he challengeth all power in heaven and earth; and the

like is practised by his followers at this day in the church of Rome.

From private priests they grow up into some prelature, as archdeacons,

deans; then a bishopric; then a better or richer; then archbishops,

cardinals; then pope. And the devil is grown so impudent, by the help

of these churchmen, as that it is counted a great piece of spiritual

wisdom, publicly owned in the world, to be able, by these steps, to get

higher and higher, and lord it over God's heritage; as if ambitious

affectation were the honour of Christianity, and gospel humility would

expose the church to scorn, and pomp and grandeur were a greater

ornament to religion than grace; when, in the mean time, they have

nothing to prove them to be true pastors of the church but Judas's

kiss, a little owning of Christ to countenance their ambition.

II. The particular instances wherein the pride of Antichrist is set

forth are two:--

1. His exalting himself above all human powers: He opposeth and

exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped.' Here

the object is set forth by two terms:--(1.) All that is called God;

(2.) Or worshipped. They both belong to the same thing.

[1.] That which is called God, that is, magistrates, princes, and

kings: Ps. lxxxii. 1, He judgeth among the gods;' and ver. 6, I have

said, Ye are gods; all of you are children of the Most High;' and John

x. 34, 35, It is written in your law, I said ye are gods. If he call

them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be

broken,' &c. God hath clothed magistrates with his own honour so far

that he hath put his name upon them; and their eminency is a part of

his image, as it lieth in superiority, dominion, and power. Though

magistrates be but like their brethren as to their common nature, yet

in respect of their office they have the glorious title of gods

conferred upon them; as being his vicegerents, and bearing his person

in government, they are honoured with his name. So that, without

impeachment of blasphemy, those that excel in the civil power may be

called gods. Now, over these Antichrist exalteth himself, that is,

above all kings and potentates.

[2.] The other notion is, e` se'basma; we render it, or is worshipped.'

The Greek word is, whatever is held in the highest degree of reverence,

whatever is august or illustrious; as the emperors of Rome were called

Sebastoi`: Acts xxv. 21, Paul appealed to be referred to the hearing of

Augustus;' it is tou Sebastou, not Augustus Caesar, who was then dead,

but his successor. Well, then, here is the character of Antichrist:

that he exalteth himself above all civil authority authorised and

permitted of God, not only above ordinary magistrates, but kings and

emperors. Now, we find in history no less than twenty kings and

emperors trampled under foot by the Pope of Rome, some of whom he had

excommunicated and deposed from their kingdoms, and their people

dispensed withal in denial of their subjection to them; others brought

to cruel, shameful deaths, and their kingdoms miserably rent and torn,

to the destruction of millions of men, by their means. He that hath any

knowledge of the histories in Christendom cannot but know these things;

how he treadeth on their necks, kicketh off their crowns with his feet,

and hath brought them to the vilest submissions. And if kings and

emperors have received more spirit and courage, and the Popes of Rome

learned more modesty nowadays, thanks is due to the light of the

gospel, which hath shined so far and to such a degree as to the

consuming of Antichrist, though not to his utter destruction.

2. The next instance of his pride is his usurpation of divine honour,

expressed in two clauses:--(1.) The one showeth the usurpation itself,

That he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God;' (2.) The other, the

degree of it, showing himself as God.' Both must be explained and

vindicated.

[1.] For the usurpation itself, he sitteth as God in the temple of

God.' By the temple of God is meant the church: 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17,

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God

dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God

destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' So 2 Cor.

vi. 16, What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are

the temple of the living God.' The external visible church, which

professeth the faith of Christ and beareth his name; so that the place

wherein Antichrist shall arise is the visible Christian church; not

Rome ethnic, but Christian.

But is, then, the church of Rome the church of Christ?

Ans. It was one part of it before it was perverted; it usurpeth still

that name; it retaineth some relic of a church, mangled as it is. Saith

Calvin in his Epistles: I think I have given some strong reasons that

it yet retaineth some show of a church.' Now in this temple of God he

sitteth as an officer and bishop there, as I before explained it: and

whereas other princes are said to reign so many years, the Pope is said

to sit so long. It is his sedes, his cathedral or seat. And again, here

he is said to sit as God, that is, as God incarnate, for Christ is the

true and proper Lord of the church; none should reign there but he. And

the name of this man of sin is not Antitheos, but anti'christos; not

one that directly invadeth the properties of the supreme God, but of

God incarnate, or Christ as Mediator: he sitteth negatively, not as a

minister, but positively as supreme lord upon earth, whom all must

adore and worship, and kings and princes kiss his feet. In short, he

usurpeth the authority due to Christ. Now I shall prove that by a

double argument:--

First, By usurping the titles due to Christ; for he that will make bold

with names will make bold with things; as to be sponsus ecclesiae, the

husband of the church, as Innocent called the church sponsam suam, his

spouse; caput ecclesiae, the head of the church, which is proper to the

Saviour of the body; supreme, visible, and universal head, which only

Christ is, who hath promised to be with her to the end of the world,

and will be visible to those who do at length approach his court in

heaven, where his seat is; to be chief pastor, Christ's own title: And

when the chief shepherd shall appear,' 1 Peter v. 4; to be pontifex

maximus, the greatest high priest, whereas Christ alone is called the

high priest of our profession,' Heb. iii. 1, and the great high priest

over the house of God,' Heb. iv. 14; so his vicar-general upon earth;

whereas the ancient church attributed this to the Holy Ghost, calling

it Vicariam vim Spiritus Sancti, he supplies his room and absence. Now

titles including power, certainly they are not to be usurped without

warrant. Therefore to call the Pope the chief and only shepherd, and

the like, it is to usurp his authority to whom these things originally

belong.

Secondly, He doth usurp the thing implied by the titles--the authority

over the church, which is only due to God incarnate. Supreme authority

may be considered, either as to the claim, right, property, and

pre-eminence which belong to it, or to the exercise.

1. The claim and right pretended. He sitteth as God in the temple of

God; that is, by virtue of his office there, claimeth the same power

that Christ had, which is fourfold:--

(1.) An unlimited power over all things both in heaven and earth. This

was given to Christ, Mat. xxviii. 18, and the Pope, as his vicar,

challengeth it. But where is the plea and ground of the claim? For one

to set up himself as a vice-god without warrant, is rebellion against

Christ. To set himself in his throne without his leave, surely none is

fit to have this authority that hath not his power to back and to

administer and govern all things for the church's good, which power God

would trust in the hands of no creature.

(2.) A universal headship and supremacy over all the churches of

Christ. Now, this supreme power over all Christians is the right of God

incarnate, and whosoever challengeth it sits as God in the temple of

God; and it is very derogatory to the comfort of the faithful that they

should in all things depend upon one man as their supreme pastor, or

else be excluded from the hope of salvation. Certainly this power, as

to matter of fact, is impossible to be managed by any man, considering

the vast extent of the world, and the variety of governments and

different interests under which the people of God find shelter and

protection, and the multitude and diversity of those things which are

comprised in such a government; and, as to matter of right, it is

sacrilegious, for Christ never instituted any such universal vicar and

bishop. It is a dignity too high for any creature: none is fit to be

universal head of the church but one that is God as well as man.

(3.) Absolute authority, so as to be above control. When a mortal man

should pretend to be so absolute as to give no account of his actions,

that it shall not be lawful to be said to him, What^doest thou? and all

his decrees must be received without examination or complaint, this is

such a sovereignty as belongs to none but God: Job ix. 12, Behold, he

taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest

thou?' Now, this is in their canon law, that the Pope is to be judged

by no man; that though he should lead millions of souls into hell, none

can say Domine, cur ita facis?

(4.) Infallibility and freedom from error, which is the property of

God: he neither is deceived nor can deceive. Let God be true, and every

man a liar.' Now, that corrupt and fallible man should arrogate this to

himself, such an unerring in judgment, is to usurp divine honour in

matter of right and in matter of fact. For the Pope to arrogate this is

as great a contradiction to all sense and reason as if a man sick of

the plague, or any other mortal disease, should say that he was

immortal, and in that part wherein the disease was seated.

2. As to the exercise, there are two acts of supreme authority:--

(1.) Legislation.

(2.) Judgment.

(1.) Legislation: It is the peculiar and incommunicable property of

Christ to be Lord and lawgiver to the church; Isa. xxxiii. 22, The Lord

is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will

save us.' God alone hath such interest in his people as to prescribe

supreme or universal laws to them, and we are his subjects: James iv.

12, There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.' Now,

whosoever will make laws that shall immediately bind the conscience,

they invade Christ's sovereignty. This is spiritual tyranny, and the

worst sort of tyranny, to arrogate a power over the subjects of Christ

and their consciences as lord of their faith. He that taketh upon him

to rescind and make void his institutions and ordinances, and set his

own in their place, and give that reverence and honour to them which

only belongeth to the ordinances of Christ, he is Antichrist, whatever

he be.

(2.) As to judgment: It is an exercising an authority no less than

divine, so to take upon him to absolve man from his duty to God, or the

penalty which sin hath made his due. The one is done by dispensations,

the other by indulgences: and therefore whoever by dispensations

antiquates and dispenses with the laws of God himself is thus guilty;

as dispensing with marrying the brother's wife. Nay, one of the Popes

dispensed with one that took his own sister to wife. I do not allege

this so much for the particular facts, but to show the power which they

challenged to be inherent in themselves. Bellarmine saith, Christ hath

given Peter and his successors a power faciendi peccatum non

peccatum--to make a sin to be no sin; and again, If the Pope, should

err in forbidding virtues and commanding vices, the church were bound

to believe vices to be good and virtues to be evil,' which certainly is

to set man in the place of God. As to indulgences: as to pretend to

give pardons for sin for so many years, a thing that God himself never

did; to pardon the sin before it was committed, that is, to give a

license to sin: so for the highest crimes to absolve men, upon a little

attrition or trouble about the sin,--to do all this and more than this

as of right, is to sit in the church of God as God.'

[2.] And showing himself that he is God: that is meant, not of what he

professeth in words, but what he doth in deed. It is not said that he

saith he is God, but apodeiknu'nta, he showeth himself, or sets forth

himself as God. The reason of the thing showeth it:--(1.) Antichrist

gets power by seduction, or the deceiveableness of unrighteousness;

therefore does not openly call himself the true and only God. He is

represented as a false prophet, that speaketh lies in hypocrisy. If one

would openly and plainly profess himself to be God, he might be a

frantic usurper, but could not be a cunning seducer, and few would be

so stupid and senseless as to be led by him. (2.) Antichrist, whoever

he be, is to be a Christian by profession, and to have a high and great

charge among the visible professors of Christianity. He is a secret

adversary, that groweth upon the apostasy or degeneration of the

Christian state. Now, such pretends observance and obedience to Christ,

and therefore he would not openly declare himself to be God, and he

sitteth in the temple and church of God, as before. And it is a

mystery; all which imply crafty conveyance, and that he doth not openly

assume the godhead, but slily and secretly, which doth not mend the

matter; for the insinuating, devouring, unsuspected enemy is the most

perilous and pernicious; as Joab to Amasa, and Judas to Christ. (3.)

Antichrist is plainly a man. Now, for a man to disannul all religion,

and set up himself directly as God, is improbable. Nero,

Nebuchadnezzar, Simon Magus would be adored as gods; they did not deny

other gods, nor a greater God above them; therefore it is the arrogance

of works is intended. If Antichrist will show himself as God, certainly

he will sweeten his blasphemy with some hypocrisy, as that he is the

vicar and vicegerent of God. (4.) His showing himself as God, is either

accepting or doing such things, which if they did rightly belong to

him, they would show that he is God. Two persons I find in scripture

charged for usurping divine honours. The one, Herod Agrippa, who was

smitten by an angel for not giving God the glory, when the people

cried, The voice of God, and not of man,' Acts xii. 22: his fault was

accepting what was ascribed by others. The other is the prince of Tyre:

Ezek. xxviii. 2, Because thy heart is lifted up, and thou hast said I

am God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seat; yet thou

art a man, and not God, though thou set thy heart as the heart of God.'

His fault was taking upon him, as if he were God, to accept divine

honours, to do those things which would make him equalise himself to

our Lord Christ, blessed for ever. So doth he show himself that he is

God. (1.) His accepting Antichrist's disciples, who call him our Lord

God the Pope, supremum numen in terris, a certain deity upon earth.

That the Pope hath the same consistory with God, and the same tribunal

with Christ; that he is lord of heaven and earth; that from him there

are no appeals to be made, no, not to God himself; that the Pope may do

all that God doth; that he is the husband of the church, and the

foundation of faith (Council of Lateran, sess. 4); Alter Deus in terra;

that the words of the Pope in cathedra are for certainty of truth equal

to the scriptures; that he can change the form of sacraments delivered

by Christ, or decree contrary to scripture. If any do object that these

were the applauses of his flatterers and claw-backs, it is true they

were so uttered; but those flatteries of the canonists and Jesuits do

come to be received doctrines among them; and whereas divers popes have

directed special commissions for perusal of the works of the learned,

with authority to expunge and purge out whatsoever is not orthodox,

many better things have come under censure, but these things stand

still, as being very pleasing to his holiness's humility, and so not to

be altered: besides, many of these things have been spoken to his face

without rebuke.--Conc. Latt., sess. 2. He is called the high priest and

king that is to be adored by all, and most like unto God--(sess. 9). It

is said, the aspect of thy divine majesty dazzleth our eyes, and that

of the 72d Psalm applieth to him, All the kings of the earth shall

worship him, and all nations shall serve him.' Now, to accept and

approve of these flatterers is to show himself that he is God: (2.) By

doing such things as if he were God, not by the usurpation of the

formal name, as by arrogating to himself such things as belong to God,

his right and property, to take upon himself to be lord of consciences,

to command what faith is to be believed, suppressing the true doctrine

of Christ, and setting up his own inventions, dispensing with God's

laws, taking upon him to pardon sins. One article for which Luther was

condemned is this: that it is not in the power of the church or Pope to

make new articles of faith; another, that the best penitence of all is

the new life. Qui facit Deos divosque Deo major est. The Pope doth

canonise saints, and his decrees must be received as oracles, &c.

The first use is to give us a clear discovery where to find Antichrist;

every tittle of this is fulfilled in the bishop of Rome, that we need

no longer be in doubt, and say, Is this he that should come, or shall

we look for another?' Who is the antikei'menos, but he that opposeth

himself to that humble state and frame wherein Christ left the church,

and will be prince of all pastors, and swear them to his obedience, and

hath made such troubles in the world to make himself acknowledged for

head and chief? Who is he that exalteth himself above all that is

called God, and is august in the world, but he that takes upon him to

deprive and depose emperors, kings, and princes, by his

excommunications, suspensions, interdictions, and decrees, discharging

subjects of their allegiance and oaths, and giving away their kingdoms;

that doth crown and uncrown emperors with his feet, and tread upon them

as one would do upon a viper? Who is he that sitteth as God in the

temple of God--that is, affecteth the honour due to our Lord Jesus

Christ--but he that doth thus imperiously aspire, subesse Romano

Pontifici definimus esse de necessitate salutis; that takes upon him a

power to make a new creed, and say we are bound to obey him; that saith

he can change the things which God hath commanded in his word, and

dispense with them, and so by his decrees make the commandment of God

of none effect; and can forgive sins, not only already committed, but

to be committed, which God himself never would do; that lords it over

consciences, enslaving the world to his usurpations: in short, that

will be obeyed in those things which God hath forbidden, and take upon

himself an office which no human creature is capable of? Who is he that

showeth himself that he is God, but he that suffereth himself to be

decked with the spoils of God's own attributes; to be optimum maximum,

the best and chiefest, our Lord God the Pope, a visible deity; and will

be adored by all the potentates of the earth, with such veneration as

greater could not be given to Christ himself if he were corporally

present, and will have all the world to submit to his decrees as being

infallible; that challengeth a power over angels, purgatory, and hell?

These things are as clear as daylight, and ought to be regarded by us,

partly that we may bless God, who hath freed us from this tyranny, and

have a liberty of judging of truth and falsehood out his holy and

blessed word; partly that we may stand fast in this liberty. Those that

were never pope-bitten know not the mischiefs that attend this

spiritual tyranny; and God grant that we never more know it to our

bitter cost. Therefore, as Samuel dealt with the Israelites when they

would cast off the theocracy, or God's government, under which they had

been well and safely governed, unless they forfeited the protection by

their own sin, that they might be like all the nations round about

them, 1 Sam. viii. 20;--Samuel telleth them what would be the manner of

the king that should reign over them: 1 Sam. viii. 11-13, And he said,

This shall be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will

take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to

be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will

appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and

will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make

his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will

take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be

bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your

oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants,'

&c.;--so if such a wanton humour should possess us, that we must have

the religion of the nations round about us, consider whom you receive

spiritually to reign over you--the king of pride, who opposeth and

exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped, &c.,

one that will not only devour your substance, but lord it over your

consciences, and put out the eye of your reason, that you may the

better swallow his damnable errors, pestilent superstitions, and

idolatries, and bold usurpation on the authority of Christ; or else

burn your bodies with temporal fire, and cast out your name as one to

be condemned to that which is eternal. It is easy to open the

flood-gate, but when that is done, it is not so easy to call back the

waters; and when you come to discern the difference between the blessed

yoke of Christ and the iron yoke of Antichrist, it will be too late for

a remedy to repent of your error.

The second use is to show us how things should be carried in the true

and reformed Christianity.

1. With such meekness, modesty, and mortification, that our religion

may be known to be established by a crucified Lord, whose doctrine and

example do visibly and eminently hold forth the contempt of the world.

The pride and ambition of the pastors of the church hath been the cause

of all the evil in it; therefore nothing so unsuitable to the gospel as

a domineering spirit. We, that are to preach heavenly-mindedness and

self-denial, should not affect the greatness of the world, lest our

lives contradict our doctrine.

2. How eminent and exemplary we should be in our obedience to

magistrates, for this is to be opposite to the antichristian estate.

God is very tender of the honour of civil powers and authorities, and

will have every soul to be subject to them: Rom. xiii. 1, Let every

soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of

God; the powers that be are ordained of God;' and again, 1 Peter ii.

13, Submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be

to the king as supreme, or to governors, as them that are sent by him.'

Great respect and submission is due to them for God's sake, and that we

may commend religion to the profane world, and live down the reproaches

of the gospel. They were branded as wicked men that were not afraid to

speak evil of dignities, that despise governments in their own hearts,

or weaken the esteem of it in the hearts of others by their speeches: 2

Peter ii. 10, But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of

uncleanliness, and despise government; presumptuous are they,

self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.'

3. What a wickedness it is to usurp divine honours! We do so when we

take that praise and admiration to ourselves which is only due to God:

Acts iii. 12, And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye

men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on

us, as though by our power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers,

hath glorified his Son Jesus, &c.; and his name, through faith in his

name, hath made this man strong, whom we see and know; yea, the faith

which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence

of you all.'

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SERMON V.

Remember ye not, that, while I was with you. I told you these things?

and now you know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his

time; for the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now

letteth will let till he be taken out of the way.--2 Thes. II. 5-7.

IN these words is:--

First, A digression, calling them to remembrance of what he delivered

by word of mouth,

Secondly, A progress in the further description of Antichrist. He had

hitherto been described by--

1. His names and titles;

2. His nature and properties; now--

3. By the time of his appearing, where take notice of three things:--

I. That Antichrist was not then revealed, because there was an

impediment hindering his revelation.

II. That though he was not then revealed, yet that mystery of iniquity

did begin to work, but secretly.

III. That when that impediment shall be removed, then Antichrist shall

be revealed.

First, I begin with his putting them in mind of what he had told them

before by word of mouth: Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with

you, I told you these things?' This showeth the certainty and

usefulness of this doctrine; for though the event were not to be

accomplished in their days, yet he taught them before when present, and

now repeateth it again when absent; he preached it in private, and now

writeth it for public good, and laboureth to confirm the truth of it,

and fasten it upon their memories.

Observe, then, that the doctrine of Antichrist is a profitable

doctrine, and a point very necessary to be preached and known.

1. It is a point very necessary to admonish and warn the faithful, that

they be not circumvented with these delusions, and be found in the

opposite state to Christ Jesus, and the interests of his kingdom. God

hath blown his trumpet: Rev. xviii. 4, Come out of her, my people, that

ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her

plagues;' God calleth his people out of spiritual Babylon; it is

dangerous and unsafe being there. If we would escape Babylon's

punishments we must escape her sins, not live in that communion and

society where there are such temptations to idolatry and other

detestable enormities. It is disputable whether the errors of Popery be

damnable, or there be any possibility of salvation in that religion.

Some deny all possibility; others, abating from the rigour of that

opinion, assert a very great difficulty: 1 Cor. iii. 13, Saved as by

fire;' if so much Christianity left as to save them, it is with much

ado. But the question is not about our benefit, but our duty; not

whether possibly we may be saved? but what is the way the Lord will

have us to walk in? And if there were possibility or probability of

salvation in the way, in the general, yet there is very little or none

for them that live in a known sin, and especially in a sin of such a

dangerous nature as abetting an opposite faction to Christ, such as is

that of Antichrist.

2. It is necessary to fortify and forewarn the people of God against a

double temptation. (1.) Against scandal; (2.) Against persecutions.

[1.] Against scandal. It is a dangerous temptation to atheism to see

Christianity so corrupted and debauched by a vile submission to serve

worldly ends, and turned into the pageantry of empty and ridiculous

ceremonies, which beget scorn and contempt of it in the minds of all

considering beholders; and therefore there are more atheists in Rome

and Italy than in other countries. Supernatural things, disguised with

a vain pomp, lose their reverence, and do not alarm the conscience, but

harden the heart in a settled atheism and contempt of Christ. Now it is

a mighty stay to the heart to see that this degeneration was foreseen

and foretold: John xvi. 1, These things have I spoken to you, that you

should not be offended;' Mat. xviii. 7, Woe unto the world because of

offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man

by whom the offence cometh!'

[2.] Against persecutions; for the man of sin is also a son of

perdition, a destroyer of the saints, and maketh havoc of the people of

God. Now it is grievous when Christians suffer by Christians, and we

may have many doubtings and misgivings about our cause; but when

Antichrist is clearly discovered, we submit the more cheerfully to

suffer the hardest things under his tyranny; for suffering under

antichristian persecution is martyrdom and suffering for Christ, as

much as suffering under Pagan persecution: Rev. xiv. 13, And I heard a

voice from heaven saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die

in the Lord from henceforth,' &c. Not only the primitive martyrs, who

were put to death by heathens, but those that are condemned by

Christians and burned for heretics, those are martyrs also.

3. That we may the better understand true Christianity; antikei'mena

paralleleime'na ma'lista phai'netai, opposites illustrate each other.

The two opposite states are Christianity and Antichristianity; the one

is a mystery of godliness,' 1 Tim. iii. 16; the other, a mystery of

iniquity.' The design of the mystery of godliness is to recover men

from the devil, the world, and the flesh, unto God; the other, to

seduce men from God to the devil, the world, and the flesh again; and

that by corrupting the former mystery, or the most excellent

institution that ever the world was acquainted with for the ennobling

and refining man's nature; so that Christ's religion is turned against

himself, to lull men's consciences asleep, whilst they gratify the

lusts of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, or live in pride of life.

The devil is gratified by all sin, but especially he is eidolochare`s,

as Synesius calleth him; one that delighteth in idols, as knowing this

is the best way to make men brutish, or to live in an oblivion or

neglect of God; for an idol is a teacher of lies,' Hab. ii. 18, doth

imprint upon the mind carnal and false conceptions of a deity.

4. To confirm us in the truth of the Christian faith, when we see the

prophecies of it expressly fulfilled; for this is the Lord's direction

to know a true prophet, Deut. xviii. 22, if the thing come to pass, and

the event doth punctually answer the prediction; but when a prophet

speaketh in the name of the Lord, and the thing follow not, nor come to

pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken. Now, the

apostles did not only teach the church the doctrine of Christianity,

but by a prophetic spirit and divine revelation foretold things to

come; and among these, the great thing which is to happen and come to

pass before Christ's second coining is Antichrist, or the appearing of

the man of sin. Therefore, that we may not doubt of what is past, nor

suspect what is further to come, it is good to study these prophecies,

and know they are to be fulfilled in their time, that we may say that

God, who hath kept touch with the world hitherto in all the predictions

of the word, will not fail at last.

Use 1. To reprove them that think this is a curious point not to be

searched into. Why then did God reveal it, and that so often by St

Paul, by St John, in so many prophetical representations of it? Surely

it is not curiosity to search into things revealed, but to intrude

ourselves into things hidden, and which God hath put under a veil of

secrecy. It is true men must know their measure, and not attempt to run

before they can go, and venture upon obscure points before well versed

in plain; and it is true, in more abstruse points, men must not rashly

define, but soberly and modestly inquire, and compare predictions with

plain events; this is no way culpable.

2. To reprove those that are so impatient of giving a little attendance

to such doctrines for a while, and think at least matter more

profitable should be insisted on; they are persuaded enough already. It

is well if it be so; but those that stand should take heed lest they

fall; and presumptuous confidence soonest giveth out, and forsaketh

Christ. I would but propound this argument to them: If it were

profitable for them that were to go out of the body long before

Antichrist was revealed to be taught these things again and again, and

they be charged to keep these things in remembrance, certainly it is

more profitable for others that live at the time when these things are

in being, and the temptation is at the next door, ready to break in

upon them. Surely it is profitable to discover Antichrist, to reduce

those that are gone astray, much more to prevent a revolt, that we may

not return to this bondage after a deliverance from it.

Secondly, I come to consider the time of his appearing, and there to

observe three things:--

I. That Antichrist was not then revealed because there was an

impediment hindering his revelation: 'and now ye know what withholdeth

that he might be revealed in his time,' that is, what keeps him back

for the present, until the time that God had prefixed. The apostle doth

not expressly mention what this to` kate'chon or impeachment [1] was,

either because he thought it enough to appeal to their memory and

knowledge--now ye know what withholdeth; there was no need of repeating

that which was formerly mentioned, they sufficiently knew; or partly

because he would not give the heathen an occasion of raising a

persecution against the Christians, if they should come to understand

that one professing himself a Christian should erect a throne for

himself at Rome, and that the empire should be taken away to make way

for him. The Romans were very jealous, o'ti basilei'an

onoma'zomen--because they talked of these innocent notions, the kingdom

of Christ and the kingdom of heaven; they were apt to accuse them

laesae majestatis, as if they would with open force and violence attack

or assault the empire; therefore the apostle had spoken that which he

thought not fit to write in an epistle; or, lastly, he leaveth it in

this obscurity because all prophecies were but darkly uttered, that

their accomplishment be not hindered, since it is the will of God that

such events shall fall out in the world, and out of indulgence to his

people he is pleased to foretell this. It is not meet that the

prediction should either be too clear or too dark; if too clear, the

event would not follow, nor God's government of the world be carried in

such a way as might suit with the liberty of mankind; if too dark, the

comfort and caution of God's people would not be sufficiently provided

for.

But what was this impediment? The ancients generally determined it to

be the Roman empire; for so Tertullian--the empire of Rome, which was

to be divided into ten kingdoms; and reason showeth it, because the man

of sin could not rise to his greatness as long as the Roman empire

stood. Why? Because he that was to exalt himself above all that is

called God, and above all that is august, could not bring his designs

to pass as long as the Roman empire retained its majesty; but when once

that was eclipsed and removed, then he was to be revealed in his time:

all things have their time, and so the man of sin. Well, then, it was

the Roman empire that stayed the manifestation of Antichrist, he being

to build his tyranny on the ruins and wreck thereof; and therefore the

primitive Christians prayed pro mora finis, that it would please God to

defer the fall of this empire, fearing worse things upon the

dissolution thereof.

Now this impediment showeth both the time and place of Antichrist; and

time and place, next to the nature and state of things, are the best

circumstances to discover him. (1.) The place: Antichrist's seat and

throne was to be there, where the seat of the Roman empire was; and St

John telleth us it was situated on the city that had seven hills: Rev.

xvii. 9, The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman

sitteth;' and that is Rome, which is famously taken notice of to be

seated on seven hills or mountains. Now Antichrist had not room as long

as the seat was filled with the Roman emperor, for ^this seat could not

be filled with two imperial powers at once, especially with such a

tyrannical power as that of Antichrist is, exalting itself not only

above kings and kingdoms, but pan se'basma, the august state of the

emperors themselves; there was no exalting this chair, till there was a

removal of the throne; while the Roman emperor possessed Rome, the seat

was full, and till it was void it could riot be the seat of Antichrist.

(2.) The next circumstance is the time when the impediment is taken

away, when the Roman empire is so weakened and removed from Rome that

this power may grow up; and that was when the Roman empire was divided

into ten kingdoms, as Tertullian saith, and is agree able enough with

the prophecy of St John, Rev. xvii. 12, And the ten horns which thou

sawest are ten kings, which have not received their kingdoms as yet,

but receive power as kings one hour with the beast;' that is, near that

time when the Roman empire was broken and divided, which began near 600

years after Christ's birth.

II. The next observation is, that though he was not revealed in the

apostle's days, yet the mystery of iniquity did begin to work, but

secretly; for it is said, ver. 7, beginning, The mystery of iniquity

doth already work.' This is given as a reason why it would break out

sooner; but it was kept back; there was something a-brewing that would

make way for Antichrist, some disposition of the matter, some

propensity thereunto, something begun, which would afterwards show

itself more eminently in the great Antichrist.

Here two things must be explained:--

1. What is the mystery of iniquity.

2. How it began to work in the apostle's days.

1. What is the mystery of iniquity? I answer--The design of usurping

Christ's kingdom, and his dignities and prerogatives over the church,

to countenance the kingdom of sin and darkness, under the mask of piety

and religion. Surely it is something quite contrary to the gospel,

which is the mystery of godliness,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. So that this

mystery is such a course and state design as doth frustrate the true

end and purpose of the gospel, and yet carried on under a pretence of

advancing and promoting it. So that to state it we must consider:--

[1.] The mystery of godliness.

[2.] The mystery of ungodliness or iniquity.

[1.] The mystery of godliness is known by the ends of God in the

gospel, and the way he took to promote those ends.

(1.) The end of the gospel is to recover man out of a carnal, ungodly

state, into a state of holiness and reconciliation with God. (1.) The

terminus a quo:--men are carnal, tin godly. (1st.) Carnal. When man

fell from God, he fell to himself; self interposed as the next heir,

and that self was not the soul, but the flesh. Many wrong their souls,

but no man ever yet hated his own flesh; and therefore men would rule

themselves, and please themselves according to their fleshly appetite

and fancy: John iii. 6, That which is born of the flesh is flesh,' and

therefore love the pleasures, honours, and profits of the world, as the

necessary provision to satisfy the desires of the flesh; and whosoever

live thus they live in a carnal state, as all do, till grace renew

them, Rom. viii 5. But this carnal estate doth break forth and bewray

itself in various ways of sinning: Titus iii. 3, For we ourselves also

were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and

pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.'

All are not fornicators, drunkards, persecutors, nor live in the same

way of sinning; but all are turned from God to the world, and have a

carnal mind, which is enmity to God.' Rom. viii. 7. (2dly.) The next

word is ungodly. Men thus constituted live either in a denial of God:

Ps. xiv. 1, The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God'--or a

neglect of God: Eph. ii. 12, Without God in the world;' without any

acknowledgment or worship of him: Ps. ix. 17, The wicked shall be

turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;'--or if not

deprived of all sense of a deity, they worship false gods, as those,

Acts xiv. 12, 13, the men of Lycaonia, that called Barnabas, Jupiter,

and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker, and would have

sacrificed to them; and the apostle saith to the Galatians, Gal. iv. 8,

When ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no

gods;' they worshipped plurality of false gods; and though the wise men

of the Gentiles had some confused knowledge of the true God, Rom. i.

19-21, yet they glorified him not as God, but committed idolatry by

setting up a false medium of worship, an idol, which begot a brutish

conception of God in their mind; so that a false religion is so far

from showing a remedy of corrupt nature that it is a great part of the

disease itself. (2.) The terminus ad quem, into a state of holiness and

reconciliation with God, in whom man alone can be happy. (1st.) For

holiness and obedience to God. The great design of the Christian

religion is to bring us back to God again. First, As we are carnal, by

the denial of fleshly and worldly lusts: Titus ii. 12, The grace of God

that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that,

denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,' &c.; 1 Peter ii. 11, Dearly

beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshy

lusts that war against the soul;' and Gal. v. 24, They that are

Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.'

Secondly, As we are ungodly, to bring us to the knowledge, love,

worship, and obedience of the true God: Acts xiv. 15, We pray ye that

you should turn from these vanities to the living God, that hath made

heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things therein;' and to seek

after the Lord, from whom we have life, breath, and all things, Acts

xvii. 25-28; 1 Thes. i. 9, How ye turned from idols to serve the living

and true God.' (2dly.) Reconciliation with God, that we might have

commerce with him for the present, and live for ever with him

hereafter: 2 Cor. v. 19, God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto

himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed

unto us the word of reconciliation;' 1 Peter i. 18, Ye are not redeemed

with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain

conversation,' &c.; Heb. vii. 25, He is able to save unto the uttermost

all that come unto God through him;' that whereas before they were

alienated from the life of God, they might live in his love, and in the

expectation of being admitted into his blessed presence, that they may

see him as he is, and be like him, 1 John iii. 2.

(2.) The way it took to obtain these ends, how God may be satisfied,

man renewed and changed, God pacified by the sacrifice, merit, and

intercession of Christ Jesus, who came in our flesh and nature, not

only to acquaint us with the will of God and the unseen things of

another world, but to suffer an accursed death for our sins; therefore

the mystery of godliness is chiefly seen in God manifested in our

flesh,' 1 Tim. iii. 16; and man must be renewed and changed, for our

misery showeth what is needful to our remedy and recovery: that we be

not only pardoned but sanctified, if ever we will be saved and

glorified; for till men have new and holy hearts they can never see

God: Heb. xii. 14, Without holiness it is impossible to see God.' Mat.

v. 8, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' &c.; nor

for the present love him and delight in him, nor take him for their

chief happiness. As none but Christ can satisfy justice and reconcile

such a rebel to God, so none but Christ's Spirit can sanctify and renew

our souls that we may live in obedience to him: 1 Cor. vi. 11, Such

were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are

justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'

This is the mystery of godliness.

[2.] Now, for the mystery of ungodliness or iniquity: that is a quite

opposite state, but carried on plausibly, and with seeming respect to

the mystery which it opposeth. To know it, take these considerations:--

(1.) Where the carnal life is had in request and honour, there

certainly is the mystery of iniquity to be found, whatever pretences be

put upon it. Now, the carnal life is there had in request and

honour,--(1.) Where all is referred to worldly gain and profit, and the

whole frame of the religion tendeth that way; for certainly they are

enemies to the cross of Christ whose god is their belly, and who mind

earthly things,' Phil. iii. 19. Now pardons, indulgences, purgatory,

shrines of saints, what do they all tend unto but to make a merchandise

of religion? It was an old byword, Omnia Romae venalia--all things may

be bought at Rome, even heaven and God himself, &c. And these things

are used, not only to open the people's mouths in prayer, but their

hands in oblations and offerings. The complexion of their religion is

but a gainful trade. But the papal exactions and traffickings have been

so much and so loudly insisted upon, and the evil runneth out into so

many branches, that I shall forbear. (2.) Where temporal greatness is

looked upon as the main prop of their religion. The king's daughter is

glorious within,' rich in gifts and graces, Ps. xlv. 13; Ps. xciii. 5,

Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever;' but the false church is

known by pomp and external splendour. It is easy to discern the true

ministers of Christ from the false; the true are known by being much in

labours, much in afflictions: 2 Cor. vi. 4-6, In all things approving

ourselves the ministers of God, in much patience, afflictions,

necessities, distresses, in labours and watchings, and fastings; by

pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy

Ghost, by love unfeigned,' &c.; whereas the false ministers are known

by the life of pomp and ease. The rule is plain, because self-denial is

one of the great lessons of Christianity, and self-seeking the bane of

it: therefore where men professedly seek the greatness of the world,

they serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies.

(2.) Where men are turned from God to idols, though it be not the

demons of the Gentiles, but saints, as mediators of intercession, there

godliness is destroyed and the mystery of iniquity set up; for the

great drift of the Christian religion is to bring us to God, through

Christ. So the great whore--(which imports a breach of the fundamental

article of the covenant, Thou shalt have no other gods but me), it is

said, Rev. xvii. 5, Upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery,

Babylon, the mother of fornications and abominations upon

earth,'--debaucheth nations with her idolatry, and so seduceth from God

to the worship of the creature, that the great intent of the gospel is

lost.

(3.) Wherever power is usurped in Christ's name, and carried on under

the pretence of his authority, to the oppressing of Christ's sincere

worshippers, who hate the carnal life, and would by all means keep

themselves from idols, or bowing and worshipping before images, but

excel in unquestionable duties, there is the mystery of iniquity; for

the beast, that hath a mouth like a dragon, pusheth with the horns of a

lamb, Rev. xiii. 11. The violence and persecution against the sincere,

pure worshippers of Christ is nothing else but the mystery of iniquity,

the enmity of the carnal seed against the holy seed, or the seed of the

serpent against the seed of the woman disguised.

(4.) Where there is a lessening of the merits of Christ and his

satisfaction, as if it were not sufficient for the expiation of sin

without penal satisfactions of our own, there is the mystery of

iniquity: For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are

sanctified.' Heb. x. 14.

(5.) Where the new nature is little thought of, and all religion is

made to consist in some external rites and adorations or indifferences,

there the reducing of man to God is much hindered, and Christianity is

adulterated, and the religion that designedly countenanceth these

things is but the mystery of iniquity--To worship God, as the Papists

do, with images, agnus dei's, crucifixes, crossings, spittle, oil,

candles, holy water, kissing the pix, dropping beads, praying to the

Virgin Mary and other saints, repeating over the name Jesus five times

in a breath, repeating such and such sentences so often, praying to God

in an unknown tongue, and saying to him they know not what, adoring the

consecrated bread as no bread, but the very flesh of Christ himself,

fasting by feasting upon fish instead of flesh, choosing a tutelary

saint whose name they will invocate, offering sacrifices for quick and

dead, praying for souls in purgatory, purchasing indulgences for their

deliverance, carrying the bones and other relics of saints, going in

pilgrimage to shrines or images, or offering before them, with a

multitude more of such trashy devotions, whereby they greatly dishonour

God and obstruct the motions of the heavenly life, yea, quite kill it;

for instead of the power and life of grace, there are introduced

beggarly rudiments or ritual observances in indifferent things, and

vain traditions by which Christian liberty is restrained, and these

pressed with as much severity as unquestionable duties established by

God's known law for the renewing and reforming mankind. We are to stand

fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be

entangled again with the yoke of bondage.' Gal. v. 1; Col. ii. 16, Let

no man judge you in meat or drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of

the new moons, or of a sabbath-day.' These things are left to

arbitrament, to abstain or use them for edification. That physician may

be borne with who doth only burden the sick with some needless

prescriptions, if faithful in other things; but if he should tire out

the patient with prescriptions which are not only altogether needless,

but troublesome, costly, and nauseous, and doth extinguish and choke

true religion by thousands of things indifferent, making our bondage

worse than the Jews', this is the mystery of iniquity,--to cheat us of

the power of godliness by the show of it, burdening of men with

unnecessary observances.

2. How did this work in the apostle's time? Something there was then

which did give an advantage to Antichrist, and laid the foundation of

his kingdom, and did dispose men's minds to an apostasy from pure

Christianity; as--

[1.] Partly the idolising of pastors by an excess of reverence, such as

was prejudicial to the interests of the gospel, setting them up as

heads of factions: 1 Cor. i. 12, Now this I say, that every one of you

saith, I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos, and I of Cephas;' 1 Cor. iii.

22, Glory not in men, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,' &c. This in

time bred tyranny and slavery in the church.

[2.] The ambition of the pastors themselves, and the spirit of

contention for rule and precedency: Acts xx. 29, 30, There shall arise

among you ravening wolves, speaking perverse things, to draw disciples

after them;' which within a little time began to affect not only a

primacy of order, but of jurisdiction and authority; so that then

Antichrist did not exist in his proper person, but in spirit and

predecessors.

[3.] The errors then set afoot corrupted the simplicity of the gospel:

1 John ii. 18, Now there are many antichrists;' 1 John iv. 3, Every

spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is

not of God; and this is the spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard

it should come, and even now already is it in the world.' The spirit of

Antichrist is even now in the world; there was a spirit then working in

the church to introduce this mystery of iniquity, only the seat was not

empty, but filled by another; the seeds of this mystery were sown in

ambition, avarice, haughtiness of teachers, and their carnal and

corrupt doctrines.

[4.] Some kept their Jewish, others their Gentile customs, so that the

Christian religion was secretly tainted and mingled with the seeds of

heathenism and Judaism, which afterwards produced the great apostasy.

Paul, in all his epistles, complaineth of the Judaising brethren, and

seeks to reduce them to the simplicity of the gospel. In the

Corinthians he complaineth of their resort to idol temples, their

communion in idol-worship: 1 Cor. x. 14, Wherefore, my dearly be loved,

flee from idolatry;' and ver. 20, But I say, that the things which the

Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils and not to God, and I would

not that ye should have fellowship with devils,' and 2 Cor. vi. 16. The

worship of angels, interdiction of certain meats, then will-worship,

and shows of humility: Col. ii. 16, Let no man judge you in meat and

drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the

sabbath-days;' and ver. 18, Let no man beguile you of your reward in a

voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those

things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up with his fleshly mind;'

and vers. 22, 23, Why are ye subject to ordinances after the

commandments and doctrines of men? which things have indeed a show of

wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body.'

Contempt of magistracy: 2 Peter ii. 10, But chiefly them that walk

after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government;

presumptuous are they, self-willed, and are not afraid to speak evil of

dignities.' Thus you see how it began to work, and that the devil from

the beginning had sown these tares.

But was it, then, in the apostle's time that the mystery of iniquity

did begin to work? Then--

1. We see what need we have to withstand the beginnings, and not give

way to a further encroachment on the church of God; and--

2. That the word of God should dwell richly in us, for we have to deal

with mystical iniquity.

III. Proposition: That when that impediment shall be removed, then

Antichrist shall be revealed; only he that now letteth will let till he

be taken out of the way. Where observe--

1. It was before, to` kate'chon, that which letteth; now it is o

kate'chon, he that letteth the empire and the emperor. And mark, a long

succession of empires is called o kate'chon: why not then a long

succession of popes, the man of sin, the son of perdition?

2. He that now letteth will let. Antichrist was but in fieri, and that

secretly and in a mystery; there was desire of rule, some superstitious

and false doctrines, some mixture of human inventions, borrowed both

from Jewish and heathenish rites, mingled with the worship of God, some

secret rising of antichristian dominion, some playing at lesser game,

as Victor took upon him to excommunicate the Eastern churches for the

matter of Easter. But before this obstacle was removed, he could not

fully appear and invade the empire of God and men till the emperor was

removed out of that city: while the heathen emperors prevailed, there

was no place for churchmen's ambition; their times were times of

persecution, and it is not persecution, but peace and plenty, that

breedeth corruption in the churches.

3. He, that is, the emperor, must be taken out of the way, that is,

either by the removal of his person and throne from the city of Rome,

or till the Roman empire be ruined, as it was in the East by the Turk,

in the West by the incursions of many barbarous nations, parting it

into ten kingdoms, and then by the translation of the empire to Charles

the Great.

Well, then, note three things for the time of Antichrist:--

1. Before the obstacle was removed he could not appear.

2. When this obstacle was removed, presently he appeared.

3. The degrees of the falling of the one are the degrees of the

exaltation and establishment of the other, for Antichrist did grow up

upon it.

But they say, the Roman empire is not quite fallen, there being a Roman

emperor still. But (1.) the present empire is but inane nomen, or umbra

imperii--a mere name, or a shadow of the empire. (2.) He that then let,

in St Paul's time, was the succession of the Roman emperors, but this

is the German empire; now, if the Roman empire were the only impediment

(the apostle useth the word mo'non, therefore as soon as that should be

removed, Antichrist would infallibly be revealed. (3.) Though this

empire be not abolished, but removed out of Rome, it is enough to make

good Paul's prophecy. Dixit apostolus, imperium esse de medio

tollendum, non prorsus delendum.--(Whitaker.) Well, then, since the

seat is left void, either the prophecy is riot accomplished at the

time, or else the Pope is Antichrist, for the nations are long since

fallen away from the Roman empire, and the emperor hath no power nor

authority at Rome.

Use. To give a new note to discover and descry the man of sin.

Certainly Antichrist is already revealed, and we may find him some

where. I prove it by two arguments:--(1.) The mystery began to work in

the apostle's days; therefore surely it is completed by this time, and

not reserved to a short space of time a little before Christ's coming

to judgment; (2.) This spiritual usurped power was to break forth upon

the fall of the empire; accordingly so it did, though it grew to its

monstrous excess and height by degrees, as to ecclesiastical dominion,

in Boniface III., who obtained from Phocas the title of universal

bishop; whereas Gregory the Great called John of Constantinople the

forerunner of Antichrist for arrogating the same title.

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[1] Qu. impediment'?--ED.

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SERMON VI.

And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume

with the breath of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his

coming.--2 Thes. II. 8.

THESE words contain both the rise and ruin of Antichrist, his

revelation and destruction.

1. As to his revelation, there are two things:--

[1.] The title given to Antichrist: ho anomos, the wicked.

[2.] His appearing in the world upon the taking away the impediment:

shall be revealed.

2. As to his ruin, three things are observable:--

[1.] The progress of his destruction, which is here considered as

begun, or as consummated.

(1.) A diminishing of antichristianism: whom the Lord shall consume.

(2.) The finishing thereof, in the word destroy.

[2.] The author, the Lord.

[3.] The means.

(1.) God's word, called his breath, or the Spirit of his mouth.

(2.) The brightness of his coming, namely, when he shall come to judge

the world in the glory of the Father.

First, Of the rising of Antichrist: And then shall that wicked be

revealed.'

1. The title given to Antichrist, ho anomos, that lawless one, or son

of Belial. It is the property of Antichrist to boast himself to be

above all laws, and to be judged by no power upon earth; for therein he

resembleth Antiochus, of whom it is said, He shall do according to his

own will,' Dan. xi. 36. Now if this be one of his characters, it will

not be hard to find him out; for who is that infallible judge that

taketh upon him to decide all controversies, and judgeth all things,

and is judged of no man? and whosoever doth but mutter against his

decrees and delusions, if a private person, he is to be destroyed with

fire and sword; if a prince, to be excommunicated, deposed, and his

subjects freed from all allegiance to him? Who is he that taketh upon

him, with faculties, licenses, and pardons, to dispense with the law of

God, and to allow open and notorious sins? Who is he that by his own

writers is said to be Solutus omni lege humana, freed from all human

law (Hostiensis), Nec ullo jure humano ligari potest, that hath a

paramount authority to all laws, that he cannot be bound by them,

whether they concern parricide, the murder of princes; or perjury, the

obligation of oaths; or matrimony, the bond of conjugal relations? But

one expressly saith, that he is supra jus, contra jus, extra jus, above

law, against law, and without law; a plain description of the lawless

one in the text; and another, not without some spice of blasphemy, Apud

Deum et Papam sufficit pro ratlone voluntas, God and the Pope have

their will for a law. Lastly, Who is he that hath brought into the

church the great impiety of worshipping of God by images, and the

worship of the saints and angels, with a worship which is only due to

God? which is the great anomi'a, the lawlessness, which the pure

Christian rule condemneth and brandeth for such. If there be not such a

power extant in the Christian world, then I confess we are yet to seek

for Antichrist; but if there be, none so wilfully blind as they that

cannot see wood for trees, and know not where to fix this character.

2. His revelation: Then shall that wicked be revealed.' The word

revealed noteth two things:--

[1.] His appearance in the world.

[2.] God's discovery of him.

[1.] Then he shall be revealed beareth this sense, He shall be in the

world, and begin to lift up his head as soon as the Roman emperor and

empire shall be removed; this lawless one shall begin to discover

himself and set up his kingdom.

Now to understand this, consider this:--

(1.) The most learned interpreters, both ancient and modern, agree in

this, that the impediment was the Roman empire, as we showed before;

and therefore as the Roman empire and emperor were removed out of the

way, Antichrist was to be revealed, or the predictions of the scripture

are false.

(2.) Things of great moment cannot be removed nor established in a

minute. The removing of the Roman empire was not all at once, nor the

rising of the pontificate, but by degrees the seat began to be made

void. When Constantine began to remove the imperial throne to

Byzantium, though the majesty of the empire continued still at Rome,

yet this was a step to the removing of the impediment, for by that

means the popes grew in greatness; but as the emperor's authority was

lessened, so grew that of the popes, who still encroached to themselves

more and more power, and that to promote the apostasy and derogation

from the pure Christian religion. But as soon as he arose, he came not

to the height of his power, either ecclesiastical or temporal, nor

shall he presently decay.

(3.) To state the progress of antichristian tyranny is not for a

sermon, it filleth whole books; but thus in short. About the year 600.

or in that century, their ecclesiastical power began to be raised, when

the majesty of the empire was low and weak in Italy, and therefore then

was Antichrist advanced a good step. When John of Constantinople had

usurped the title of universal bishop, Gregory the Great saith, Rex

superbiae prope adest--the king of pride is near; et sacerdotum

exercitus ei praeparatur--an army of priests is prepared to serve him

as their general; this he--(fidenter dico, I speak confidently) and

within six years or thereabouts Phocas conferred on Pope Boniface the

same title, to ingratiate himself with the people of that part of the

empire, after the murder of his lord and master. And then many

superstitions were gotten into the church; as, about the year 688, the

Pope obtained of the emperor the Pantheon, or temple of all-devils, and

consecrated the same to the Virgin Mary, and all saints. The temporal

monarchy was long in hatching, but yet the beginning of this mystery

soon bewrayed itself. In the beginning of the seventh century,

Constantine the Pope would have his foot kissed, like another

Diocletian, and in defence of image-worship he openly resisted

Philippicus, the Emperor of Greece, and encouraged Justine and

Anastasius, tyrants and murderers, who submitted themselves to him with

adoration. Rebellion and idolatry have been ever continued since. In

the year 720, or thereabouts, Gregory the Second and Third continued

the same idolatry and rebellion, and caused all Italy to withdraw their

obedience from the Emperor Leo, because he had commanded all images to

be broken and burnt, and for the same cause excommunicated him, and

took to himself the Coctian Alps as the gift of the Lombards. In the

same century, 749, Zachary encourageth and assisteth Pepin to depose

his master Childeric, king of France, and to take upon him that

kingdom. Afterward Adrian took upon him to translate the empire of the

Greeks to the Latins; and ever since deposed emperors and made broils

in kingdoms.

[2.] God's discovery of him to the world; that is, when Antichrist was

not only extant, but impleaded as such; and this also was by degrees,

God raising up in every age witnesses against the tyranny and

usurpations of Rome, as the place, and the Pope, the person, as,

considered in his succession, claiming the same power. Five hundred

years before Luther, Peter Bruis began, and Henry his scholar succeeded

him, and both of them succeeded by the Waldenses and Albigenses; then

Wicliffe, the Bohemians, who have all pleaded and proved that the Pope

was the very Antichrist; then Savonarola in Italy preached this boldly.

In the fifteenth century, about 1500, there were some remainder of the

Albigenses about the Alps, some few relics of the Hussites and

Cahxtines in Bohemia, so few and so ignorant that they had neither

learning nor ability to oppose this potent tyranny. Then God raised up

Luther, and many other worthies to assault the idolatry, tyranny, and

errors of the church of Rome; and it is reported in history, that the

angel on the top of the Tower St Angelo was beaten down by a

thunderbolt; and in the very day and in the church where Pope Leo the

Tenth at Rome had created thirty-one cardinals, a sudden tempest dashed

the keys out of the hands of the image of St Peter, showing God would

begin to take away their power.

Use. If God hath revealed Antichrist, let no man shut his eyes, but lei

him be shunned, forsaken, and abhorred. When Christ was to come into

the world, it was a day of rumours; some sent to John Baptist, whether

he were the Christ, others cried up false Christs and impostors; but

the people were alarmed with a general expectation. So when Antichrist

was to be revealed, it was a day of rumours; just about the time there

was a great expectation: some pitched it here, some there, until the

pit was discovered to the church, and the snare laid open. And now to

run wilfully into these errors, how damnable is it! If Papists cleave

to him, let not Protestants fall to him; to continue Papists is

dangerous, for they favour Antichrist, and serve Antichrist; but to

turn Papists is more dangerous, for this is a down right revolt from

Christ to Antichrist. And how God may in mercy dispense with errors

imbibed in our education we know not; but to turn our back on the

truth, wherein we have been educated and instructed, maketh it more

dangerous to our salvation.

Secondly, We now come to the more comfortable part, his ruin; where

note:--

I. In the general, that the apostle, as soon as he had showed his rise,

he presently foretelleth his ruin, to support the hearts of the

faithful, though he hath yet more things to speak concerning his

discovery, ver. 9. I cannot let this pass without an observation,

Doct. That a spiritual eye can discern the ruin of wicked instruments,

even in their rise and reign: Job v. 3, I have seen the foolish taking

root, and presently I cursed his habitation.' By the foolish, is meant

the wicked; by their taking root, their seeking to fix and settle

themselves in their worldly prosperity; I presently, that is, without

any great deliberation, which in this matter needeth not, cursed their

habitation, not as desiring, but as foreseeing and foretelling. I

pronounced them accursed, or to be in a cursed condition; when carnal

men seek to root and establish themselves upon earth, to a spiritual

eye, their best estate is miserable and detestable. When we see their

rise, we may foretell their fall.

REASONS.

1. Their faith occasions such a reflection, which is the evidence of

things not seen.' Heb. xi. 1. They look not at things as at present

they seem to shortsighted men, or as they relish to the flesh, but as

they appear, and will be judged of at last; their ruin is as present

before them as their rise; present time is quickly past. But now

without faith this cannot be: 2 Peter i. 9, He that lacketh these

things is blind and cannot see afar off,' muopa'zon, but are dazzled

with present splendour, and so miscarry.

2. This faith is necessary:--(1.) Partly to prevent scandal at the

prosperity of an ungodly party who obey not the gospel, but corrupt and

pervert it to their worldly ends. David's steps were even gone when he

saw the prosperity of the wicked, till he went into the sanctuary and

understood their end, Ps. lxxiii. 17; that settled his heart, to

consider what end these men were appointed unto. How prosperous soever

they seem to be for the present, yet the end must put the difference;

there they see the wicked in the height of their prosperity, as ready

to be cut down and withered. (2.) To prevent apostasy. They choose the

better part that choose the holiness and patience of the saints: 2 Cor.

iv. 18, While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the

things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal,

but the things which are not seen are eternal.' But things present

carry away our hearts, because we have so dim and doubtful a sight of

things to come; whereas, if we did look upon them and near, they would

fortify us against temptations: Prov. 32. Envy thou not the oppressor,

and choose none of his ways; for the froward is abomination to the

Lord, but his secret is with the righteous.'

II. More particularly the ruin of Antichrist is set forth:--

1. Partly by the manner of his fall. It is represented both as begun

and finished: he shall be consumed, he shall be destroyed; the one

noteth a lingering delay, the other an utter perdition, that he shall

be finally rooted out.

First, Consumed; to consume is to waste and melt away by little and

little.

Doct. Antichrist is not presently to be destroyed, but to waste away by

a lingering consumption; as his rising was by little and little, so is

his fall; he loseth his authority in Christendom by degrees.

Now the reasons may be these:--

1. God hath a ministry and use for him and the abettors of his kingdom,

as he hath a use for the devil himself, therefore permitteth him some

limited power; but yet he holdeth him in the chains of his invincible

providence. So hath he a use for the devil's eldest son, for

Antichrist, and antichristian adversaries, which, if their power were

wholly gone, could not be performed; as--

[1.] To scourge his people for their sins, as their contempt of the

gospel, and wantonness under the several privileges which they enjoy by

it. God will not want a rod to scourge his disobedient children; as,

Isa. x. 5, he calleth the Assyrian the rod of his anger,' the

instrument that he maketh use of to punish those with whom he is angry.

And again, the staff of his indignation,'--the staff is a heavier and

sorer instrument of correction than a rod. What the Assyrian was to the

Jews, that Antichrist is to professing Christians. God useth him till

he have sufficiently chastised his children, and then he will cast this

rod into the fire. Heathens and Turks are at a distance from us: our

miseries will come from antichristianism, who are nearer at hand to

execute the Lord's vengeance when we grow wanton.

[2.] To try his people, for he expects a tried obedience; what

Christianity we will accept and choose--that calculated for this world,

or that which is calculated for the next. Antichristianism, in all the

branches of it, is a sort of religion suited to worldly interests: 1

John iv. 5, They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world,

and the world heareth them;' but true Christianity is for the kingdom

of heaven: 1 Cor. ii. 12, Now we have received, not the spirit of the

world, but the spirit which is of God.' Therefore God will try who are

the formal and pretended Christians, that serve their own bellies, and

the sincere Christians, who look to an unseen world, and are willing to

hazard their own interests out of their fidelity to Christ; therefore,

when the saints under the altar groaned: Rev. vi. 10, How long, Lord,

holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the

earth?' the answer given was, ver. 11, that they should rest for a

season until their fellow-servants, and also their brethren that should

be killed, as they were, should be fulfilled.' In every age God will

have his witnesses, who by their faith and patience, and not loving

their lives to the death, should promote the Lamb's kingdom before they

receive their crown; and therefore, though Antichrist be consumed more

and more, yet he hath so many abettors of his kingdom left as may try

the faith and patience of the saints.

[3.] To cure our divisions. Nazianzen called the enemies kuinoi`

diallaktai`, the common reconcilers. The dog is let loose to make the

sheep flock together. We are hardened in our strifes against each other

till a common danger unite us. It is noted that when there was a strife

between the herdsmen of Abraham's cattle and Lot's cattle, the

Canaanite and Perizzite were yet in the land, Gen. xiii. 7. God will

unite those in common sufferings whose stubborn humours will not suffer

them to meet upon other terms.

[4.] To keep up a remembrance of his mercies: Ps. lix. 11, Slay them

not, lest my people forget; scatter them by thy power, and bring them

down, O Lord, our shield.' God maketh us sensible of the care he hath

over us, not by the utter destruction of the enemies of his people, but

by lingering judgments on them, which affect us more than if they were

cut off suddenly.

2. Many other reasons may be given, because it serveth the beauty and

harmony of his providence to cut them off in their time, and by such

means as he hath appointed, and in such a way as shall most conduce

unto his glory. But I pass them by; we must tarry his leisure, and not

question his truth and care over us, and be content that our faith and

patience be exercised. If God should bring a sudden destruction upon a

power and tyranny so supported by the combined interests of the world,

we were not able to bear it. Thorns serve for a fence to a garden of

roses. God would not destroy the Canaanites at once, lest the beasts of

the field should increase upon them, Deut. vii. 22; nor all abettors of

antichristianism, lest his people should lie open to such evils as they

cannot bear.

[1.] Observe this consumption, how it is accomplished. If we find

Antichrist risen, discovered, and consumed, why should we be in doubt

any longer? The pomp and height was much about 1500 years after Christ;

what a consumption hath happened since, by the reviving religion and

learning, the Christian world should with thankfulness take notice of,

by the falling of Germany, England, France, and Hungary in a great

part, together with Denmark, Sweden, Poland, and other countries; and

by what means hath this been but by the Spirit of his mouth? It is

profitable to know Antichrist by his rise and description; but it is

comfortable to know him by his discovery and consumption, and God's

blessing such unlikely means at the beginning to such a wonderful

effect. When Luther first appeared, the bishop of Strasburg told him,

Abi in coelum, mi frater, et dic, miserere nostri. But God hath done

great things for us too: when he first turned the captivity of his

churches, we were like unto those that dream.

[2.] Caution. Antichrist is consumed, but he is not yet dead. What

strength he may recover before his last destruction, God knoweth.

Popery after it was cast out, hath re-entered Bohemia and Austria, and

the emperor's hereditary countries; and what havoc hath been made of

the evangelical churches, the book of Caraffa, the bishop and legate of

the Pope, called Germania sacra restaurata, showeth, wherein many

notable things concerning their artifices to replant Popery are set

down. As to England, some hope his consumption is not desperate, and

many fear that Popery may recover again, unless God in mercy prevent

it. We know not what is in the womb of providence, or how far the

prerogative of free grace may interpose in our behalf--whether England

shall be made a theatre of mercy once more, or the seat of idolatry,

and superstition, and blood. But though we do not know what God hath

determined, yet we may soon know what England hath deserved. And that

is enough to quicken us to watch fulness and prayer, and expectation,

and serious preparation for the day of evil; and by these things, if it

cometh to pass, it will do us no harm.

(1.) When God hath laid in great store of comforts against sufferings,

usually there is a time of expense to lay them out again. Christ warned

his hearers to make use of the light, because of the darkness coming

upon them, John xii. 35, 36. You never knew the gospel powerfully

preached, but trials came: Heb. x. 32-34, For ye had compassion of me

in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in

yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.'

Castles are first victualled, then besieged: the ministry is

consolatory mostly.

(2.) When men can neither bear our vices nor their proper remedies:

Ezek. xxiv. 13, In thy filthiness is lewdness; because I have purged

thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy

filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee;'

Hosea vii. 1, When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of

Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria, for they commit

falsehood,' &c.

(3.) When there are great differences amongst God's own people, the end

is bitter; we warp in the sunshine, will not know the way of peace.

Eusebius says, before Diocletian's persecution, philoneiki'ais

anephle'gonto--the church was torn with intestine broils, pastors

against pastors, and people against people. Ease begets pride and

wantonness, and that maketh way for contention.

(4.) When profaneness increaseth, and men do not walk becoming the

gospel, God taketh the gospel from them. The apostasy from the power

and purity of religion first made way for Antichrist, and is most

likely to let him in again.

(5.) When a people are prepared for such impressions, there is a party

formed, partly by opinions that symbolise with Popery, partly by doting

on the pomp and outside of religion, and neglecting the life and power

of it; and partly when indifferent and atheistical conceits do dispose

their minds no more to one religion than another: usually then is a

nation fitted for such a change.

Now what shall we do?

1. Watch and pray. A people well awaked will not change their religion.

The envious man sowed tares while the servants slept, Mat. xiii. 25. Be

instant with God in prayer, as all good Christians should be, when the

church is in danger; as David, Ps. lix. 13, Consume them in wrath,

consume them, that they may not be, that they may know that God rules

in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.' The consumption is at

hand: Luke xxi. 36, Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may

be counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass.'

2. Reform and repent: Rev. ii. 5, Repent, or I will remove thy

candlestick out of his place.' Our disorders must be bewailed and

redressed. There are two stumbling-blocks the idolatry of the Romish

synagogue, and the evil manners of the Reformed Churches.

3. Be fortified and established:--

[1.] By knowledge. If we have not i'dion sterugmo`n, a stedfastness of

our own, we shall fall, 2 Peter iii. 17; in a time of long peace, arms

hang up a-rusting; and so we are not prepared to resist temptations.

[2.] By grace: It is good the heart should be established by grace,'

Heb. xiii. 9. The new nature will caution men against many popish

errors: 1 John ii. 20, Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye

know all things.' A child of God hath something in his bosom that will

not permit him to hearken to Popery; the very life in us is opposite to

this dead show and mummery of trashy devotions.

Now I come to the author, with the means of consuming: The Lord shall

consume him with the spirit of his mouth.' The Lord, that is the Lord

Christ. But what is meant by the spirit of his mouth, or the breath of

his mouth, as some render it? Two things may be meant hereby--either

his providential word, or his gospel, accompanied by his Spirit.

1. His providential word; that is, when Christ saith, Let it be done,

it shall be done: Isa. xi. 4, He shall smite the earth with the rod of

his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.'

Those that are called wicked, they are also called the earth, because

they are earthly-minded, and have their portion here, and possess much

on earth, and have great power, by the advantage of which they oppress

his people. Now, to execute judgment upon them, Christ needeth no more

than the rod of his mouth, that powerful word whereby he created all

things: Ps. xxxiii. 6, By the words of the Lord were the heavens made,

and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth;' upholdeth all

things: Heb. i. 3, Upholding all things by the word of his power;' and

brings all things to nothing again: John xviii. 6, As soon as he had

said to them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground;'--one

word of his powerful providence is enough. Or, secondly--

2. It is meant of the efficacy of his gospel, as it is accompanied by

his Spirit, called The sword of the Spirit.' Eph. vi. 17. And it is

said to be quick and powerful.' Heb. iv. 12; and Rev. ii. 16, Repent,

or I will come against thee quickly, and smite thee with the sword of

my mouth.' By this word he shall confound the falsehood and cunning

practices which are carried on under this mystery of iniquity, and give

it such a deadly and incurable wound, that it shall languish before it

be utterly destroyed.

Doct. That Antichrist's destruction is by the preaching of the gospel,

and the victorious evidence of truth. It must needs be so, for his

kingdom and tyranny is upheld by darkness, which is dispelled by the

light of the truth; and, therefore, the Papists, as all other heretics,

are lucifugae scripturarum Dei--cannot endure the scriptures, deny them

to the people, and seek to make them contemptible by all the means they

can. Again, his kingdom is carried on by falsehood; and his cheats, and

impostures, and wickedness, and usurpation, and false interpretations

and delusions are discovered by the truth and simplicity of the gospel,

and so is consumed yet more and more. Lastly, Popery is a dead form of

religion, and there is not only truth in the word of God, but life; we

are not only enlightened, but quickened b^ it. and converted to God,

and made partakers of his Spirit; and these will go against their own

experience and inclination, if they should sit down with such empty,

beggarly rudiments.

But here ariseth a question, Shall Antichrist be consumed no other way

but by the spirit of his mouth? We read in the prophecy of wars, by

which the antichristian state is brought to nought. I answer--The pure

and powerful preaching of the gospel is the principal means whereby the

Spirit of the Lord consumeth Antichrist in the hearts of men; but this

is not exclusive of other means which God, in the ways of his

providence, may use to weaken his worldly interest. But we must

distinguish between the means God may use and we must use. Simply to

put down a religion by force of arms is not our way; it is not lawful

certainly to invade other nations upon the pure and sole title of

religion; but if they invade us on that account, no doubt a prince and

people so invaded may defend themselves. But when a war is commenced on

other occasions, it is the most cheerful cause to engage in. When we

war against the abettors of Antichrist, we war against an enemy whom

God will consume. Constantine warred against Licinius, his colleague,

not because an infidel, but because he persecuted the Christians,

contrary to their capitulations. Lewis XII. caused it to be disputed in

a synod at Tours, Num liceret Papae absque causa principi bellum

inferre? when it was answered, Non licet; a second question, Num tali

principi sua defensione fas sit eum invadere? Their answers were Licet,

which he undertook, and caused money to be stamped with this

inscription--Perdam Babylonem.

Use 1. We learn hence not to be discouraged in our greatest

extremities, when all temporal hopes seem to fail, and we have nothing

left us but the word of our testimony. Let us not distrust our

spiritual weapons, for they are mighty through God to bring down all

the strong holds of sin and Antichrist, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Oh, encourage

yourselves in the Lord; you have the merit of his humiliation, and the

power of his exaltation. Merit, what cannot the blood of Christ do to

fetch off men from their inveterate prejudices and superstitions? 1

Peter i. 18, We are redeemed by the blood of Christ from our vain

conversation.' So, for the power of his exaltation, there is his

Spirit. The success of his Spirit on the pouring out of the first

sermon, Acts ii. 41, fetched in 3000 souls that had imbrued their hands

in the blood of their Saviour, and were in no very devout posture at

that time. His word, that is, The rod of his strength,' Ps. cx. 2,

which hath a mighty power to convince, transform, and convert souls:

Rom. i. 16, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the

power of God unto salvation.' Then there is the power of providence;

all judgment is put into Christ's hands for the advancement of his own

kingdom, John v. 22. If all be in Christ's hands, why should you

distrust your cause, or the success of it?

2. If you would defend yourselves, and wound the enemy, be much

acquainted with the word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit.'

Eph. vi. 17; thereby you may ward off every blow of a temptation.

Surely then we should be much acquainted with this word, that it may

dwell in us richly, that we may have it ready; this is enough to make

wise the simple for all necessary duties and defence.

3. Pray heartily that the word of God may have a free course, 2 Thes.

iii. 1, and that God would send forth labourers into his harvest, Mat.

ix. 38.

Secondly, The final destruction of Antichrist: and destroy him by the

brightness of his coming. This coming is most likely to be the coming

of Christ, so often mentioned: 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, When the Lord Jesus

shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire,

taking vengeance on those that know not God, and that obey not the

gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;' 2 Thes. ii. 1-3, Now we beseech you,

brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering

together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, nor be troubled,

neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the

day of Christ is at hand.' Others conceive some notable manifestation

of his presence and power in his church; but this would engage us in

many dark prophecies, which I shall not meddle withal (intending only a

doctrinal discovery of Antichrist), as how long before his coming, by

what means. Sure I am, that at his coming, The beast and false prophet

shall be slain, and cast into the lake of fire,' Rev. xix. 20; but for

other things, I have not light enough certainly to define that the

utter ruin of Antichrist is not to be expected till the second coming

of Christ.

Use. Be not discouraged though Antichrist yet remain after all the

endeavours against him.

It is enough that antichristianism shall be finished and finally

destroyed; and for the time refer it to God. If it be not till the day

of judgment, or Christ's final conquest over all his adversaries, you

must be contented to tarry for that, as well as for other things.

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SERMON VII.

Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power,

and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of

unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love

of the truth, that they might be saved.--2 Thes. II. 9, 10.

WE have considered the titles of Antichrist, his nature and properties,

the time of his rise, and with it his ruin; now we are to consider the

way and means how he doth acquire and keep up this power in the world.

The means are--(1.) Principal; (2.) Instrumental.

1. Principal: kat' energeian tou Satana,--after the working of Satan.

2. Instrumental, which are also two:--

[1.] Pretence of miracles: with all power, signs, and lying wonders.

[2.] Other cheats and impostures: with all deceivableness of

unrighteousness; their general way of dealing being sophistical and

fallacious. Let us a little explain these things.

1. The great agent in setting up this kingdom: After the working of

Satan.' It may note the manner, as we render after, that is, in such a

way as Satan deceived our first parents, for he was a murderer and a

liar from the beginning,' John viii. 44;' I fear, lest by any means, as

the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtilty, so your minds should be

corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ,' 2 Cor. xi. 3. So all

this mystery of iniquity shall be carried on after this manner: by

deceit, by the tricks of lying men, and the works of deceiving spirits.

Bather it noteth Satan's agency and influence, and after, or according

to the working of Satan, is as much as by the working of Satan, noting

not only his pattern, but his influence; so is kata` often rendered,

and the energy of the devil, and influence upon all wickedness is

spoken of elsewhere: Eph. ii. 2, The spirit that now worketh in the

children of disobedience.' The devil hath a great hand over wicked men

in the world; his way of dealing with them is most efficacious and

powerful, and certainly he is the first founder and main supporter of

the antichristian state.

2. The instrumental means.

[1.] By pretence of miracles: With all power, and signs, and lying

wonders.' These three words signify the same thing, and are often

joined when true miracles are spoken of; as 2 Cor. xii. 12, Truly the

signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all places, in signs, and

wonders, and mighty deeds.'--duna'meis, se'mata, te'rata. So Acts ii.

22, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles,

wonders, and signs;' so Heb. ii. 4, God also bearing them witness, both

with signs and^ wonders, and with divers miracles;' Rom. xv. 19, 4

Through mighty signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of

God,' Powers they are called, because they issue from power divine and

extraordinary; signs, from their use, because they serve to seal and

signify the doctrine to which they are applied; wonders, from their

effect, because they breed astonishment in the minds of the be holders:

these were the true miracles. Now, Antichrist, to countenance his false

doctrines and superstitions, would ape and imitate Christ, and

pretendeth to powers, signs, and wonders: as Jannes and Jambres sought

to imitate Moses, God permitting it in some degree; so Antichrist seeks

to promote his kingdom the same way which Christ took to promote

evangelical truth. But they are called powers, and signs, and lying

wonders, i.e., lying powers, lying signs, and lying wonders, for it

agreeth to all the words, though affixed only to one of them. But why

lying wonders? Partly because the greatest number of them are mere

fables, notorious impostures, and forgeries; partly because others are

diabolical illusions, things beyond human, but not angelical power. If

they are thau'mata,--wonders, they are not semeia, as Chrysostom

distinguished, fit signs to signify the truth of the doctrines; partly

from the end and scope, for that must also be regarded. God cautioneth

his people, that if they gave them a sign and wonder, though it came to

pass, if it were to draw them to other gods, it was to be rejected,

Deut. xiii. 1-3; the spirits must be tried whether they be of God, 1

John iv. 1; 1 Cor. xii. 3, No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth

Jesus accursed.' If a wonder be wrought, or pretended to be wrought, to

draw us off from Christ, or to promote things clearly for bidden by the

word of God, it is a lying wonder, as all Antichrist's are; for their

end is to confirm the Pope's dominion and false doctrine. The sum is

this, then: that many things are pretended, not really done, impostures

and forgeries, not miracles; other things, done by diabolical

illusions, as there may be apparitions, visions, spectres, for Satan

will bestir himself to keep up the credit of his ministers. Lastly, if

we cannot otherwise disprove them, if they tend to false doctrine and

worship, they are to be rejected, whatever extraordinary appearance

there be in them.

[2.] The other expression concerning the means is general: With all

deceivableness of unrighteousness;' which compriseth--

(1.) Their sophistical reasoning from antiquity, unity, infallibility,

without coming to the intrinsic merits of the cause, but condemning the

truth rather by prejudice.

(2.) Their practical acts and feats to beguile souls, by fawning or

threatening, or preferment and persecutions; these are the arts by

which Antichrist shall deceive men into unrighteousness, that is, to

bring this corruption into the church, and acquire this power to

himself.

Now I shall observe some points.

Doct. 1. The devil hath a great hand in setting up Antichrist's

kingdom, as he hath a great interest by it; his coming shall be by, or

after the working of Satan. He is the raiser and supporter of that

estate, and he is the great seducer, opposer, and adversary of the

gospel. This will appear, if you consider, first, the properties of the

devil--how the devil is set forth in scripture, and secondly, by what

ways he promoteth his own kingdom.

First. 1. By ignorance; for the devils are called, Eph. vi. 12, The

rulers of the darkness of this world,' and his kingdom is called the

kingdom of darkness.' Col. i. 13. The prince-like authority and

government which by God's permission he exerciseth in the world, is

over those who remain in a state of darkness and ignorance. Well, then,

necessarily the devil must be a great friend to Popery, where ignorance

not only reigneth, but is commended as the mother of devotion; it is

into the ignorant part of the world and the church that the devil hath

brought in errors in doctrine, formality and superstition in worship,

and tyranny and usurpation in government.

2. The next thing ascribed to him is error; so it is said, John viii.

44, He abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him: when

he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the

father of it.' He soon apostatised from God and his way, and ever since

is an enemy of all truth and goodness; he turned from God, and is a

deceiver of others. To our first parents he called the truth of God in

question, and was the inventor and beginner of all errors that have

since fallen out in the world. Well, then, where should his eminent

power and residence be, but in that society of professed Christians

where most errors and corruptions in doctrine and worship have been

introduced, where they teach men to pray to and for the dead, to adore

the bread and worship it with divine worship, and to worship images,

and to pray to God in a language which they understand not, and maim

the Lord's Supper, and profess they can live perfectly without sin, and

meritoriously and supererogate besides, and lay up a treasury of merits

to redeem souls from purgatory? &c. There will be errors and mistakes

in religion, while men are men; but where there is a wilful opposing of

evident truths, and an obstinate refusing of all healing means, and men

will abide in their errors rather than acknowledge that they have

erred, surely they are governed by the influence of his counsels who

abode not in the truth, and seeketh what he can to hinder the

prevalency of it in the world.

3. That which is ascribed to Satan is idolatry. This was his first and

great endeavour in the world, to bring man to worship other gods rather

than the true, or the true God by an idol. So he prevailed among the

heathen; they thought their images did represent their gods, and that

their gods dwelt in them, as our souls do in our bodies; therefore the

Psalmist saith, all the gods of the nations are idols' or devils, Ps.

xcvi. 5, and the devil was the great master and contriver of this

idolatry; therefore it is said, Ps. cvi. 37, They sacrificed their sons

and daughters unto devils.' The service done to idols or images of

man's devising is not done to God, as men pretend who worship them, but

to devils, who are the devisers, suggesters, and enticers of men unto

all sorts of unlawful worship, and are in effect served and obeyed by a

false religion: Deut. xxxii. 17, They sacrificed unto devils, not unto

God;' 2 Cor. x. 20, The things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they

sacrificed unto devils, not unto God;' 2 Chron. xi. 15, And he ordained

him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves

which he had made;'--they otherwise meant it: Jeroboam intended it to

the true God Jehovah, but it was of the devil's invention. Now if the

devil can get such a party in the church as shall not only set up but

be mad upon image-worship, who can more serve his turn among professing

Christians than they who have consented to and continued in idolatrous

worship? Surely then Satan is concerned to befriend their usurpations,

and uphold their interests; for what will more conduce to the ruin of

Christianity, or at least the decay of the power thereof?

4. That which is ascribed to Satan is bloody cruelty, or seeking the

destruction of Christ's most faithful servants; for he is called a

murderer from the beginning,' John viii. 44; and Cain is said to be of

that wicked one, because he slew his brother; and wherefore slew he

him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous,' 1

John iii. 12. Enmity to the power of godliness came from Satan; and

wherever it is encouraged, and notoriously practised, they are a party

of men governed and influenced by Satan. Now, where shall we find this

character but in Antichrist's confederacy? In the prophecy of him, Rev.

xiii. 15, he caused as many as would not worship the image of the beast

to be killed; and again, Rev. xvii. 5, The woman, whose name was

Mystery, was drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of

the martyrs of Jesus;' and it hath been eminently fulfilled in the

blood shed in Germany, France, and England, and other nations; and all

this to extinguish the light of, and suppress the Reformation. The

world is no stranger to their bloody persecutions. Oh, how many seeming

Christians hath Satan employed in these works of cruelty! When once he

had seduced the church to so many errors, and corrupted the doctrine

and worship of Christ, he presently maketh the erroneous party his

instruments of as cruel and bloody persecutions as were ever commenced

by infidels and Mahometans; witness their murders upon so many

thousands of the Waldenses and Albigenses, whom they not only spoiled,

but slaughtered with all manner of hellish cruelty. Some of their own

bishops complained they could not find lime and stone to build prisons

for them, nor defray the charges of their food. The world was even

amazed at their unheard-of cruelties, smoking and burning thousands of

men, women, and children in caves, others at stakes, and many ways

butchering them; proclaiming croisados, and preaching up the merit of

paradise to such bloody cut-throats as had a mind to root them out,

driving multitudes to perish in snowy mountains. What desolations they

wrought in Bohemia, what horrible massacres in France, what fires they

kindled in England, and of late, what cruelties they exercised in

Ireland, Piedmont! &c. Histories will tell you, and will tell all

generations to come, what principles Rome is acted by, and how

insatiable their thirst is for the blood of upright righteous men. And

after all this, tell me, who is he whose coming is after the working of

Satan? and whether we have cause to be enamoured of blood, and fires,

and inquisitions?

5. That which is ascribed to Satan is, that he is the God of this

world,' 2 Cor. iv. 4; and again, the prince of this world,' John xii.

31. He playeth the god here; the riches, honours, and wealth of this

world are the great instruments of his kingdom; and the men of this

world, whose portion is in this life, are the proper subjects of his

kingdom. Of the saints, Christ is their head; but of the wicked,

ungodly, ambitious world, surely Satan is the head. There are two

cities (as Austin distinguisheth them): Jerusalem is the city of God,

and Babylon, that incorporation which belongeth to Satan. Now, then,

where shall we find him whose coming is after the working of Satan, but

with him who, with the loss of Christianity, exalteth himself, and

affecteth an ambitious tyranny and domineering over the Christian

world, both princes, pastors, and people; and to uphold the tyranny,

careth not what havoc he maketh of the church; and the whole frame of

their religion is calculated for secular honour, worldly pomp, and

greatness?

Secondly, By the visible appearances of the devil, and where he is most

conversant, as in his own kingdom. Before Christ's kingdom was set up,

the devil did often visibly appear; but since, he playeth least in

sight; when God openly manifested his presence by appearing to the

fathers in sundry ways and manners, as he did before he spake to us by

his Son, Heb. i. 1, 2, so did Satan; visions, apparitions, and oracles,

were more frequent; and where Christ's spiritual kingdom prevaileth,

the world heareth less of these things; but where it is obstructed,

more. Now, two instances in Popery:--(1.) In their chiefs: how many

conjurers and necromancers (who expressly consulted and contracted with

the devil), from the year 600 to the year 1500, the chair of pestilence

yielded, the histories tell us. (2.) In other duties, the devil had

formerly, in the times of Popery, and still where it is allowed,

incomparably more power among men to appear to them, and haunt their

houses, and vex them, than now he hath; all that I say is, haunting of

houses and apparitions were much more common.

Uses. 1. A detestation of Popery; whatever is of the devil should be

hated by us, for we are Christ's soldiers, listed in his warfare in

baptism: Rom. vi. 13, Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive

from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto

God; but yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto

sin;' Rom. xiii. 12, Let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on

the armour of light.' Now, after our military oath, should we revolt to

them that join with the devil and his angels, to make war against

Michael and his angels?

2. To be more careful to be completely armed, For we fight not against

flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, and spiritual

wickednesses in heavenly places.' Eph. vi. 11, 12; that is, not only

with the one, but the other. The abettors of Popery are Satan's

auxiliary forces, whom he stirreth up and employeth. Now, the devils

are of great cunning and strength, and by God's permission exercise

great authority in the world, and the matter about which we contend

with them is the honour of God and Christ, and our eternal salvation.

Therefore, since the subtlety, power, and strength of the enemy are so

great, we had need to be the better prepared, and put on the whole

armour of God. That bodily and human power that befriendeth the kingdom

of Satan is formidable, and that can only reach the outward man; but

devils and damned spirits are a more terrible and dangerous party, who

secretly blind our minds and weaken our courage, and strangely and

imperceptibly, by our own carnal affections, promote our eternal ruin.

3. It showeth us the folly of reconciling Babel and Sion--Rome, as it

is, and the Reformed Churches: For what concord hath Christ with

Belial?' 2 Cor. vi. 15, 16; What agreement hath the temple of God with

idols?' You can never reconcile God and Satan, the seed of the woman

and the seed of the serpent. I speak not of holy endeavours to adjust

the controversies, and reclaim papists from their errors; that must be

pursued, how fruitless soever the attempt be; but to hope for an

agreement, as things now stand, is impossible.

4. Caution, that the devil prevail not against us; he once surprised

Peter: Mat. xvi. 23, Get thee behind me, Satan;' he hath prevailed over

them that usurp the highest chair in the Christian church. Let him not

blind your eyes in whole or in part; though you be not drawn to

antichristianism, do not live in a carnal, worldly course: For this

purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works

of the devil,' 1 John iii. 8. Every wicked act is Satan's invention; he

stirreth it up, is served by it, delights in it, his kingdom goeth

forward by it: he gaineth by every wicked action. Show plainly that you

are not of his party, nor ever mean to be. Give way to fleshly and

worldly lusts, and you are very prone to entertain the grossest

temptations; and by subtle evasions will wriggle and distort yourselves

out of your duty, as the papists do.

I come now to the second means.

Doct. That Antichrist doth uphold his kingdom by a false show of signs,

and wonders, and mighty deeds. To evidence this--

I. We must inquire what is a miracle? Miracles are works extraordinary,

exceeding the ability of second causes, and done to confirm the truth.

Where we may observe:--

1. The general nature of them.

2. Their author.

3. Their use.

1. Their general nature and kinds: extraordinary works. Some are either

besides nature, when the course of nature is changed, as the standing

still of the sun in Joshua's days, the going back of the shadow on

Ahaz's dial in Hezekiah's time; above nature, as the opening of the

eyes of a man born blind by Christ, John ix.; against nature, when the

operation of it is obstructed, as when the three children remained

untouched in the fiery furnace, Dan. iii.: the fire had not lost its

property to burn, for those that cast them in were singed and scorched.

2. The author: they are works exceeding the ability of second causes,

and therefore are always done by the power of God, either immediately

or mediately, using some creature in the performing of them, as the

apostles of Christ. Well, then, the primary efficient cause is God, and

the manner of working is extraordinary and unusual, exceeding the power

and force of any creature.

3. The end and use is to confirm some truth. When they are done for

curiosity, ostentation, and delight, they are but juggling tricks, and

have not God for their author; much less when they are pretended to

confirm a false doctrine or evil end. But real miracles do oblige by

way of sign, declaring God's interest in or owning of the truth and

testimony to which they are annexed. For God, being the ruler of the

world, good, merciful, just, it is not to be supposed he will

co-operate to a lie or cheat, or leave such a stumbling-block before

his creatures.

II. That the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles did

sufficiently prove that they were teachers sent from God, for Christ

often appealeth to his works: John v. 36, For the works which the

Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness

of me;' and John x. 38, Though ye believe not me,' that is, his

personal verbal testimony, believe the works,' that is, his miracles,

that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.'

And when John sent his disciples to know whether he were the Messiah or

no (not so much for his own confirmation as their satisfaction): Mat.

xi. 4, Go, show him what ye hear and see;' and what was that?' The

blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the

deaf hear, and the dead are raised up,' &c. So Nicodemus was convinced

by these: John iii. 2, We know that thou art a teacher come from God;

for none can do the works that thou dost, except God were with him.' To

improve these scriptures, let us consider:--

1. The necessity of this attestation.

2. The sufficiency of it.

1. The necessity there was that Christ's person and office should be

thus attested. He had the law of Moses to repeal, which was well known

to be God's own law; a new law to promulgate, which is the law of

faith, or the gospel; and before this could be received, it was needful

for him to manifest his authority. Besides, he came to redeem and

recover sinners to God from the devil, world, and flesh. And that he

might be more readily and cheerfully entertained, it was necessary to

be evidenced that he came not only by God's permission, but commission.

For him hath the Father sealed,' John vi. 27, that is, authorised by

miracles. Look, as in the first institution of the Aaronical

priesthood, fire came from heaven to consume the sacrifices, whereas

afterwards the high priests were consecrated and admitted by the

ordinary rites, without any such attestation; so there was a greater

necessity then, when God brought forth his Son into the world, and did

first set up the gospel state, than there was afterwards, when the

course and order of it was settled, and received in the world.

2. The sufficiency of it. The miracles then wrought were numerous,

evident, and undeniable, being done publicly in the sight of all, and

therefore the clearest attestation to his doctrine, that flesh and

blood could expect; such a stream of holy, necessary miracles, that

were for the most part not acts of pomp, but of succour and relief, and

such as could be done by no power less than divine; not like those

ludicrous miracles they talk of in Popery, which look like a cheat

rather than a sign from heaven. These miracles of Christ could no way

be impeached; for either it must be by some truth of God, which the new

revelation did contradict, and delivered by more certain means than

those miracles were--but no such revelation was there; all fairly

accorded with those former revelations of his mind given to the ancient

church; and Christ and his apostles preached no other things than what

suited with Moses and the prophets, Acts xxvi. 22--or else by some

greater works which should contradict the testimony of these wonders,

as Moses did the magicians of Egypt, Exod. vii. 18; but no such thing

could be alleged, or was pretended, therefore these were sufficient.

2. After the faith of Christ was sufficiently confirmed, miracles

ceased; and it was fit they should cease, for God doth nothing

unnecessarily. The Christian doctrine is the same that it was, and is

to be the same till the end of the world; we have a sure and authentic

record of it, which is the holy scriptures. The truth of Christ's

office and doctrine is fully proved, and cometh transmitted to us by

the consent of many successions of ages, in whose experience God hath

blessed it to the converting, comforting, and saving of many a soul.

Look, as the Jews, every time the law was brought forth, were not to

expect the thunderings and lightnings, and the voice of the terrible

trumpet, with which it was given at first on Mount Sinai (one solemn

confirmation served for after ages); they knew it was a law given by

the ministry of angels, and so entertained it with veneration and

respect; so Christianity needed to be once solemnly confirmed (after

ages have the use of the first miracles); for the apostle compareth

these two things, the giving of the law and the gospel: Heb. ii. 2-4,

For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression

and disobedience received a just recompense of reward: how shall we

escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be

spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him?' we

must be contented with God's owning it now only in the way of his

Spirit and providence.

3. That upon the ceasing of miracles, or their growing to be

unnecessary, we have the more cause to suspect them who will revive

this pretence of a power to work miracles; especially after we are

cautioned against these delusions, as here in the text against the

lying wonders of Antichrist, and elsewhere: Mat. xxiv. 24, For there

shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great

signs and wonders, insomuch, that if it were possible, they shall

deceive the very elect;' and again, Rev. xiii. 13, He doth great

wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven upon earth in the

sight of men.' But herein they triumph, when did they ever pretend to

do so? Ans. This is not to be taken literally, for the whole chapter is

mystical; none can be so ignorant that Antichrist shall arise as a

beast out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns; therefore, to

fetch fire from heaven is only an allusion to Elias, that he should

pretend to work miracles, as did Elias, who brought fire from heaven, 1

Kings xviii. 24; and yet, in the letter, it was fulfilled in Pope

Hildebrand, or Gregory VII., as one Paulus, who wrote his life,

testifieth, who mentioneth divers wonders of fire wrought by him, and

sundry times resembles him to Elias. The meaning is, he shall make his

followers as confident of their errors as if they saw fire come from

heaven to confirm them. But to return. We being thus cautioned and

forewarned, miracles thus performed are deceitful. But you will say,

though miracles are not necessary to confirm the faith, yet they are

necessary to convince the falsehood of heresies. Ans. Heresies being a

corruption of the faith once received, are to be confuted by arguments,

not miracles; by evidence of doctrine, not wonders: partly lest the

people be deceived by magical impostures, for it requireth some skill

to distinguish true miracles from those that are deceitful, and done by

the power of the devil; partly because verum est index sui et

obliqui--faith stated and confirmed showeth what is error; so that to

confute error by miracles is nothing but to confirm truth by miracles.

4. Whosoever teach false doctrine, not consonant to the truth of

scriptures, or that faith of Christ which was confirmed by miracles,

their wonders are lying wonders, and, how plausible soever they seem,

are lying wonders, and not to be believed. Surely miracles must needs

be false and pretended which are brought to confirm a doctrine contrary

to that which is already confirmed by miracles; for God is faithful,

and cannot deny himself, and therefore he cannot be the author of

miracles whereby things contrary to each other may be confirmed. If the

faith once be established by other miracles, we are to believe the

latter miracles to be a mere imposture; for Christ is not yea, and nay,

but yea, and Amen,' 1 Cor. i. 19, 20. The apparition of an angel is a

great miracle, but if an angel preach any other gospel unto you than

that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed,' Gal. i. 8.

It is a supposition of an impossible case, necessary to forewarn the

people of God against the delusions of the devil, changing himself into

an angel of light. Surely God will never contradict himself.

5. The miracles wrought by Antichrist and his adherents are mira, but

not miracula, some wonderful things, but no true and proper miracles;

else, as Austin saith, Figmenta mendacium hominum, portenta fallacium

spirituum--either the fictions of lying men, or the illusions of

deceiving spirits. Many times the matter of fact is not true; at other

times the thing done is but some illusion of the senses by the devil,

or something taken for a miracle which doth not exceed the power of

nature. Either way it is an imposture; and, indeed, the miracles of the

legends are so false, so ridiculous, so light and trivial, that they

expose Christianity to contempt; or else, if there be any thing in it,

it giveth suspicions of magical illusion and converse with the devil

which, among their votaries and recluses, is no unusual thing.

6. There are seven points in Popery which they seek to confirm by

miracles; and which, being senseless in themselves, do most scandalise

Protestants.

[1.] Pilgrimages. They show the shrine, and also the chamber of the

house of the blessed Virgin; how the Virgin at Loretto was transported

out of Galilee into Dalmatia, and by angels in the air, to the remote

parts of Italy, and settled there after some removes.

The story is ridiculous, and I am serious; yet this draweth an infinite

company of pilgrims there, where new miracles are pretended to be

wrought continually.

[2.] Prayers for the dead. Bellarmine allegeth, out of Gregory, the

miraculous apparition of Paschal's ghost, beseeching St Germanus to

pray for him.

[3.] Purgatory^ All their miracles are framed especially for the

establishing of this point, which is of such gain to them; as that a

dead man's skull spake to Mercarias praying, When thou dost offer

prayer for the dead, then do we feel a little consolation.'

[4.] The invocation of saints. Alypius, a grammarian, being forsaken of

his physicians, St Tiola appeared to him by night, demanding what he

ailed, or what he would have? He answered (to show a touch of his art)

in Achilles's speech to his mother Thetis, in Homer, &c. Thou knowest;

why should I tell thee that knowest all?' Where upon she conveyed a

round stone to him, with the touch of which he was presently healed.

[5.] The adoration of images, but especially of the cross, crucifix,

and image of Christ. Malvenda saith, that at Meliapore, in the East

Indies, where St Thomas was killed by those barbarous people, digging,

to lay a foundation, they found a square stone, in it a bloody cross,

and an inscription implying the saint was slain in the very act of

adoring and kissing the cross; hereupon on went the building, and the

chapel being finished, in the beginning of the gospel, in sight of the

whole multitude, the cross did sweat abundantly; the sweat wiped off,

drops of blood appeared in the linen with which they wiped it, till at

length it returned to its own colour.

[6.] The adoration of the host is made good by such a number of

miracles as fill whole volumes. Bellarmine himself telleth us of a

hungry mare, kept three days without meat, yet when provender was

poured to her in the presence of the host, she, forgetting her meat,

with bowed head and bended knees adored the sacrament.

[7.] The primacy of the Pope hath been the beginning and is the end of

all popish legends. A bishop, being excommunicated by Pope Hildebrand,

and inveighing against his pride, was smitten with a thunderclap.

Baronius relates, that while Pope Eugenius the Third was celebrating

the mass, a beam of the sun shone upon his head, in which were seen two

doves, ascending and descending, which an Eastern legate seeing,

submitted instantly to the primacy.

Use. Another note of Antichrist: these impostures are not only

countenanced and encouraged in that church, but made a mark of it. The

power of miracles: When Antichrist first appeared, ridiculous miracles

of all sorts began to be cried up and established; yea, and to this

day, these are pleaded, challenging us for the want of them. What they

cannot prove by the oracles of God, they endeavour to prove by miracles

of Satan.

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SERMON VIII.

With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because

they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.--2

Thes. II. 10.

WE have described unto you the head of the antichristian state; we come

now to the subjects, especially the zealous abettors and promoters of

this kingdom. They are described:--(1.) By the means how they are drawn

into this apostasy and defection, en pase apate tes adikias. (2.) By

their doom or misery; they are in a state of perdition: in them that

perish. (3.) By their sin, which is the cause and reason of this doom:

because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be

saved.

1. The means: With all deceivableness of unrighteousness.' That

Antichrist shall be a deceiver, and that he deceiveth by lying

miracles, we have seen already, and is foretold: Rev. xiii. 14, And

deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles

which he had power to do in the sight of the beast,' &c.; but the

deceived are not altogether guiltless, for the fraud would soon be

discovered by a holy and pure soul. His great engine is either the

baits of lust and sin, which work on none but those that have pleasure

in unrighteousness, ver. 12: the generality of wicked and carnal

Christians are easily drawn from God's pure worship, and true

godliness; either by worldly means, as by the offers of preferment,

riches, dignities, or else terrors of the flesh. Now, none catch at

these worldly baits but whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded,

2 Cor. iv. 4.

2. Their misery: they are said to be those that perish.' That beareth

three senses:--(1.) That they are worthy to perish, because they do not

use care and diligence to understand their duty, being blinded by their

worldly affections. That is the mildest sense we can put upon it; they

deserve to perish. No man perisheth but for his own fault: Hosea xiii.

9, O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.' Now,

they that will yield to the deceivableness of unrighteousness, justly

perish; though there be deceit in the case, yet there is

unrighteousness in the case also. Fraudulent dealing should not so

cozen us, as apparent unrighteousness or unfaithfulness to Christ

should warn us. (2.) That they are in an actual state of perdition,

and, unless they come out of it, are undone for ever. The apostles,

when they propounded Christian doctrine, at first did use this term to

distinguish impenitent unbelievers from those that received the gospel:

as 1 Cor. i. 18, The preaching of the cross is to them that perish

foolishness, but unto us that are saved the power of God:' so 2 Cor.

ii. 15, We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that perish,

and in them that are saved.' So he distinguished them that receive the

faith, and them that receive it not; penitent believers are those that

are saved, but impenitent unbelievers are those that perish, that is,

are for the present, during their infidelity and impenitency, in an

actual state of perdition; so 2 Cor. iv. 3, If our gospel be hid, it is

hid to those that are lost;' that is, who are for the present in a lost

condition. We know not God's secret decrees, but those that refuse and

oppose the only remedy, to all appearance, are lost men. Now, this he

applieth to those that yield to Antichrist, showing them that though

they are Christians, yet they have no more benefit by the gospel than

infidels; they receive not the truth--these revolt from the owning of

it upon carnal reasons: and therefore it is foretold, Rev. xiv. 9, 10,

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his

forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wrath of God,

which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation;

and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of

the holy angels, and the presence of the Lamb;' that is, all those that

give up themselves as servants and soldiers to the antichristian

estate, and obstinately adhere to and promote that profession, they

shall taste of the Mediator's vengeance, which will be very sore and

severe: Luke xix. 27, These mine enemies, which would not that I should

reign over them, bring them forth, and slay them before me,' Popery is

the highway to damnation. (3.) It beareth this sense, that they are

fore-appointed to perish who are left to these delusions; they are such

as God hath passed by, and not chosen to life. This is to be considered

also; for damnable errors take not effect on God's elect: Mat. xxiv.

24, If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.' The elect

cannot altogether be seduced and drawn away from Christ, for God taketh

them into his protection, and guardeth them against the delusions of

false prophets, that, if they be for a time, they shall not always be

deceived. So it is said, Rev. ix. 4, The locusts shall hurt none of

those that had the seal of God in their foreheads.' The delusions of

Antichrist have only their full effect on those who are not elected and

sealed, upon the hypocritical professors that live in the visible

church. So it is said again, Rev. xiii. 8, All that dwell upon the

earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book

of life;' and again, Rev. xvii. 8, And they that dwell on the earth

shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the

foundation of the world.' The elect are still excepted, which is much

for the comfort of the godly, who belong to God's election, that he

shall not prevail over them totally, finally. God hath chosen you to

life.

3. The reason of this doom: Because they received not the love of the

truth that they might be saved.' By the truth is meant the gospel, the

chief truth revealed in God's word, and the only means of salvation:

Eph. i. 13, In whom also ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of

truth, the gospel of your salvation.' This is the truth most profitable

to lost sinners; receiving is put for entertaining, or believing the

word; as Acts viii. 14, When they heard that Samaria had received the

word of God;' and Acts xi. 1, That the Gentiles had received the word,'

and elsewhere. This reception must be with love: Acts ii. 41, As many

as received the word gladly;' and Acts xvii. 11, They received the word

with readiness of mind.' And this affection must produce its effect, so

as to convert them unto God. Now, this is denied of them who are

seduced by Antichrist, that they ever had any true love to the truth,

or minded it in order to their salvation. Now, the business is, whether

the clause concerned only the Jews, or can be applied to Christians?

The Jews clearly received not the love of the truth, but did refuse

Christ and his salvation. And herein the papists glory of an advantage

of turning off this prophecy from themselves. But the apostle speaketh

not of rejecting the truth, but of not receiving the love of the truth,

which is not proper to the Jews but to false Christians. The Jews'

company rejected Christ, and Antichrist was not sent to them for a

punishment, but wrath came upon them to the uttermost, to the excision

and cutting off their nation. But here is rendered the reason not of

other judgments, but why men are captives to Antichrist. Therefore it

is not so to be confined.

Doct. 1. The subjects of Antichrist's power and seduction are those

that perish.

2. The great reason why God sent this judgment on the Christian world,

is because they received not the love of the truth.

Doct. 1. That the subjects of Antichrist's power and seduction are

those that perish.

It is a dreadful argument we are upon, yet necessary to be known for

our caution, however to be handled warily. (1.) It is certainly more

meet for us to have a regard of our own estate, than curiously to

inquire what becometh of others. The apostle waiveth judging them that

are without, 1 Cor. v. 12. I know he meaneth it of the censures of the

church, which are not exercised upon infidels, but Christians; but so

far we may apply it to this case, that we should not rashly judge of

the eternal state of other persons, but rather of things wherein our

selves are concerned. If the inquiry were only matter of curiosity,

surely Christ's rebuke would silence it, What is that to thee?' John

xxi. 22; for Christ is ill pleased with curiosity about the state of

other men; but it is fit we should know our own duty and danger, and to

that end it must be discussed. (2.) That there is a great difficulty of

the salvation of papists so living and dying, if not an utter

impossibility. Partly because, though it should be supposed that they

retain the foundation, yet they build such hay and stubble upon it, so

many errors in doctrine, corruptions in worship, and tyranny in

government, that if a man could be saved, he is saved but as by fire, 1

Cor. iii. 13; and no man that hath a care of his soul will either

embrace Popery or continue in it. Where the way is plainest there are

difficulties enough, and the righteous are scarcely saved; and,

therefore, in a questionable way, none should venture. Worshipping of

angels and saints departed, and images, are no light thing. Nor will a

serious Christian choose that way where the doctrines of the gospel are

so exceedingly corrupted, and there is such a manifest invasion of the

authority of Christ, by challenging a universal headship over his

church without his leave, and this maintained by errors and

persecutions. (3.) We must distinguish of those that lived under

Popery, rather as captives under this tyranny, than voluntary subjects

of this kingdom of Antichrist; as many holy men did in former times,

groaning and mourning under the abominations, rather than countenancing

and promoting them. To these God speaketh when he saith, Rev. xviii. 4,

Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and

that ye receive not of her plagues.' They were his people while they

were there. These were as those seven thousand in Israel that had not

bowed the knee to Baal.' Rom. xi. 4. (4.) There is a difference to be

put between those that err in the simplicity of their hearts, knowing

no better, and those that withstand the light upon carnal reasons, and

will not retract their errors, though convinced of the degeneration of

Christianity; for simple ignorance is not so damning as obstinate

error: Luke xii. 48, But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy

of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes,' &c.; and 1 Tim. i. 13,

But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.' The

scriptures many times condemn a way as a way of ruin, but all in that

way are not damned; as John iv, 22, Salvation is of the Jews.' There it

is eminently dispensed, and yet therefore it followeth not that all the

Samaritans were damned. Some among them, though tainted with the errors

of their country, might have such knowledge of the law of God, and love

to him, as might be effectual to salvation. (5.) We must distinguish

between papists so living and so dying; many, by God's grace, may have

repentance conferred upon them at death; and though they lived papists,

might die as reformed Christians, seeking salvation by Christ alone, in

the way of true faith and repentance, and so the Lord may manifest his

compassion to them, pardoning the errors of their lives. (6.) We must

distinguish times. God might dispense with many in the times of

universal darkness and captivity, more than he doth afterwards, when

the light of the gospel breaketh forth, and his trumpet is sounded to

call them forth. Whosoever shall compare John Fierus and John Calvin

will find they were assisted by the same Holy Spirit of God, though the

one lived and died a papist, and the other was an eminent instrument in

reforming the church of God; but an ignorant fear of separation from

the catholic church caused many to do as they did; but much more doth

it hold good in the times before. Our fathers, if alive, would not have

condemned us, nor should we condemn them, being dead, before they had

these advantages which we now enjoy. Illi si reviviscerent, &c., saith

Austin in a like case. (7.) We must distinguish between Popish errors:

some are more capital, as adoration of images, invocation of saints,

justification by the merit of works, inhibition of the scriptures, &c.;

others not so deadly, as when too much reverence is given to

ecclesiastical orders and constitutions, penance, auricular confession,

fasting, &c. Now though the case of a real papist, who is complete in

this mystery of iniquity, and refuseth, hateth, persecuteth the truth

offered, be desperate, yet the Lord may in tender mercy accept of other

devout souls who yet live in that way, if they hold the head and the

foundation.

Use 1. Let us not think Popery a light thing, which the Lord so

peremptorily threateneth. Surely it is no little mercy that we are

freed from it. Therefore we should be thankful for the light we have,

and improve it well while we have it, and hold it fast. What hope

soever we may have of men living in former times, and foreign

countries, where they know no better, but after such express warnings,

what hope can we have of English papists, considering the time, when

Rome is not grown better but worse, and what was common opinion is now

made an article of faith, and when the truth is taught and so clearly

manifested; so that for any, by their own voluntary choice, to run into

Popery, is a plain defection from Christ to Antichrist, and wilfully to

drink that poison which will be the bane and ruin of their souls!

Doct. 2. The great reason why God sent this judgment upon the Christian

world, is to punish those that received not the love of the truth.

Here I shall inquire--(1.) How many ways men may be said not to receive

the love of the truth. (2.) How just their punishment is for such a

sin.

[1.] In stating this sin--(1.) It is supposed that the truth and

doctrine of Christ is made known to a people; yea, cometh among them

with great evidence, conviction, and authority. For it is not the want

of means, but want of love, that it is charged on them; and the plenty

of means aggravateth their fault, and maketh their condemnation the

more just: John iii. 19, This is the condemnation, that light is come

into the world, and men loved darkness more than light.' The truth was

not for their turns, but was contrary to their lusts, and passions, and

prejudices; and these they preferred before the light of the gospel

shining to them.

(2.) That as in evidence of doctrine was not the cause of not receiving

the truth, so not bare weakness of understanding. No; it is not

weakness, but wilfulness which is here intimated; not a defect of their

minds, but their hearts: John viii. 45, Because I tell you the truth,

ye believe me not.' It was not weakness but prejudice hindered their

believing. They despised the grace of God; yea, hated it for their

lust's sake. Their lusts lie more in opposition to the truth than

speculative doubts and errors: Luke xvi. 14, And the pharisees, who

were covetous, when they heard all these things, derided him;' the

words are, blew their noses at him.' The sensual, carnal, and ungodly

world scorneth heavenly doctrine, and pure Christianity is distasted by

false Christians. Err in mind, err in heart.

(3.) It is not enough to receive the truth in the light of it, but we

must also receive it in the love of it, or it will do us no good. To

make the truth operative:--(1.) Knowledge is necessary, and also faith,

and then love. Knowledge, for without knowledge the heart is not good,'

Prov. xix. 2. Nothing can come to the heart but by the mind; the will

is o'rexis meta` lo'gon--a choice or desire, guided by reason, and the

gospel doth not work as a charm, whether it be or be not under stood.

No; the purport or drift of it must be known, or how can it have any

effect upon us? Next to knowledge, to make it work, there must be

faith. When we apprehend a thing, we must judge of it, whether it be

true or false; how else can it make any challenge, or lay claim to our

respect? 1 Thes. ii. 13, Ye received it not as the word of men, but (as

it is in truth) the word of God, which worketh effectually in you, as

it doth in all them that believe.' Faith doth enliven our actions about

religion; to hear of God, and Christ, and heaven, doth not stir us

unless we believe these things. Well, next to faith there must be love,

for apprehension and dijudication are acts of the understanding only,

but love belongeth to the will, and we must believe with all the heart,

Acts viii. 37. There may be knowledge without faith, as an heathen may

understand the Christian religion, though he believe it not, profess it

not. And there may be faith without love, for there is a dead faith,'

James ii. 20, which rests in cold opinions, without any affection to

the truth believed. Love pierceth deeper into the truth, and maketh it

pierce deeper into us. As a red-hot iron, though never so blunt, will

run farther into an inch board than a cold tool, though never so sharp.

And love maketh it more operative; there is notitia per visum, et

notitia per gustum--a knowledge by sight, and a knowledge by taste. A

man may guess at the goodness of wine by the colour, but more by the

taste; that is a more refreshing apprehension; and Augustine prayeth,

Fac me, Domine, gustare per amorem quod gusto per cognitionem--Lord,

make me taste that by love which I taste by knowledge. Surely we are

never sound in Christianity till all the light that we receive be

turned into love. These great things are revealed and represented to

our faith, not to please our minds by knowing them, but to quicken our

love. Faith alone is but as sight, and faith with love is as taste.

Now, it is more easy to dispute a man out of his belief that only

seeth, than it is him that tasteth, and knoweth the grace of God in

truth. This is the true reason of the stedfastness of weak and

unlearned Christians; though they have not such distinct conceptions

and reasonings as many learned men have, yet their faith is turned into

love, and a man is better held by the heart than by the head. And

though they cannot dispute for Christ (as one of the martyrs said),

they can die for Christ. But alas! many receive the truth in the light

thereof, but few receive it in the love of it, and so lie open to

deceit.

(4.) This love must not be a slight affection, for that will soon

vanish; but we must be rooted and well grounded, and have a good

strength.' The stony ground had some love to the word: Mat. xiii. 20,

21, But he that receiveth the seed in stony places, the same is he that

heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet he hath not root

in himself, but dureth but a while; for when tribulation or persecution

riseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.' So also of the

thorny ground: He heareth the word, and the care of this world, and the

deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful,'

ver. 22. Now what are the defects of this love? (1.) It is not

radicated--a pang of love or flash of zeal; whereas we should be rooted

and grounded in love.' Eph. iii. 17. Hypocrites had a taste: Heb. vi.

4, 5, For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and

have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy

Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the

world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto

repentance.' Tasted, but did but taste; did escape mia'smata ko'smou, 2

Peter ii. 20; yet, not having a good conscience, may make shipwreck of

faith, 1 Tim. i. 19. (2.) It is partial. The gospel offereth great

privileges, and it is also a pure, holy rule of obedience, Acts ii. 41.

The word of God is made up of precepts and promises. God offereth in

the covenant excellent benefits, upon gracious terms and conditions:

there must be a consent to the terms, as well as an acceptation of the

privileges. The confidence of the privileges serveth to wean us from

the false happiness, therefore that must be kept up: Heb. iii. 6, But

Christ, as a son over his own house, whose are we, if we hold fast the

confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.' And the

consent to the terms bindeth our duty upon us, Isa. lvi. 4. Now as

willingly as we yielded at first, we must keep up the same fervour

still: Deut. v. 29, Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that

they would fear me and keep all my commandments always; that it might

be well with them and with their children for ever.' But whole, pure

Christianity is not loved by false Christians; therefore, when religion

crosseth their interests and the bent of their lusts, they seek to

bring religion to their hearts, not their hearts to religion. (3.) It

is not strong, and in such a prevalent degree as to control other

affections; it is but a passion, a pleasure, and a delight they take on

for a time, not the effect of solid judgment and resolution a joy

easily controlled and overcome with other delights; therefore Christ

requireth a denial of all things, for a close adherence to him and his

doctrine, and hath told us, Mat. x. 37, He that loveth father and

mother more than me, is not worthy of me,' and Luke xiv. 26, cannot be

my disciple.' This is a love to which all other loves must give way and

be subordinate. Many love the truth a little, but love other things

more, will be at no cost for it. Solomon giveth advice, Prov. xxiii.

23, Buy the truth and sell it not.' In lesser points we must do nothing

against the truth, for though the matter contended for be never so

small, yet sincerity is a great point; but in the greater truths we

should purchase the knowledge of them at any rate, and be faithful to

Christ whatever it costs us. (4.) This slight love may arise from

worldly respects. Now in the text it is said, They received not the

love of the truth, that they might be saved.' It should arise upon

eternal reasons and considerations of the other world, which only

produce abiding affections: Heb. x. 39, We are not of them that draw

back to perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.'

In closing with Christianity, that must be fixed as our scope, not to

spare the flesh, but to save the soul, and to save the soul with the

loss of other things; and that will make us true to Christ. But there

are many foreign reasons for which men may show some love to religion.

As, first, policy; as Jehu took up Jehonadab into the chariot with him,

2 Kings x. 15 there is his compliment to him. Jehonadab was a good man,

and this honoured him before the people, to see Jehu and Jehonadab so

well acquainted. Sometimes respect to others upon whom we depend Many

seem to be good because they dare not displease others that have

authority over them, or an interest in them; as Joash was religious all

the days of Jehoiada, for he stood in awe of him, 2 Chron. xxiv. 2. Now

such sorry religion dependeth on foreign accidents, the life of others

or presence of others, and therefore it cannot be durable; whereas, in

presence or absence, we should work out our salvation with fear and

trembling,' Phil. ii. 12; otherwise men only keep within compass for a

while, but they have the root of sin within them still. Or it may be

novelty, as our Lord telleth the Jews, John was a burning and shining

light, and ye were willing to rejoice in his light for a season,' John

was an eminent man for pureness of doctrine and vigour of zeal, and the

more corrupt sort of Jews, pharisees as well as others, admired him for

a while, but they soon grew weary of him--it was a fit of zeal for the

present. Lastly, This love may be to the excellency of gifts bestowed

upon some minister or instrument whom God raiseth up, or some

countenance of great men given to their ministry may stir up some love

and attendance on their ministry; and some respect is given for their

sakes when men have no sound grace in their hearts. There is a

receiving of the word as the word of man, and a receiving of the word

as the word of God, as the apostle intimateth, 1 Thes. ii. 13. The

receiving of the word as the word of man, so it worketh only a human

passion, a delight in the gifts of the ministry used: Ezek. xxxiii. 32,

Thou art to them as a lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice.'

Then there is a receiving it as the word of God, and then we receive it

with much assurance and joy in the Holy Ghost: 1 Thes. i. 5, Our gospel

came to you, not in word, but in power, and much assurance, and joy in

the Holy Ghost.' Now if we do not receive the truth upon God's

recommendation and confirmation, we do not love truth as truth; our

contest is not who hath most wit and parts, but most grace. (5.) They

do not receive the love of the truth, when it doth not produce its

solid effects, which is a change of heart and life, and they are not

brought by the gospel to a sincere repentance and conversion to God, or

receive the truth so as to live by it; but whilst they have the names

of Christians, have the lives and hearts of atheists and infidels.

These were those that debauched Christianity, and meritori� and

effectiv�, by their provocations and negligence, brought this

degeneracy into the church and judgment on the Christian world.

Certainly a man hateth that religion which he doth profess when he will

not live by it. This perfidiousness and breach of covenant was that

which provoked God to permit these delusions in the church; the

worldly, sensual, carnal Christians, that hate that life which their

religion calleth for. The godly Christian and the carnal Christian have

the same Bible, the same creed, the same baptism, yet they hate one

another as if they were of different religions, and confound the

distinction between the world and the church, because the world is in

the church. And of sensual and godless men we must speak as heathens,

as if they were without God: they abhor that religion which they do

profess; that is, they abhor not the name, but they abhor those that

are faithful to it and serious in it, who desire to know God in Christ,

and desire to love him, and live to him. It was that Christ taxed in

the pharisees; they honoured the dead saints and abhorred the living:

Mat. xxiii. 29-31, Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!

because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres

of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers,

we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the

prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the

children of them which killed the prophets.' Christ hath not worse

enemies in the world than those that usurp his name, and pretend to be

his officers, and yet eat and drink with the drunken, and beat their

fellow-servants, Mat. xxiv. 49. Christ will disown such at the day of

judgment: Mat. vii. 22, 23, Many will say unto me in that day, Lord,

Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out

devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I

profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work

iniquity.' And such do most dishonour him in the world. A righteous,

sober, godly life is the best evidence of our love to the truth.

[2.] How just this punishment is:--(1.) Because God hath ever held this

course on the pagan world, who kept not the natural knowledge of God:

He gave them up to vile affections,' Rom. i. 28. The Jews who rejected

Christ: John v. 43, I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me

not: another will come in his own name, and him will ye receive.' When

Christ cometh merely for our benefit, the unthankful world will not

make him welcome, but they will take worse in his room. So towards

Christians. At first men would not receive the gospel while it was pure

and in its simplicity, as taught by Christ and his apostles, and sealed

by the blood of the martyrs, till it was backed by a worldly interest,

and corrupted into a worldly design; and then they had it and all

manner of superstitions together, and with these strong delusions there

came just damnation. So still the pure gospel is refused, and God

sendeth popish seducers as a just judgment; men only prize the light as

it may serve their turn. (2.) The neglect and contempt of the truth is

so heinous a sin that it deserveth the greatest punishment: Heb. ii. 3,

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Now it is

revenged by these errors as a just judgment on the perverseness and

unthankfulness of the world. The duties of the gospel being so

unquestionable, shows their perverseness. The privileges of the gospel

being so excellent, their unthankfulness is more intolerable.

Use 1 is to show us what cause we have to fear a return of Popery.

Alas! where is this love of the truth? (1.) Some are gospel-glutted,

loathe manna: a full-fed people must expect a famine, Amos viii. 2. In

differences between God and Baal, Christ and Antichrist, few are

valiant for the truth: Jer. ix. 3, And they bend their tongue like

their bow for lies, but they are not valiant for the truth upon the

earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith

the Lord.' Contend earnestly: Jude 3, It was needful for me to write

unto you, and to exhort you, that you should earnestly contend for the

faith which was once delivered unto the saints.' Again (2.) There are

many sensualists, unclean and carnal gospellers; to these God oweth a

judgment. Usually the gospel is removed and given to a nation that will

bring forth the fruits thereof. They that use the truth only or

principally for their own turns, hate to be reformed; God will reckon

with them: Ps. l. 16, 17, But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou

to do to declare my statutes? or that thou shouldst take my covenant

into thy mouth, seeing thou Latest instruction, and castest my words

behind thee?'

Use 2 shows you indeed that you love the gospel. [2] Carentia remedii

is a grievous misery, or else Christ had not come as a great blessing.

Neglectus remedii is a grievous sin, to be lazy in a matter of such

moment: those that never set their hearts to obey the truth. Crassa

negligentia dolus est: There should be constant purpose, endeavour,

striving, and not cease striving, till we in some measure prevail.

Rejectio or contemptio remedii, if we put away the word of God from us:

Acts xiii. 46, Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was

necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you;

but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of

everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.' God will be gone, if

not from the land, from thy soul. This is the most heinous iniquity of

all: Heb. x. 28, 29, He that despised Moses' law died without mercy

under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye,

shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God,

and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was

sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of

grace?' So Esau's despising his birth right: Heb. xii. 16, 17, Lest

there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel

of meat sold his birthright; for ye know Low that afterwards, when he

would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no

place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.'

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[2] Apparently the sentences in this paragraph are elliptical.--ED.

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SERMON IX.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they

should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not

the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.--2 Thes. II. 11, 12.

WE have considered the sin of those seduced by Antichrist; now the

judgment. It is twofold:--(1.) Delusion in this world, ver. 11; (2.)

Damnation in the next, ver. 12.

1. Delusion in this world; where take notice of three things:--

(1.) The author of it: God shall send it; (2.) The degree or nature of

the punishment: strong delusion; (3.) The issue of it: that they should

believe a lie.

2. Their punishment in the next world: that they all might be damned

who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness; where

take notice:--(1.) Of the terribleness of it, it is no less than

everlasting damnation: krithosin for katakrithosi; (2.) The justice and

equity of it: They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in

unrighteousness.'

1. I begin with their judgment in this world: For this cause God shall

send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie.'

Doct. That by God's just judgment there is an infatuation upon the

followers and abettors of Antichrist, that they swallow the grossest

errors to their own destruction.

To clear this I shall speak:--(1.) To the author; (2.) The degree or

kind of the punishment; (3.) The effect and issue.

1. As to the author: pempsei autois ho Theos. Here a difficulty

ariseth; for God is not, and cannot be, the author of sin. He that is

essentially good cannot be the cause of evil; and he that is ultor

peccati, the avenger of sin, cannot be auctor peccati, the author of

it. If he should cause man to sin, how will his punishment of it be

just? I answer--As it is a sin, God hath no hand in it; but as it is a

punishment of sin, God hath to do in it.

To clear this to you, consider--

[1.] He that is the supreme Lord and Governor of his creatures is also

their Judge; for legislation and judgment belong to the same authority.

And therefore God is called sometimes our King, and some times our

Judge: Gen. xviii. 25, Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'

Rom. iii. 5, 6, Is God unrighteous? how then shall he judge the world?'

That is his office and prerogative.

[2.] God's way of judging for the present is either external or

internal. As, for instance, there are two acts of judicature reward and

punishment. In rewarding, God's external government is seen in

dispensing outward blessings to his people, as the fruit of their

obedience: Micah ii. 7, Do not my words do good to him that walketh

uprightly?' His promises speak good, and as fulfilled do good, yield

protection, maintenance, and such a measure of outward prosperity as

supporteth and maintaineth them during their service. David owned God's

dealing with him in this sort: Ps. cxix. 56, This I had, because I kept

thy precepts.' So as to his internal government, in giving them peace

of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost: Rom. xiv. 17, For the kingdom

of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in

the Holy Ghost;' Prov. iii. 17, Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and

all her paths are peace.' These are the internal rewards of obedience.

And so also God often rewardeth grace with grace; as Isa. lviii. 13,

14, If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy

pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of

the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thy own ways, nor

finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt

thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon

the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob

thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it;' Ps. xxxi. 24, Be

of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope

in the Lord,' Proficiency in the same grace is a reward of the several

acts and exercise of it. So in punishing, sometimes he useth the way of

external government, by the terrible judgments exercised upon men for

the breach of his law: Rom. i. 18, For the wrath of God is revealed

from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who

hold the truth in unrighteousness:' Heb. ii. 2, Every transgression and

disobedience received a just recompense of reward;' sometimes the way

of internal government, by terrors of conscience, or punishing sin

committed with sin permitted. Both these parts are seen in punishing

both the godly and the wicked; as, for in stance, in the godly, in the

way of external government: 1 Cor. xi. 32, But when we are judged, we

are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the

world.' In the way of internal government, the lesser penal

withdrawings of the Spirit, which God's people find in themselves after

some sins and neglects of grace, are grievous. But the judgments upon

the souls of the ungodly are most dreadful, when the sinner is either

terrified or stupefied; terrified by horrors of conscience: 1 Cor. xv.

56, The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;' or

stupefied by being given up to their own hearts' counsels: Ps. lxxxi.

12, So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in

their own counsels.' So that the sinner is left dull and senseless and

past feeling: Eph. iv. 18, Having the understanding darkened, being

alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them,

because of the blindness of their heart.' By the first, by horrors of

conscience, they are made to feel God's displeasure at the courses they

walk in; but when that is long despised, and men sin on still, then the

other and more terrible judgment cometh; for the giving up a sinner to

his own lusts, and his losing all remorse, is the last and sorest

judgment on this side hell.

[3.] As to God's internal judgments, the scripture chiefly insists upon

two parts of this internal dispensation--blindness of mind and hardness

of heart; they usually go together. Blindness of mind is spoken of,

John xii. 39, 40, Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias

said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that

they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart,

and be converted, and I should heal them.' All passages are obstructed

whereby the word might enter and work conversion unto God. It was God

laid this punishment of blindness upon them. Hardness of heart, in that

famous instance, Exod. iv. 21, I will harden Pharaoh's heart.' God doth

not make them that see, blind, nor them that are soft, hard; but

leaveth them to their own prejudice, obstinacy, and unpersuadableness,

and that when highly provoked. The former is under our consideration.

[4.] To understand God's concurrence as a judge, we must not say too

much of it or too little. We must not say too much of it, lest we leave

a stain and blemish upon the divine glory. God infuseth no sin-, no

blindness nor hardness, into the hearts of men; all influences from

heaven are good: he conveyeth no deceit into the minds of men

immediately, nor doth he command or persuade men to oppose the truth.

Nor doth he impel or excite their inward propensions so to do. All this

belongeth not to God, but either to man or Satan. Nor must we say too

little; as, for instance, God is not said to blind or harden; by bare

prescience or foresight, that they will be blinded or hardened; because

God foreseeth other things, and yet they are not ascribed unto God; as

that men will kill, or steal, or do wrong, and yet God is not said to

kill or steal, as he is said to blind and harden; and therefore there

is a difference between God's concurrence to this effect and other

sins. Nor only by way of manifestation, as if this were all the sense,

that in the course of his providence God doth in the issue declare how

blind and hard they are. That some other thing is meant by it is seen

in the prayers by which we deprecate this heavy judgment. As when the

saints pray, Isa. lxiii. 17, Lord, harden not our hearts from thy

fear;' or David, Ps. cxix. 19, Lord, hide not thy commandments from

me.' They mean not thus, Lord, show not to the world how hard and blind

I am, but cure my blindness and hardness of heart; keep back this

judgment from me. Again, we must not say that all that God doth is a

bare, naked, and idle permission, as if it happened be sides his will

and intention, and God had no more to do in it than a man that standeth

on the shore and seeth a ship ready to be drowned: he might have helped

it, but permitted it. No; besides all this, there is not a bare

permission only, but a permissive intention and a judicial sentence,

which is seconded by an active providence. Many things concur to the

blinding of the mind and hardening of the heart, all which God willeth,

but justly. The wicked take occasions of their own accord to blind and

harden themselves. Satan tempteth of his own malice, but all this could

not be done with effect and success without the will of God. There is a

supreme power overruling, and ordering all that is done in the world.

[5.] God's concurrence may be stated by these things:--

(1.) His withdrawing or taking away the light and direction of his Holy

Spirit: Deut. xxix. 4, The Lord hath not given you an heart to

perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear, unto this day.' Now, when

God lets them loose to their own hearts' counsels, then they fall into

damnable errors. A greyhound held in by a slip or collar runneth

violently after the hare when it is in sight; as soon as the slip and

collar are taken away, the restraint is gone, and his inbred

disposition carrieth him. So men that are greedy of worldly things are

powerfully drawn into errors countenanced by the world, when God taketh

off the restraint of his grace, and giveth them up to their own lusts.

Now herein God is not to be blamed, for he is debtor to none, and the

grace of his Spirit is forfeited by their not receiving the love of the

truth. He is so far from being bound to give grace, that he seemeth to

be bound in justice to withdraw what is given already by men's

wickedness and ingratitude. Voluntary blindness bringeth penal

blindness; and because men will not see, they shall not see. And when

they wink hard, and shut their eyes against the light of the gospel, it

is just with God in this manner to smite them with blindness: and since

they had no love to the truth, they are given up to errors and deceits.

And because they despise the holy scriptures, and dote on vain fables,

and would not take up a course of sound godliness and holiness, he

suffereth them to weary themselves with sundry superstitions.

(2.) Not only by desertion, but by tradition, delivering them up to the

power of Satan: 2 Cor. iv. 4, The God of this world hath blinded their

eyes.' Satan, as the executioner of God's curse, worketh upon the

corrupt nature of man, and deceiveth them. It is said, 1 Chron. xxi. 1,

Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel;'

but it is said, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, And the anger of the Lord was kindled

against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number

Israel and Judah.' How shall we reconcile these two places? God gave

him over to be tempted by Satan--by God as a judge, by Satan as an

executioner. Temptations to sin come immediately from the devil, but

they are governed by God for holy and righteous ends. So again, 1 Kings

xxii. 22, the evil spirit had leave and commission to be a lying spirit

in Ahab's prophets: Go forth and do so, and thou shalt prevail with

him.' There is a permissive intention, not an affective. When they

grieve his Spirit, God withdraweth and leaveth them to the evil spirit,

who works by their fleshly and worldly lusts, and then they are easily

seduced who prefer worldly things before heavenly.

(3.) There is an active providence which raiseth such instruments and

propoundeth such objects as, meeting with a naughty heart, do sore

blind it. (1.) For instruments: Job xii. 16, The deceived and the

deceiver are his.' Take it in worldly, or take it in religious,

matters, man's deceiving others, or being deceived by others, is of

God; for it is said, both are his; not only as his creatures, but

subject to the government and disposal of providence, how and whom they

shall deceive, and how far they shall deceive. So Ezek. xiv. 9, If the

prophet be deceived that hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived

him.' This is a great transaction in the world, a sad judgment, not to

be cavilled but trembled at. For man's ingratitude, God raiseth up

false prophets to seduce them that delight in lies rather than in the

truths of God. (2.) For objects: wicked instruments varnish and dress

up this cause with all the art they can to make it a powerful deceit,

and then it is befriended and countenanced by the powers of the world,

and so easily prevaileth with them who are moved either with worldly

hopes or fears, and have debauched their conscience by worldly

respects. God saith, Jer. vi. 21, I will lay stumbling-blocks before

this people.' If we will find the sin, God will find the occasion. If

Judas hath a mind to sell his Master, he shall not want chapmen to

bargain with him. The priests were consulting to destroy Christ at the

same time that the devil put it into his heart, Mat. xxvi. 3, being

alarmed by the miracle of raising Lazarus. Birds and fishes are easily

deceived with such baits as they greedily catch at, so God by his just

vengeance ordereth such occurrences and occasions as take with a

naughty and carnal heart.

2. The degree or kind of the punishment, energeian planes; we render it

strong delusion,' or the efficacy of error;' that is, such delusion as

shall have a most efficacious force to deceive them. The prevalency and

strength of the delusion is seen in two things:--(1.) The absurdity of

the errors; (2.) The obstinacy wherewith they cleave to them.

[1.] The absurdity of the errors. I will instance in three

things--False image worship and bread worship, invocation of saints,

and supererogation of works.

(1.) Adoration of images. Idolaters are usually represented as sottish;

as Ps. cxv. 8, They that make them are like unto them; so is every one

that trusteth in them.' He had described the senselessness of the idols

before. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they

see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they

smell not, &c. Now as idols are senseless, so the idolaters are

brutish; that is, the makers, worshippers, and servers of them, are as

void of true wisdom as the images are of sense and motion: Isa. xliv.

18, They have not known, nor understood; for he hath shut their eyes,

that they cannot see, and their hearts, that they cannot understand.'

There is a fatal obduration upon them all along there. Their

senselessness is set forth from ver. 9 to ver. 20; they that worship

the work of their own hands are themselves but stocks and stones, being

blinded by the just judgment of God. If it be said this is meant of the

idols of the Gentiles, not of the images of God, and Christ, and the

Virgin Mary, and saints; still God will not be worshipped by an idol,

and there is no difference between the images of the papists and the

heathens, but only in the name.

(2.) Another thing that I will instance in is the invocation of

saints--a sottish error, and respect paid to them that are so far out

of the reach of our commerce; and a thing not only without precept,

promise, or precedent in scripture, but also against scripture, which

always directeth to God by one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. The

scripture saith, Go to God if you lack anything, and they say, Go to

the saints; if they say, not as authors of grace, or any divine

blessing, but as intercessors, though that be not true, yet that

derogateth from Christ, whose office it is to intercede with the

Father. So that this is to put the creature in the place of God. But it

is not only contrary to scripture, but the very motion and inclination

of the Spirit when he stirreth us or moveth us to pray: Rom. viii. 15,

Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;'

Gal. iv. 6, And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of

his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;' he inclineth us to

come to God, and yet this they will leave.

(3.) A third error that I shall instance in is, that man may

supererogate, not only merit for himself, but lay in an overplus to

increase the treasure of the church; when the scripture telleth us that

our best works are imperfect, yea, polluted; and our Lord himself hath

told us that when ye have done all, say ye, We are unprofitable

servants.' Luke xvii. 10. But what will not men believe that can

believe these things? There are other absurdities as gross as these,

but this sufficeth for a taste.

[2.] The obstinacy wherewith they cleave to them. Nothing will reclaim

them; not scripture, nor reason, nor evidence of truth, but they still

cry the opinion of the church, and the faith of their fore fathers, and

will invent any paltry shift and distinction, rather recede from

anything than once admit that the church hath erred; like the obstinate

Jews in Christ's time, that denied apparent matter of fact, John viii.

33, We were never in bondage to any man,' though they were in Egypt and

Babylon, and were now under servitude and the power of the Romans.

Though we prove they have erred, and do err, still the church cannot

err; or rather, like the elder Jews in the prophet Jeremiah's time,

Jer. xliv. 16-19, As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the

name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee. But we will certainly do

whatsoever goeth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen

of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings to her, as we have done, we,

and our fathers, and our kings, and our princes: for then we had plenty

of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we have left off

burning incense to the queen of heaven, we have wanted all things, and

have been consumed by the sword and the famine.' Such sottish obstinacy

is there in men that dote upon their own invented superstitious and

idolatrous services, custom, antiquity, practice of their ancestors,

the authority and usage of their great ones, their rulers, the

generality of observance. This is their knot of arguments by which they

confirm themselves; just as the papists plead for their superstitions

at this day; and to make the mess more complete, they add the plenty

and prosperity they enjoyed--what a merry world it was before the new

gospel came in, when they had nothing but mass and matins; and all the

calamities that have fallen out they impute not to their own sins, but

to the gospel. Now, when a people are thus obstinate, and measure

religion not by reasons of conscience, but the interests of the belly,

it is a sign that they are under the power of delusion, and error hath

more efficacy with such corrupt minds than the truth.

[3.] The causes of it show the efficacy of error. (1.) The sinning of

their learned to keep out all instructions, allowing the vulgar only

prayers in a strange tongue, and the scriptures in no tongue, and

teaching them implicitly to believe as the church believeth. When the

Lord permitteth such guides to order the affairs of his church, his

great judgment of occecation and obduration is upon them: Jer. v. 31,

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their

means, and my people love to have it so.' (2.) When gain, interest, and

ambition move them thereunto; as those masters in the Acts exclaim

against Paul and Silas, when they saw their hope of gain was gone, Acts

xvi. 19-21, These men do exceedingly trouble the city;' and Demetrius,

Acts xix. 25, Ye know by this craft we have our wealth.' This is a

tender point to touch interest, and when once it cometh to this, they

will proceed in their folly, and defend one falsehood with another; for

the great idol of the world is gain or love of money: 1 Tim. vi. 10,

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted

after, they have erred from the faith.' It were a happiness if such

kind of arguments did only prevail with us to embrace a religion that

might convince others that it was religion itself that we loved; that

our interests did not keep others from their duty, and that we could

embrace a religion for the goodness of it, even to our own loss. (3.)

Another cause is pride of themselves, and prejudice to others; lest

they should seem to be in an error and wrong, and to learn of a few

novelists shall they teach them? No; rather they will remain ignorant

still. Alas! it is not easy to strike sail, and submit to the teaching

of those whom they hate; therefore men continue those first prejudices

they have imbibed, and will rather live and die in their errors than

give God glory by a submission to truth, such a proud opinion and

conceit have they of their own learning and knowledge. This cause also

conduceth to make the resolution more strong--pre-engagement in a

contrary way. It is disgraceful to change; men think it is taken notice

of as a great wonder, Acts vi. 7, that a great company of the priests

were obedient to the faith.' But such wonders are not wrought every

day; they of all men are most pertinacious; but God can of stones raise

up children to Abraham. Now, would to God these causes of error were

only found in the antichristian estate. They are everywhere, but these

cause strong delusion.

3. The issue and effect; that they should believe a lie. Two things

must be explained:--(1.) The object; (2.) The act.

[1.] The object: a lie; that is, either--(1.) False doctrines: 1 Tim.

iv. 2, Speaking lies in hypocrisy,' when palpable errors are taken for

truths. A man given over by God to delusion will swallow the grossest

errors and fictions, and that in matters dangerous and destructive to

salvation. False doctrines are often called a lie in scripture, as

opposite to the truth; and yet such things are received by those from

whose parts the world could expect better things. (2.) False miracles

in their legends. A man would wonder any should have the face to

obtrude such ridiculous stories, and scandalous to religion, upon the

world. (3.) False calumnies against those instruments whom God employed

in the Reformation. Popery is a religion supported by lies; as that

Calvin was a sodomite, and burnt in the shoulder at Noyon for that

crime, and the Popish dean and chapter of that place have published his

vindicate; that Luther was an incarnate devil, begotten by an incubus.

I should weary you to rake in this dunghill; but I must close it with

the general observation that antichristians will lie; some among them

call them pious frauds, but they are diabolical forgeries.

[2.] The act is, that they are given up to believe a lie. This must be

applied to their erroneous doctrines, as common to them all; to their

false miracles and calumnies; not to the inventors, but to the seduced,

who swallow these things. All that oppose the truth do not go

apparently against conscience, but being given up to the efficacy of

error, they may believe that false religion wherein they live. Let us

open the term believe. What is it to believe a thing? You may know by

the opposites. Now, opposite to faith there is--(1.) Doubtfulness, when

men halt between two opinions: 1 Kings xviii. 21, If the Lord be God,

follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' This doubtfulness proceedeth

from want of bringing the case to a trial and thorough hearing. (2.)

Conjecture: Acts xxvi. 28, almost persuaded--Almost thou persuadest me

to be a Christian.' (3.) Opinion: Mat. xiii. 4, Hath not root in

himself, but dureth for a while,' &c. (4.) Firm persuasion. They will

censure nothing; for if of truth, John vi. 69, We believe and are

sure,' &c.; if of error, Acts xxvi. 9, I verily thought with myself

that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of

Nazareth.' (5.) Resolved adherence. If to the truth, that is called

receiving the truth in the love of it;' if to error, it is seen in

men's obstinacy and zeal suffering in it: 1 Kings xviii. 28, Cutting

themselves with knives and lances, till blood gushed out.' Suffering

for it; for a man may give his body to be burned for an error, a man

may sacrifice a strong body to a stubborn mind: 1 Cor. xiii. 3, Though

I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth

nothing.' And persecuting the contrary: John xvi. 2, They shall put you

out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whoso ever killeth

you will think that he doeth God service.' To apply this:--Many that

live within the kingdom of Antichrist, some are doubtful, some almost

persuaded, some espouse the common prevailing opinions, others adhere

to them with much false zeal and superstition; these are those who are

given up to believe a lie.

Use 1. Information.

1. To show us the reason why so many learned men are captivated by

Antichrist, and live yet in the popish religion, for this is a great

scruple to many. The answer is ready: The Lord hath suffered them to be

deluded by him whose coming is after the working of Satan in all power,

&c.: Rev. xvii. 2, The inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk

with the wine of her fornication.' It is an intoxication; the errors of

that state are plausibly defended and supported by worldly interests.

There is the witchery of worldly allurements, and the intoxicating wine

of errors defended and owned within their bounds and places of their

education and abode; so that men have seemed to lose their

understandings, and not have that advisedness which well becomes a man.

Possibly they may have doubts and checks of conscience, but the name of

the church charmeth them, and worldly magnificence strangely inveigleth

them. They may know that the religion professed by Protestants is

sincere, holy, and saving; but being allured by licentiousness, or

entangled by covetousness, or puffed up with pride, are loth to change,

or are vanquished and astonished with fear of death, and other

inconveniencies; or, it may be, do not use that advised and serious

deliberation, which a matter of salvation requireth. Four causes may be

given:--(1.) Self-confidence. God will show the folly of those that

depend on the strength of their own wit: Prov. iii. 5, 6, Trust in the

Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding:

in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths;' and

therefore will bring to nought the wisdom of the wise, and destroy the

understanding of the prudent, when it is lifted up against the

interests of Christ's kingdom, 1 Cor. i. 19. (2.) Prejudice. The

priests and scribes could readily tell that Christ was to be born in

Bethlehem when Herod sent to consult them, Mat. ii. 4-6; yet who more

obstinate against him that was born there? They expected a temporal

Messiah, and therefore could not see what they saw. What was apparent

to children was a riddle to the rabbis. So they expect some open enemy

of the church to attack it by power and force, little dreaming of a

bishop, &c. (3.) Pride. Many of the Jewish church believed in Christ,

but they did not profess him, lest they should be put out of the

synagogue: John xii. 42, 43, They loved the praise of men more than the

praise of God.' They loved not an hated opinion. Many may fear the Pope

to be Antichrist, but pride and interest will not let them submit to a

change. (4.) The judgment of God is the great cause that men do not, or

will not, know Antichrist; God hath not given them eyes to see, as

Christ was not received in Jerusalem; the things of their peace were

hid from their eyes: Luke xix. 41, 42, He beheld the city, and wept

over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy

day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from

thine eyes.'

2. It showeth us that the prevalency of this wicked one should be no

blemish to providence; for the permission of him is one of God's

dreadful providential dispensations. That it should have such success,

it raiseth atheistical thoughts in weak spirits; yea, it is an offence

to the godly, as it is a prejudice to the truth. But God hereby will

show us:--(1.) That there are deceits and errors as well as truth in

the world; much of choice, not chance; and lest we should think this an

antiquated dispensation, to try the professors of the gospel who lived

in the midst of pagans; it cometh nearer to us. But he that condemneth

all religion on this account, judgeth one man for another's crime,

which is unjust doth as foolishly as he that thinketh there is no true

money because there are some counterfeit pieces. (2.) That God, in

concomitancy with the gospel, will discover his dreadful justice as

well as his wonderful mercy by it, that we may tremble whilst we admire

grace. (3.) That it is a great evil to be deceivers or active promoters

of delusions, and it will not wholly excuse us that we are deceived,

Mat. xv. 14. (4.) What need all serious Christians have to pray to God

not to be led into temptation. Alas! what would become of us if left to

ourselves in an hour of temptation? (5.) Let us fear to slight the

grace offered. Among other threatenings, God threateneth to smite his

people with blindness: Deut. xxviii. 28, The Lord shall smite thee with

madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart.' (6.) What a ready

way to destruction it is to measure religion by worldly interests. This

bred Antichrist, kept him up in the world, and blindeth his seduced

proselytes to this day.

Use 2. Is caution to take heed of spiritual blindness and infatuation,

that this judgment fall not upon us; that God leave us not to our own

lusts, hearts, and counsels, without check and restraint. It may in

part befall God's people. What shall we do to avoid it? (1.) Take heed

of sinning against light, either by sins of omission or commission:

James iv. 17, To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him

it is sin.' They will find it to be sin in the sad effects. (2.) Take

-heed of hypocrisy in the profession of the truth. God oweth the

hypocrite an ill turn, and seemeth to be engaged to discover him before

the congregation: Prov. xxvi. 26, Whose hatred is covered by deceit,

his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation;' and

usually it is by giving him up to some licentious practice or strong

delusion, by which he breaketh the neck of his profession. (3.) Take

heed of pride and carnal self-sufficiency. God may leave his people to

dangerous falls when they make their bosom their oracle, and think to

carry all by the strength of their own understanding: 2 Chron. xxxii.

31, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his

heart.' It is good to consult with God continually. (4.) Take heed of

following the rabble: John iv. 20, Our fathers worshipped in this

mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to

worship,' &c. But learn to see by your own eyes, that you may have sure

evidence you are in God's way, Prov. xxiv. 13, 14.

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SERMON X.

That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had

pleasure in unrighteousness.--2 Thes. II. 12.

THEIR punishment in the other world. Where--(1.) The terribleness of

it; (2.) The righteousness and justice of it.

1. The terribleness: that they all might be damned; that is, filling up

the measure of their obduration, they may at length fall into just

condemnation.

2. The justice and equity of it, which is two ways expressed:--

[1.] Negatively: they believed not the truth; that is, received not the

gospel in the simplicity of it, as revealed by Christ and his apostles,

and recorded in the scriptures, but wilfully, and for their interest's

sake, gave up themselves to these corruptions.

[2.] Positively: had pleasure in unrighteousness. In the 10th verse it

was, They received not the love of the truth;' now when the meritorious

cause is repeated, there is something more added: they had a love to,

and delight in, other things, eudokesantes en te adikia. Here two

things must be explained.

1. What is adikia--unrighteousness?

2. What is eudoki'a--taking pleasure in unrighteousness?

1. What is adikia--unrighteousness? Righteousness is giving every one

his due; and denying them their due is unrighteousness. There is a

giving man his due, and a giving God his due: Mat. xxii. 21, Render

unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that

are God's.' Righteousness is often put for giving man his due: Titus

ii. 12, That we should live soberly, righteously,' &c.; and giving God

his due, which is worship and reverence: Ps. xxix. 2, Give unto the

Lord the glory due unto his name;' and again, Ps. xcvi. 8, Give unto

the Lord the glory due to his name; bring an offering and come into his

courts.' Now this unrighteousness here spoken of is principally meant

in the latter sense. False ways of worship are the greatest

unrighteousness that can be practised; for the duty that we owe to God

is the most righteous thing in the world. Now, by false worship you

withdraw the glory of God from him, and communicate it to another.

Worship is his own proper due, both by the light of nature and

scripture; and therefore the Gentiles, which had the light of nature,

are said to detain the truth, en adiki'a,' Rom. i. 18. Why? The reason

is rendered in the after verses. Ver. 23, They changed the glory of God

into an image made like a corruptible man.' Ver. 25, They changed the

truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more

than the Creator.' This was their adiki'a, their unrighteousness, or

injurious dealing with God. So the antichristians that had the light of

scripture, though under palliated pretences, changed the truth of God

into a lie, loved their own errors more than simple and plain

Christianity, or the true knowledge of God, and diverted the worship

from himself unto an idol.

2. They had pleasure in unrighteousness;' in these things they please

themselves, not lapse into it out of simple ignorance and error of

mind. And so the apostle parallels the two great apostasies: that from

the light of nature, and that from the light of the gospel. Light of

nature: Rom. i. 32, Not only do these things, but have pleasure in them

that do them.' Light of scripture: Have pleasure in unrighteousness.'

They are mad upon their idols and images; not only are idolaters, but

delight in idolatry and image-worship: Ps. xcvii. 7, That boast

themselves of idols.'

Now to observe some things.

1. Errors of judgment, as well as sins of practice, may bring damnation

upon the souls of men. All sins do in their own nature tend to

damnation: Rom. vi. 23, For the wages of sin is death.' And errors of

judgment are sins, for they are contrary to the rule or law of God: 1

John iii. 4, Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law, for

sin is the transgression of the law.' Any swerving from the law is sin;

and they are inductive of other sins; for if the eye be blind, the

whole body is full of darkness.' Mat. vi. 23; it perverts our zeal.

There is nothing so mischievous, wicked, and cruel, that a man blinded

with error will not attempt against those that differ from him: John

xvi. 2, They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh,

that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth. God service,' A

blind horse is full of mettle, but ever and anon stumbleth. Therefore,

if a man be not guided by sound judgment, his zealous affections will

precipitate him into mischief. As the Jews, that persecuted Christ and

his apostles, had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge,' Rom.

x. 2, so the Popish zealots; with what fury have they persecuted the

innocent and sincere servants of Christ! The papists would be angry if

we should not reckon St Dominic a zealous man; and the poor Albigenses

felt the bitter effects of that zeal, in the destruction of many

thousands by inhuman butcheries and villanies about Toulouse, &c. The

Lord deliver us from the furies of transported, brain-sick zealots!

2. Though all errors may bring damnation upon the souls of men, yet

some more especially than others may be said to be damning; as 2 Peter

ii. 1, Some shall bring in damnable heresies.' Now, this may be either

from the matter or manner of holding them:--

[1.] From the matter, if destructive of the way of salvation by Christ.

Some are utterly inconsistent with salvation and eternal life, as

errors in the fundamentals in religion. As suppose that a man should

reject or refuse Christ after a sufficient proposal of the gospel to

him, there is no question but this is damning unbelief: John iii. 19,

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and

men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.'

But yet we are not to say that alone damneth. There are other things

necessary to salvation contained under that general truth. The

scripture saith, John xvii. 3, And this is life eternal, that they

might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast

sent.' There is the sum of what is necessary to salvation: that God is

to be known, loved, obeyed, worshipped, and enjoyed; and the Lord Jesus

to be owned as our Redeemer and Saviour, to bring us home to God, and

to procure for us the gifts of pardon and life, and this life to be

begun here, and perfected in heaven. Other things are of moment to

clear these necessary truths, but they may be all reduced thereunto.

The truth is, the question about the matter to be believed is not what

divine revelations are necessary to be believed or rejected, when

sufficiently proposed, for all points, without exception, are so; but

what are simply and absolutely necessary to eternal life, and these are

points of faith, and practice, and obedience. The points of faith are a

knowledge of God in Christ; and practice, that we be regenerated: John

iii. 5, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot

enter into the kingdom of God.' And live a holy life: Heb. xii. 14,

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see

the Lord.'

[2.] From the manner. (1.) When men profess what they believe not, and

voluntarily choose error for worldly ends, though it be a less error

against the scripture, and consistent with the main tenor of salvation,

yet, if taken up against conscience, for by-ends, it is a matter of sad

consequence; for this is living in a known sin. Some may be blinded for

a time, out of terror and compassion, and their case is sad till they

express solemn repentance; but when there is a reluctation against

clear light, and an obstinacy in that reluctation, this man is

condemned in himself: Titus iii. 11, Such a man is subverted and

sinneth, being condemned of himself.' There cannot be a greater

argument of a will unsubdued to God, than to stand out against

conviction out of secular respects. This is to love darkness more than

light, and argueth such pravity of heart as is inconsistent with faith

and salvation. Some ignorant souls may hold dangerous errors, and which

to others would be damnable; yet they may not actually damn them,

because they do not rebel against the light; and may be retracted by a

general repentance or seeking of pardon for all their known or unknown

sins: Ps. xix. 12, 13, Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me

from secret faults: keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;

let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I

shall be innocent from the great transgression.'

(2.) When they are vented by some professor of Christianity, to the

seducing of others, and rending of the church, and drawing disciples

after them, this addeth a new guilt to their errors, and maketh them

the more damnable: Acts xx. 30, Also of your own selves shall men

arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.'

These are properly heretics and ringleaders of sects; therefore

heresies are reckoned among the works of the flesh: Gal. v. 20,

Emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies;' increasing their own

doom and judgment. These, under a Christian name, seduce and lead away

the church from Christ; they pervert the holy ways of God, and draw his

people from serving him in spirit and truth.

(3.) When, though they should not err fundamentally, they so far

debauch Christianity, as that God giveth them up to believe a lie, and

to take pleasure in unrighteousness, that is, to defend and maintain

apparent corruptions of Christian doctrine and worship. Of doctrine,

for it is here said they believe a lie, and they believe not the truth.

Of worship, for it is said they take pleasure in unrighteousness. A

party thus given up by God we should shun, as we would shun a plague or

come out of Bedlam; for these men have lost their spiritual wits, and

see not that which the common light of Christianity doth disprove,

however they retain the name of Christians, and make a cry of the

church! the church! as the Jews did of the temple of the Lord, and

retain some truth among them; for such a party is here described.

(4.) When there is gross negligence, or not taking pains to know

better, it is equivalent to reluctation or standing out against light;

crassa negligentia dolus est--there is a deceit in laziness or affected

ignorance: John iii. 20, They will not come to the light, lest their

deeds should be reproved;' 2 Peter iii. 5, They are willingly

ignorant.' Those that please themselves in the ignorance of any truth,

err not only in their minds, but their hearts. It is the duty of God's

people to understand what is his will: Eph. v. 17, Be not unwise, but

understanding what the will of the Lord is.' And it is their practice:

Rom. xii. 2, That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and

perfect will of God;' Ps. i. 2, His delight is in the law of the Lord,

and therein doth he meditate day and night.' We should be searching

still. But when men will not know what they have a mind to hate, it

argueth a secret sore, and suspicion of the truth, and are loth to

follow it too close, lest it cross their lusts and interests.

3. That the way and errors of Popery are damnable, and it is very

unsafe living in that society and combination. I prove it--(1.) Because

they live in wilful disobedience to God. They violate the manifest

commandments of God, while they hold it lawful to worship pictures and

images, to make pictures of the Trinity, to invocate saints and angels,

to deny laymen the cup in the sacrament, to adore the sacrament, to

prohibit certain orders of men and women to marry, to celebrate the

public service in a language which ordinarily men and women that assist

understand not. In all these things they offer apparent violence to

God's precepts. And that their whole worship is polluted with a gross

superstition; as, for instance, to worship images is expressly against

God's word: Ps. xcvii. 7, Confounded be all they that worship graven

images, that boast themselves of idols. Worship him, all ye gods.' The

scripture, you see, denounceth confusion to all worshippers of images,

and they are reckoned as enemies of Christ's kingdom (for it is applied

to Christ, Heb. i. 6, And let all the angels of God worship him') that:

would set up the worship and service of them in his church, in the

exercise of their religion, especially those who glory in them, and

boast of them, and set them forth as the glory of their way and

worship. No; he disdaineth all this relative worship at or before

images, which men would give unto him, and showeth that all the powers

of this world and the other, angels and potentates, should immediately

worship Christ. For the second point, picturing the Trinity, God hath

not only forbidden it, but argued against it: Deut. iv. 15, 16, Take

therefore good heed unto yourselves, for ye saw no similitude, when the

Lord spake to you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest ye

corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of

anything male or female.' See how cautelous God is to prevent this

abuse, and yet how boldly men practise it. For the third instance, the

invocation of saints and angels, our Lord hath taught us how to repel

that temptation: Mat. iv. 10, It is written, thou shalt worship the

Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;' that religious service

and worship is due only to God. No creature can claim it without

sacrilege, nor can we give it to them without idolatry. And God being

so jealous of his honour, every Christian should be careful that he

doth not divert it from him. They have many distinctions to excuse

themselves to the world, but I doubt how they will excuse themselves to

God. For the fourth particular, adoring the sacrament, I shall speak to

again anon; that is a mean, not an object of worship. The fifth,

prohibiting certain orders of men and women to marry, which the apostle

calleth doctrines of devils: 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, In the latter times some

shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and

doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their

conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry,' &c. For the

sixth, celebrating public service in an unknown tongue, it is contrary

to the apostle's reasoning: 1 Cor. xiv. 14-17, For if I pray in an

unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the

understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with

the understanding also; else, when thou shalt bless with the spirit,

how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy

giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? for

thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.' For the

seventh, communion in one kind, this is against Christ's express

institution: Mat. xxvi. 26, 27, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and

brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my

body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them,

saying, Drink ye all of it.' The apostle supposeth that every one can

examine himself: 1 Cor. xi. 28, But let a man examine himself, and so

let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.' Now for this

usurping synagogue to come as they do, with a non obstante to the

statutes of God, who can join with them in these corruptions and

usurpations without peril of salvation? (2.) That the way of Popery is

damnable, because they deprive the people of the means of salvation,

contrary to the express injunctions from God: John v. 39, Search the

scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are

they which testify of me;' Col. iii. 16, Let the word of Christ dwell

in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in

psalms and hymns.' The saints are commended, Acts xvii. 11, In that

they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the

scriptures daily, whether those things were so;' and 2 Tim. iii. 15,

that he knew the scriptures, which are able to make wise unto

salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.' This is the seed of

life, food of souls, rule of faith and manners, our strength against

temptations: 1 John ii. 14, I have written unto you, young men, because

ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome

the wicked one.' Now to deprive the Lord's people of the bread of life,

and word of life, what is it but to leave them to perish?

The great charge is, they have pleasure in unrighteousness, that is,

delight in idolatry, and corrupt or false worship, which is the

greatest unrighteousness man can be guilty of. To evidence this, let us

inquire--(1.) What is idolatry? (2.) Prove how notoriously they are

guilty of it.

First, What is idolatry? It is a worshipping of a creature with divine

worship, and whosoever giveth divine worship to a creature committeth

idolatry. This proposition is evident in the scripture; as when the

Israelites worshipped the calf, literal or metaphorical idolatry, they

are called idolaters: 1 Cor. x. 7, Neither be ye idolaters, as were

some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink,

and rose up to play.' And the covetous, that giveth that delight and

trust to his wealth which is only due to God, is called an idolater:

Eph. v. 5, Nor covetous man, who is an idolater;' and in many other

places.

Secondly, Now, that the papists are guilty of this, I prove:--

1. By the several kinds of their idolatry: they have more variety of

objects of worship than any society of men that ever lived in the

world.

First, Angels are creatures, and that they worship angels them selves

confess. They consecrate churches unto them, offer solemn prayers unto

them, and own the adoring them, though an angel forbiddeth this

adoration: Rev. xix. 10, And he said unto me, See thou do it not, I am

thy fellow-servant,' &c. And St Paul telleth us, that they that worship

angels do not hold the head, Col. i. 18, 19. So that angel-worship

proveth to be a damnable error.

Secondly, The adoration of saints, to whom they give religious worship,

and invoke them as helpers, and honour them with fastings, watchings,

and prayers, as Suarez acknowledged; and yet God is express that he

will not give his glory to another,' Isa. xlii. 8. They are to be

honoured indeed for imitation, but not adored for religion.

The third object is the Virgin Mary, to whom they pray more than they

do to God. In the rosary there is this prayer: Beata Maria, salva omnes

qui te glorificant--and we beseech thee to hear us, good Lady; that

address, Monstra te esse matrem, and one divided, inter ubera et

vulnera, the breasts of the Virgin and wounds of Christ, as if the milk

of the one were as sovereign and as precious as the blood of the other.

It were endless to rake in this filthy puddle: how many books are there

concluded with Laus Deo et Virgini Deiparae? that sometimes there is a

more present relief by commemorating the name of Mary than by calling

on the name of the Lord Jesus; in their exclamations, Jesu! Maria!--how

often in their Te Deum, We praise thee, O Lady?

Fourthly, Adoration of images. This is more foul than all the former,

because directed to a more gross object. This is prophesied of

Antichrist, that he and his abettors shall worship idols of silver, and

gold, and brass, and wood, and stone.' Rev. ix. 20. Now tell a papist

of this, and they say they do not terminate their worship in the image,

but in the party whom it representeth; the same said the pagan, Non

lapidem sed Jovem in lapide (Julian the apostate). But God hath

forbidden bowing to or before an image.

Fifthly, The worshipping of the cross, not only by cupping, that is,

bowing, cringing, but prayers. O crux, ave! spes unica hoc passionis

tempore, auge piis justitiam reisque dona veniam--All hail, cross! our

only hope this time of passion; augment the godly's devotion, and

forgive the transgression of the guilty.

Sixthly, The bread in the sacrament; the papists give it cultum

latriae, that worship which is due to God. Those heathens worshipped

living animals, but these adore a piece of bread, kneel to it in their

chapels and oratories, yea, in the midst of the streets when it is

carried in procession. These are the idols whom they worship; and what

hope of salvation is there in a religion where the heart is turned so

much from God to the creature?

2. That they are more culpable than the heathens. (1.) As to their

hypocrisy, by distinctions and veil of piety wherewith they disguise

all this; for this delight in unrighteousness was called before, the

deceivableness of unrighteousness.' They profess to abhor idols, and

yet worship images, and make that a point of Christianity which is

directly contrary to the drift of it, which is to teach us to worship

God in the Spirit. (2.) As to their helps against it, the pagans were

never taught to do better; though they sinned against the light of

nature in worshipping God by images, yet they had no scripture, no such

express prohibitions to caution them as we have from God. They pretend

to believe the scriptures, yet how do they seek to evade the force of

them by crafty distinctions that will never satisfy conscience, though

they help to blind the mind and harden the heart. That which I urge is

this, they were never interdicted this kind of worship by their gods;

but these know that it is severely forbidden by our God, and the second

commandment so stareth in their faces that it is expunged out of their

catechisms; and Vasquez is bold to affirm that the second commandment

is ceremonial. Lactantius of old said, Non est dubium, religio nulla

est ubi cujusque simulachrum est. (3.) The Pagans did adore their gods

in their images, but never was any so sottish among them to imagine

that an image was to be adored with the same degree of worship as God

himself; but this is the corrupt doctrine of the papists, that an image

is to be worshipped with the same worship wherewith God himself is

worshipped. Imagini Christi latria debetur (Aquinas); that is, the

proper worship of God.

Use 1. To show how necessary it is to take heed that we be not found

among the followers of Antichrist, since these errors are damnable.

Salvation and damnation are not trifles, nor matters to be played

withal. Surely we need have our eyes in our head, and not to be

hoodwinked, when we are upon the brink of a bottomless gulf. Both sides

lay damnation at one another's door: they, for our departing from the

catholic church, out of which is no salvation, as they pretend; we,

upon their departing from the catholic faith and simplicity of the

gospel. Now external order is not of such consideration as faith; but

when they will be able to prove that Christ hath settled this order in

the church, that all his subjects should be obedient to one universal

visible head, and that this head is the Pope, and therefore when their

very order is an encroachment and usurpation, to depart from them is to

return to Christ. Again, where is salvation most likely to be found?

rather with them who seek all their religion in the scriptures, and

stick there, or with those who, not contented with the apostolical

doctrine contained in the scriptures, have brought in unwritten

traditions as an equal rule of faith with scripture, and the sacrifice

of the mass and purgatory, the religious invocations of saints, and

many other enormities, and uphold these innovations with all manner of

tyranny and cruelty exercised upon Christ's faithful servants? If men

go to heaven without prayers which they understand, and scriptures,

half Christ's sacrament, a piece of his merits, and some superstitious

observances, yea, plain idolatry, then the way to heaven is sooner to

be had in Popery. But he that hath but half an eye may soon see which

is the surer side. Surely the surest way to avoid damnation is to avoid

sin. Now, where are souls so much in danger of sin as in the Roman

society, where so little is given to internal life and piety, and so

much to external pomp and service; and where errors are so palpable,

that either men do not believe them with their hearts, or, if their

hearts were upright and not perverse and obstinate, could not believe

them? But just so is the way of Popery to true Christianity. Surely

whatever it be to papists, it would be absolutely damnable to us, as

wilfully to thrust ourselves upon apparent ruin. There is a cavil or

pretence which I shall speak unto on this occasion: that many

Protestants confess papists may be saved in their faith; whereas they

hold Protestants and other heretics may not be saved out of the

catholic church; and therefore it is safe to enter into that way which

is safe by the consent of both parts.

Ans. (1.) Men's opinions are no ground of faith. Persons may be in a

sad, woeful case, that men speak well of: Luke vi. 26, Woe unto you

when all men shall speak well of you!' It is not what man saith, but

what the word of God saith. Now the word speaketh terrible things to

them: Them that perish, and that they all might be damned who believed

not the truth, &c. (2.) The word of God teacheth us to judge of the

way, rather than persons, who stand or fall to their own master. The

way is damnable. If, on the one side, there be charity to some persons

that sin of invincible ignorance, and are saved as by fire,' 1 Cor.

iii. 13, which the other side will not grant to a contrary persuasion;

it argueth charity on one side, which hopeth all things; malice on the

other, who rashly condemn men without evidence, yea, against it. (3.)

If this argument would hold good, it had been better, in Christ and the

apostles' time, to be a Jewish proselyte than a Christian. Christ

acknowledged salvation is of the Jews,'--their promises of adoption and

glory; but the Jews pronounced him and his followers

accursed--scourged, imprisoned them; yet did not get so far as papists,

to murder and butcher them. Suppose a little time that Catholics owned

Donatists as brethren, allowed their baptism; but Donatists are

re-baptised, and upon pain of damnation require all so to be, and say,

Save thy soul, become a Christian. Now a pagan should rather by this

argument join himself to Donatists than Catholics. Lastly, the argument

may be retorted--A Protestant keepeth himself to his Bible, baptismal

covenant, creed, but denieth many things which papists believe and

practise, as papal infallibility, transubstantiation, purgatory,

invocation of saints, worshipping of images. They cannot but say

Protestants are in the right.

Use 2. Observe the degrees of obduration, not receiving the truth in

the love of it, believing a lie, discarding truth, and then taking

pleasure in unrighteousness, and then cometh damnation.

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SERMON XI.

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren,

beloved of the Lord, because the Lord hath from the beginning chosen

you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of

the truth.--2 Thes. II. 13.

THE adversative particle but showeth what respect these words have to

what went before. He had spoken of God's direful judgment, of sending

strong delusion on them that had no love to the pure truth, but sinned

against light, and had pleasure in the false worship and superstitions

countenanced by the world. Now, lest the Thessalonians should be

troubled at this sad prediction, he showeth what cause he had to bless

God in their behalf. The subjoining of this consolation doth teach us

three things:--

1. That it is a great favour of God to us to escape antichristian

errors. They are so dangerous in their own nature, so insinuative and

inveigling by plausible appearance, and accompanied with such worldly

baits and advantages, that it is a great mercy that God hath taught us

better things. But then be sure you be in the right out of conscience

and evidence, not out of faction and interest; and that you hate Popery

out of the love of the truth, rather than because you are out of the

reach of the temptation. However, it is a great mercy that God keepeth

off the temptation till we are better settled in religion.

2. That the election of God giveth a people great advantages against

errors, especially against the impostures of Antichrist; for when he

speaketh of the sad estate of those who are seduced by the man of sin,

he presently addeth, But we are bound to give thanks to God for you,

for he hath chosen you to salvation.' You will say the Thessalonians

received the gospel before these corruptions were brought into the

church; but, though Antichrist was not then in being, and this corrupt

Christianity not then set afoot, yet there were some preparations for

it. The mystery of iniquity already worketh, and they were preserved

from the taint of it by the election of God; for either God suffereth

not the elect to be deceived in momentous points, or sooner or later he

reduceth them: The purpose of God according to election must stand,'

Rom. ix. 11; and Rom. xi. 7, The election hath obtained, and the rest

were blinded;' so 2 Tim. ii. 18, 19, They have overthrown the faith of

some, nevertheless the foundation of the Lord standeth sure.' Still the

elect of God escape the seduction, and especially antichristian error:

Rev. xiii. 8, The dwellers upon earth shall worship him, whose names

are not written in the Lamb's book of life.'

3. How careful we should be to support the hearts of God's people, when

we speak of his terrible judgments on the wicked. This was the practice

of the apostles everywhere; as when the author to the Hebrews had

spoken of the dreadful estate of apostates, whose end is to be burned:'

Heb. vi. 9, But we are persuaded better things of you, and things that

accompany salvation, though we thus speak;' he did not condemn them all

as apostates, nor would discourage them by that terrible threatening,

So again, after another terrible passage: Heb. x. 39, But we are not of

them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe to the

saving of the soul.' Once more, when another apostle had spoken of the

sin unto death, which is not to be prayed for, he presently addeth, 1

John v. 18, 19, Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not; but he that is

begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in

wickedness.' Zuinglius saith, Bone Christiane, haec nihil ad te,

&c.--Good Christian, this is not thy portion, when he had flashed the

terrors of the Lord in the face of sinners. The reasons of this are

partly with respect to the saints, who, sometimes out of weakness and

infirmity, and sometimes out of tenderness of conscience, are apt to be

startled, electorum corda semper ad se sollicite pudeant (Gregor.) We

deserve such dreadful judgments, and therefore fear them; partly, with

respect to ourselves, that we may rightly divide the word of truth: 2

Tim. ii. 15, Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that

needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.' Give

every one his portion; make not their hearts sad whom God would not

make sad; and, therefore, they are much to blame who, in reproving

sinners, stab a saint at the heart, and take the doctrine but for a

colour to make a perverse application. The apostle here useth more

tenderness: God shall send them strong delusion. But we are bound

always to give thanks for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord; because

the Lord hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through

sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.'

In the words are two things:--

1. An acknowledgment of this obligation to give thanks for them: but we

are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, &c.

2. The matter or particular cause of his thanksgiving: because the Lord

hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, &c.

First, There are--(1.) The titles he giveth: brethren,' and beloved of

the Lord.' They were not only beloved of the apostle, but the Lord

himself; both with an antecedent love, bestowing grace upon them, and

also a consequent love, they believing in his name, living according to

his precepts, suffering for the truth. (2.) His obligation to bless God

in their behalf: We are bound to give thanks to God always for you.'

There is--First, Giving thanks,' which showeth his esteem of the

blessing. Secondly, Always,' which showeth how deeply he was affected

with it. (3.) Ophei'lomen, We are bound;' he acknowledged a debt and

bond of duty. We must not only give thanks to God for our own election,

but the election of others, out of the law of brotherly love, we loving

them as our own souls, and respect to the glory of God, which is

promoted by the salvation of others as well as ourselves.

Secondly, The matter of the thanksgiving, their election to salvation,

which is two ways amplified:--(1.) By the antiquity of it: from the

beginning;' that is, from everlasting, for so it is taken sometimes; as

John i. 1, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God;'

that is, before the first point of time, before God began to create all

things. (2.) From the means of its accomplishment. Two are

mentioned--one on God's part, the sanctification of the Spirit;' the

other on ours, the belief of the truth.' From the whole observe:--

Doct. That the great matter of our thanksgiving to God is his eternal

election of us, whether for ourselves or others; this is that which

leaveth a debt, or an indispensable obligation, always to bless and

praise his name.

In pursuing this point I shall first consider how election is here set

forth; secondly, give you the reasons why this is the great matter of

thanksgiving:--

1. How it is here set forth.

[1.] By the rise of it, which is the mere love of God; for he calleth

these brethren, beloved of the Lord;' and that the only original cause

and motive of election is God's love and grace. This is asserted in

other scriptures; as, for instance, in the types of election and

reprobation: Rom. ix. 13, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.'

God's respect to Jacob above Esau is ascribed to his love. So to the

posterity of Jacob, whom he distinguished from other nations: Deut.

vii. 7, 8, The Lord did not set his love upon you, and choose you,

because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest

of all people; but because the Lord loved you.' And still the Lord's

election is an election of grace. There is no antecedent worthiness in

the people whom he chooseth: 2 Tim. i. 9, Not according to our works,

but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given in Christ

Jesus, before the world began.' Now grace is nothing but the love of

God working freely and of its own inclination. [2.] The act itself: he

hath chosen you;' making a distinction between them and others. Upon

them he shall send strong delusion, but you hath he chosen to salvation

through the belief of the truth. Those whom God hath chosen he

separates from the world of the ungodly, or the corrupt heap of

mankind, and consecrateth them unto himself; so that election is not a

taking all, but some, and passing by others: 1 John v. 19, We are of

God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' A choice implieth a

setting apart some for objects of his grace and instruments of his

glory in the world, Ps. iv. 3. And the number is certain, for their

names are said to be written in the rolls and records of heaven, when

others are not written: Luke x. 20, Rejoice not that the spirits are

subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in

heaven:' Phil. iv. 3, Whose names are written in the book of life.' And

others are said not to be written: Rev. xvii. 8, And they that dwell on

the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of

life from the foundation of the world.' And Rev. xx. 15, And whosoever

was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of

fire;' namely, those that perish by these delusions.

[3.] It is set forth by the antiquity of it: from the beginning.' Eph.

i. 4, He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world;' and

Mat. xxv. 34, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom

prepared for you from the foundation of the world;' namely, as they

belonged to his choice election. Love in God is of an old standing,

even from all eternity. His thoughts and purposes of love were towards

us a long time before they were discovered. Surely the ancientness of

his love should beget an honourable esteem of it in our hearts; for who

are we, that the thoughts of God should be taken up about us so long

ago? And what is from everlasting is to everlasting, Ps. ciii. 17; for

what is from eternity is to eternity, and dependeth not upon the

accidents of time.

[4.] By the means of its accomplishment. Two are mentioned, one on

God's part, the other on ours--the sanctification of the Spirit, and

the belief of the truth.' Where note:--

(1.) That God's decree is both of ends and means, for all his purposes

are executed by fit means. He that hath chosen us to salvation hath

also chosen us to be holy, and to believe the truth. And without the

means the end cannot be obtained; for without faith and holiness no

grown person shall see God or escape condemnation. As to faith, it is

clear: John iii. 36, He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on

him.' And holiness is indispensably necessary: Heb. xii. 14, Without

holiness no man shall see the Lord.' God had assured Paul, Acts xxvii.

22, That there should be no loss of any man's life amongst them, except

of the ship;' and afterwards, ver. 31, Paul telleth them, Except these

abide in the ship ye cannot be saved.' How could the assurance given to

Paul from God, and Paul's caution to the mariners stand together? Doth

the purpose of God depend upon the will and actions of men? I

answer--Not as a cause from whence it receiveth its force and strength,

but as a means appointed also by God to the execution of his decree.

For by the same decree God appointeth the event, what he will do, and

the means by which he will have it to be done; and the Lord revealing

by his word this conjunction of end and means, there is a necessity of

duty lying upon man^to use these means, and not to expect the end

without them. God in tended to save all in the ship, and yet the

mariners must abide in the ship. And therefore, what God hath joined

together let no man separate. If we separate these things, God doth not

change his counsel, but we subvert his order to our own destruction.

The scripture maketh it a grievous sin, a tempting of God, to expect

the end without the use of means. In vain is the cavil, then, of those

who would impeach the doctrine of God's free and unchangeable will

concerning the salvation of the elect, upon the pretence that it taketh

away the duty of man, and the necessity of our faith and obedience. No;

God executeth his decree by the proper means. Arid wretched is their

inference who say, If I be elected I shall be saved. No salvation can

be obtained but by the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of

the truth. Arid worse is their confidence who profess assurance of

their election, and yet walk after the flesh. No; till a man purge

himself from youthful lusts he is not a vessel of honour sanctified and

set apart for God, 2 Tim. ii. 21. And in vain do we hope to go to

heaven till we take the way that leadeth thither. Devils have been cast

out thence for unholiness, and therefore unholy men shall never be

taken in there.

(2.) That these things are not causes of election, but fruits of

election, and means of execution of God's decree about our salvation.

Sanctification is not a cause, but a subordinate end or means: Eph. i.

4, He hath chosen us to be holy;' not because we are holy, but that we

might be holy. So 1 Peter i. 2, Elect according to the foreknowledge of

God, through the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.' Not

elected for it, but through it. When God had all mankind in his

prospect and view, he freely chose out some to be sanctified and saved.

We come to the possession of it through sanctification, that is, by it

as a means. So for the other; faith is a fruit of election, not a

foreseen cause: Acts ii. 47, The Lord added to the church daily such as

should be saved.' None cometh to the church but those whom God draweth,

and they are actually added to the church by a profession of faith; and

such as should be saved were as many as were ordained to salvation Acts

xiii. 48, And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' The

whole city were met together to hear, but as many as were ordained to

eternal life believed. It is not said, as many as believed were

ordained to eternal life, but the contrary; faith is not the cause of

election, but election is the cause of faith.

(3.) That being the necessary fruits, they are also evidences of our

election. All that are sanctified by the Spirit and believe the truth

belong to the election of God. Election itself is a secret in God's

bosom, and is only manifested to us by the effects; and what are the

necessary effects but sanctification by the Spirit, and a sound belief

of the gospel?

First, The sanctification of the Spirit is not only an external

dedication to God, but an internal and real change. Some are externally

dedicated, and may trample under foot the blood of the covenant whereby

they are sanctified: Heb. x. 29, Of how much sorer punishment, suppose

ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of

God; and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was

sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of

grace?' That is, were in external covenant with God, and visibly

dedicated. But there is another sanctification, which is the fruit of

the Spirit, working a real change in them: 1 Cor. vi. 11, And such were

some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are justified, in the name of

the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' Find this, and you find

a sufficient evidence, namely, if you become new creatures, and be

enabled to forsake sin, and follow after that which is pleasing in the

sight of God. Sanctification of the Spirit is not so much known by

dedication and profession, but by the real and fixed inclination of

your souls to God and heaven, and living accordingly; you are turned to

God, and live to God.

Secondly, Your belief of the truth, that is, of the gospel. Now this is

meant not of a dead faith, or such a cold assent as only begets an

opinion in us of the truth of Christian religion, but such a lively

faith as bringeth us under the power of it; for it is opposed to them

that do not receive the truth in the love of it, ver. 10: To them that

believed not the truth, because they had pleasure in unrighteousness,'

ver. 12; that lived under the power of fleshly and worldly lusts. And

it is spoken of them who had received the truth, so as to obey it and

suffer for it, as the Thessalonians are described all along; and in

short, such a belief of the truth as caused them to enter into covenant

with Christ, and make conscience of their fidelity to him. And here in

this verse we learn that a bare belief of the truth doth not save,

unless accompanied with the sanctification of the Spirit; and therefore

both must be taken together. When the word cometh to us, not in word

only, but in power and much assurance, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' it

is an infallible evidence of our election of God, 1 Thes. i. 5. Alas!

many have a general cold belief of the gospel, that never felt the

effect of it upon their hearts.

(4.) Observe the necessary connection that is between both these means,

the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth.

First, There is a necessary connection between them, as between the

cause and the effect; for none are powerfully drawn to believe in

Christ but such as are sanctified by his Spirit. It is not in the power

of any creature to incline us to God, or bring us to come to him by

Christ. But this work is wholly reserved to the Spirit. And so the Lord

himself doth powerfully bring to pass his own decrees, as by Christ

redeeming, so by the Spirit sanctifying. The Spirit is the author both

of faith and holiness. Saving grace is called a new creature: 2 Cor. v.

17, Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;' Eph. ii.

10, For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good

works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.'

And to create is the work of a divine power. Creature and creator are

relatives. And certainly the noblest creature, such as the new creature

is, cannot be framed by any but God. It is called a new birth, and the

new birth is only from the Spirit, John iii. 5, 6. Well, then, these

are fitly coupled, the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the

truth, that God's work may make way for ours.

Secondly, There is the connection of concomitancy between the gospel

and the Spirit. The Spirit only goeth along with the gospel, and no

other doctrine; and so both external and internal grace are of God:

John xvii. 17, Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth.' It was

fit that a supernatural doctrine should be accompanied with a

supernatural operation and power. How else should it be known to be of

God? The truth and the Spirit are inseparable companions. Where there

is little of God known, there is little of his Spirit. As in the

natural truth revealed to the heathens, somewhat God showed unto them,

Rom. i. 19. In the darker revelation to the Jews there is but a fainter

degree of the Spirit; but grace and truth come by Jesus Christ.' There

goeth along with the doctrine of the gospel a mighty spirit of

holiness; for thereby God would prove the verity and truth of this

religion, and suitably to the rich mercy prepared for us in Christ.

Thirdly, There is a subordination of faith to this work of the Spirit

by the truth; for the greatest things work not till they be considered

and believed: 1 Thes. ii. 13, Ye received it, not as the word of men,

but as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually also

in you that believe.' A sound belief produceth strong affections, and

strong affections govern our practice and conversation. So that fitly

are these things united, as the fruits of our election and means of

salvation.

2. Why this is the great matter of our thanksgiving to God. That I

shall evidence in the following considerations:--

[1.] That thanksgiving to God is a great and necessary duty, expressly

enjoined by him, and expected from us: 1 Thes. v. 18, In everything

give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you in Christ

Jesus.' When God hath interposed his will, all debates are silenced. If

there were nothing else in the case, this is motive enough to a

gracious heart; for the fundamental reason of all obedience is the will

of God. Our thankfulness is no benefit to God, yet he is pleased with

it, as it showeth our honesty and ingenuity. And to us Christians, the

very life and soul of oar religion is thankfulness; therefore, God will

have us continually exercised in it: Heb. xiii. 15, Let us offer the

sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving

thanks unto his name.' As our understanding was given us to think of

God, and know him; so our speech was given us to speak of God, and

praise him. We praise God for all his works, we give him thanks for

such as are beneficial to us. In praise, we ascribe all honour,

excellency, and perfection unto him. In giving thanks, we express what

he hath done for ourselves or others. Now this must be done

continually, for God is continually beneficial unto us, by daily

mercies giving us new matter of praise and thanksgiving. Besides, there

are some mercies so great, that they should never be forgotten.

[2.] That we are to give thanks chiefly for spiritual and eternal

mercies: Eph. i. 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly

places in Christ.' For we cannot give thanks rightly without a just

esteem of the mercy we give thanks for. But spiritual and eternal

mercies do much excel those that are temporal and transitory. We are

bound to bless the Lord for temporal favours and the comforts of this

life, but a renewed heart is most taken up with spiritual and heavenly

blessings. A man may give thanks carnally as well as pray carnally. A

carnal man in prayer giveth vent to the desires of the flesh, James iv.

3. So in blessing God he may speak from the relish of the flesh; though

usually carnal men seldom give thanks to God: Hosea xii. 8, I am become

rich, I have found me out substance,' &c. Surely spiritual blessings

should have the pre-eminence, because they concern our well-being, and

they discriminate us from others, which temporal mercies do not:

Eccles. ix. 1, 2, For all this I considered in my heart, even to

declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works,

are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all

that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event

to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good, to the clean, and to

the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not;

as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that

feareth an oath.' The wicked have many of these mercies: Ps. xvii. 14,

From men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose

belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure; they are full of children,

and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.' And they may own

God in them as pleased, and well satisfied with the prosperity of the

flesh, or as desirous to have more.

[3.] That the best prospect we have of God's goodness to us, as to

those spiritual mercies, is in election.

(1.) There we see all our blessings in their rise, fountain, and bosom

cause, which is the eternal love and grace of God. Dulcius ex ipso

fonte--waters are sweetest and freshest in their fountain. There we see

that antecedent love which provided a Redeemer for us, which should be

matter of continual love and reverence to us, John iii. 16. There we

see the rich preparations of grace in the new covenant, which could

never have entered into our hearts if elective love had not provided

them for us, 1 Cor. ii. 9. There we see what it was that disposed all

those providences that conduced to our good birth, education,

acquaintance, relations. Alas! we knew not the means of all these

things, but elective love was at work for us, to cast all

circumstances, that we might be best taken in our month, [3] Rom. viii.

28. There we see what it was that made all the means effectual to draw

us unto God: Jer. xxxi. 3, He loved us with an everlasting love.'

(2.) It showeth us the Lord's distinguishing grace, and who it was that

made us differ from others, who are left to perish in their sins. All

are not called, and why we? John xiv. 22, Judas saith unto him (not

Iscariot), Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and

not unto the world?' Yea, many mighty and many noble are not called, 1

Cor. i. 26. God taketh not all, nor many of the highest in esteem among

men, not many wise and prudent: Mat. xi. 25, 26, At that time Jesus

answered and said, I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,

because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast

revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy

sight.' Yea, many others are left to perish by their own delusions. The

reprobates are specula judicii divini. The judgments of God on the

wicked do exceedingly amplify his mercies towards us. It was the mere

elective love of God, issuing forth by his powerful and differencing

grace, that put the distinction between us and others. Surely his

peculiar love to ourselves doth most affect us.

(3.) There we see that grace that doth take off all self-boasting: Eph.

ii. 8, 9, For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of

yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should

boast.' Elective love prevented all actual or foreseen worth in us; and

from first to last it is carried on in a way of grace; the means, the

efficacy, all is of grace. This was God's great end, that grace might

be admired and esteemed by us, and be matter of eternal praise and

thanksgiving: Eph. i. 6, To the praise of the glory of his grace,

wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.' The whole design is

to show us how we are beloved of God, and that we may love him again.

Use 1. If election be the great matter of thanksgiving to God, then

surely this doctrine should be heard in the church; for the life and

soul of Christian religion is gratitude; and what feedeth gratitude is

of great use unto us. Our gratitude doth not rise high enough till it

come to the first cause that stirred and set all the wheels a-work in

the business of our salvation. Surely this is a very profitable point.

1. To detect the pride of man, for here we see the true and proper

cause of difference between us and others: 1 Cor. iv. 7, Who maketh

thee to differ?' The differencing grace of God, proceeding from his

election, is the only true grace.

2. Nothing more extolleth the glory of God in our salvation; for if man

can assume nothing to himself, the glory alone redoundeth to God. The

mere reason and cause why some are chosen and others passed by, is

God's good pleasure: Mat. xi. 26, Even so, Father, because it pleased

thee.' Christ himself consents to it, giveth thanks for it, as an act

of free and undeserved mercy.

3. No greater incentive to holiness; for here we see the absolute

necessity of it, together with the strongest, sweetest motive to

enforce it. (1.) The absolute necessity of it; because it is a

necessary means to bring God's purposes to pass: Eph. i. 4, He hath

chosen us, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in

love.' He hath chosen none to enjoy everlasting glory after this life,

but such as he hath chosen to be holy here. First, They must be

sanctified and renewed by the Spirit, and then walk in all holy

conversation and godliness. And whatever assurance of election is

pretended unto them who lead an unholy life, it is but a vain

presumption or ungrounded persuasion; yea, a strong delusion. Secondly,

Here is the sweetest and strongest motive to enforce it, and that is

the singular love of God, which breedeth in us a sincere love to God

again, and all serious endeavours to approve ourselves to him in purity

of living. There is no such constraining force in anything as there is

in love: 2 Cor. v. 14, For the love of God constraineth us,' &c. And no

such holiness as that which floweth from it; this is thankful and

evangelical obedience.

4. It is the ground of our solid comfort, in the midst of all the

calamities and temptations of the present life; because our final

happiness is appointed to us by God's electing love: Luke xii. 32, Fear

not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you

the kingdom.' And this is accompanied with his active providence and

care over us all the way thither. So that all things are sanctified to

us, that we may be sanctified to God: Rom. viii. 28, And we know that

all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who

are the called according to his purpose.'

Use 2. It showeth us that the elect have cause to bless God if they be

chosen to salvation, though not to wealth, pleasure, and honour. These

Thessalonians endured great afflictions for the gospel's sake, yet Paul

looked upon himself as bound to give thanks always to God for them,

because he had chosen them to salvation. God dispenseth his gifts

variously. Some are, shall I say, chosen--or condemned rather?--to

worldly felicity. It is the will of God they should attain great wealth

and honour here; and will you envy them and repine against providence,

though God hath reserved you for a better estate hereafter? Compare two

places; one is Jer. xvii. 13, All that forsake thee shall be written in

the earth;' the other is Luke x. 20, Rejoice in this, that your names

are written in heaven.' Which is the better privilege to be written in

earth, or to be written in heaven? to have a great name in the

subsidy-book, or to have our names written in the book of life? The one

is their punishment, the other your blessedness.

Second use is exhortation. It presseth you to two things:--

1. Put in for a share and interest in this mercy; that is to say, in

the apostle's words, 2 Peter i. 10, Give diligence to make your calling

and election sure.' God hath not told us who are elected and who are

not; therefore our way is to accept of the general grace offered, and

to devote and resign ourselves to God, and to depend upon the merits of

our Redeemer, and put ourselves under the discipline of his Spirit in

the use of the appointed means, humbly waiting for his renewing and

reconciling grace, and every day more and more, by diligence in the

holy and heavenly life, getting your interest more assured; for by this

means do we come to know the purposed love of God, and that he hath not

appointed us to wrath, but to obtain eternal salvation by our Lord

Jesus Christ.' We need not say, Who shall go up to heaven to know the

mind of God? Our election is known to us by our vocation, and our

vocation by the fruits--our walking before him in holiness and

righteousness all our days. Surely the knowledge of our election is a

thing greatly to be desired, because our eternal happiness and all

spiritual good things depend upon it. Election is the free love of God,

by which he intendeth these blessings to us. This is manifested by

calling, by which they begin to be applied to us; then the effectual

operation which these blessings have in us discovereth calling, when we

call on the name of Christ,' and depart from iniquity,' 2 Tim. ii. 19.

2. We should praise, and admire, and esteem this glorious grace, and

show our thankfulness both in word and deed.

[1.] In word; because that is a means to kindle in our hearts the love

of God, and to stir up a spiritual rejoicing in him: Ps. ciii. 1-3,

Bless the Lord, my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy

name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who

forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases,' &c.

[2.] Bat chiefly in deed: you are more obliged to live to God than

other men, when, passing by thousands who, in outward respects, were

better than you, and you as deep in sin as they, he, not only without,

but against, all merit of yours, by his singular grace set you apart

for himself. Shall I sin against God, and grieve his Spirit? No; let me

glorify him as long as I have a day to live.

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[3] Either a proverbial expression, perhaps referring to Jer. ii. 24;

or else a misprint.--ED.

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SERMON XII.

Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of

our Lord Jesus Christ.--2 Thes. II. 14.

AFTER the doctrine of Antichrist, and God's dreadful spiritual

judgments on his abettors and followers, the apostle interposeth some

matter of consolation to the Thessalonians; as before he comforted them

from their election, so now from their vocation, Therefore, as we saw

the doctrine of election set forth in the former verse, with all its

appendant branches and circumstances, so now the doctrine of vocation,

with what belongeth to it. Here calling is set forth--(1.) By the

author of it: he calleth you; that is, God, who from the beginning hath

chosen you to salvation. (2.) The outward means: by our gospel. (3.)

The end, which is double:--First, Subordinate, in the word whereunto,

viz., to faith and holiness; Secondly, Ultimate: to the obtaining of

the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whereunto he called you,' &c.

Doct. All that are elected by God are in time effectually called by

faith and holiness [4] to obtain eternal life.

1. I shall open effectual calling by what is said of it in the text.

2. That all chosen by God are called in this way.

1. Let me explain effectual calling. The author of it: he called you;'

namely, God, spoken of in the former verse. I prove it by these two

reasons:--(1.) None else hath authority to call; (2.) None else hath

power to call.

[1.] Authority to call, either to duties or privileges; for calling is

an earnest invitation to duties upon the offer of several privileges.

(1.) Duties: God is our proper Lord and rightful sovereign. He may

justly challenge our obedience. Being our Creator, he is our owner; and

being our owner, he is our sovereign and lawgiver, and may enact what

laws he pleaseth. Certainly creation giveth him an interest in us; for

every man taketh himself to have an authority over what he hath made,

to dispose of it as he pleaseth. Now he that properly made all things

is God. Man is said to make a thing as he bestoweth art upon it, but

God bestoweth being upon it. A potter may form his clay into what

vessel he pleaseth, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto

dishonour, Rom. ix. 21; that is, either a dish for food or a vessel to

serve the vilest uses of nature, for meat or excrements. But we speak

of rational creatures that are capable of proper government. Surely God

made us, and hath a right to govern us. Our parents are but instruments

of his providence; they know not how the child is framed in the womb,

&c. Now he calleth upon us to do our duty with original supreme

authority. We may refuse others; if they speak not to us in his name,

they have no right over our consciences, to impose new duties upon us:

James iv. 12, There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to

destroy.' Now his calling being a powerful excitation to do our duty,

it originally belongeth to God.

(2.) As to privileges: The blessings God offereth are so great and

glorious, that none else can give us a right to them but God; and the

soul can have no security that it doth not usurp and intrude upon the

possession of things that belong not to us till we have his warrant. As

the apostle speaketh of an office, Heb. v. 4, No man taketh this honour

unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron;' so it is

true of all prerogatives; we have no leave to assume and take the

honour of them to ourselves till we are called of God: that is our

warrant. None came to the wedding-feast till they were bidden, Mat.

xxii., or went into the vineyard till they were hired, Mat. xx. This is

the difference between duties and privileges: that any man, who will

prefer that office of charity and love to us, may excite us to our

duties, to unquestionable duties, due from the creature to the Creator;

but no man can assure us of right to privileges without the Creator's

leave. Man cannot make that to be a necessary duty to the Creator which

is not. But man may warn us of our danger when we disobey God; but man

cannot assure us of our right to such privileges without God's grant.

Therefore certainly it is God that must call us

[2.] None else can have power; for to calling there is necessary not

only the invitations of the word, but also the effectual operation or

the Spirit. None else can change the heart. A Christian is nothing, and

hath nothing, but what God is pleased to work in him by his divine

power: 2 Peter i. 3, According as his divine power hath given us all

things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of

him that hath called us to glory and virtue.' It is a work of an

infinite power to give grace to graceless souls, to make those that are

sensual and worldly to become spiritual and heavenly, there being so

much opposition to hinder that work; for such is the corruption of

men's hearts, the power of Satan over us, that he keepeth possession

till a stronger than he overcometh him, Luke xi. 21. Therefore it is

always made the work of his power, who calleth the things that are not

as though they were,' Rom. iv. 17. It is still ascribed to his creating

power; either the illumination of the mind, 2 Cor. iv. 6, For God, who

commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our

hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the

face of Jesus Christ;' or inclinations of the heart, Eph. ii. 10. We

can neither think, nor effect, nor pursue spiritual and heavenly things

without it. Therefore certainly it is God that calleth us.

2. The outward means: by our gospel.' Where--(1.) Consider the means

itself: the gospel; (2.) The interest which the apostle challengeth in

it: our gospel.

[1.] The means itself: the gospel. This God useth:--

(1.) Because if God will call and invite the creature by his duty to

his happiness, it is necessary that his call should be evident to the

creature by some visible sign. Now, the natural duty of man is much

seen by the creation: Rom. i. 19, Because that which may be known of

God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them;' Ps. xix. 1,

2, The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his

handiwork: day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth

knowledge.' But this call is made to man fallen, as a remedy to his

lapsed estate, which, depending on the free grace of God, can only be

known by his revelation, conveyed to us by extra ordinary messengers,

such as Christ, who was the principal revealer of the doctrine of God

for the saving of the world, and him God authorised and sealed to this

end: John vi. 27, Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that

meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall

give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed.' And then by the

apostles, who were instituted by Christ, and sent forth to proselytise

the world to the obedience of God; and they were also authorised from

heaven by divers signs and wonders, as long as it was necessary to use

that dispensation for the confirmation of their message, and to show

how dangerous it was to neglect a doctrine so useful to mankind, and

suitable to their great necessities, and so owned by God, Heb. ii. 3,

4. Therefore by the gospel God called them to this grace.

(2.) To convince and stop their mouths that refuse this calling, for

the gospel bringeth grace home to us, and leaveth it upon our choice.

If we will accept it, well and good; if not, we justly deserve to be

rejected forever: Acts xiii. 26, To you is this word of salvation

sent.' What say you to it? God hath sent a gracious message to you in

particular; will you accept or refuse? Acts iii. 26, He hath sent him

to you, to bless every one of you,' &c. It doth excite all, and every

man, to look after the recovery of his lapsed estate; surely God doth

you no wrong if he severely punish your refusal after he hath invited

you to his grace in Christ. Great is the misery of those that refuse

this call: None of those that were bidden shall taste of my supper,'

Luke xiv. 24. They are not only excluded from happiness, but they incur

extreme wrath and misery: Prov. i. 24-26, Because I have called, and ye

refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have

set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will

laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.'

(3.) Because to the elect he will deal congruously, and preserve the

liberty of his own workmanship, and therefore dealeth with man as man;

doth not compel us to be good whether we will or no, but doth at the

same time teach and draw us: John vi. 44, 45, No man can come unto me,

except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him

up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be

all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath

learned of the Father, cometh unto me; sweetly attempering the means to

our liberty, but accompanying them with his powerful grace: Acts xi.

21, The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed,

and turned to the Lord.' It is God doth all, prospering the labours of

his servants. So Acts xvi. 14, God opened the heart of Lydia, so that

she attended unto the things spoken by Paul.' God opened her heart, but

by the things spoken by Paul. And God loveth to associate or accompany

his power with his own means: Rom. i. 16, It is the power of God unto

salvation.'

[2.] The interest the apostle challengeth in it: our gospel. Doth it

not derogate from the authority of it to appropriate it to any man? I

answer--No. Elsewhere it is called God's gospel: The glorious gospel of

the blessed God,' 1 Tim. i. 11. He is the author. It is not an

invention of man, but a secret that came from the bosom of God. Again,

it is called Christ's gospel: The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 2

Thes. i. 8; as the principal sub-revealer, who made known unto us most

fully the mind of God. And then on the apostles, who were instruments

chosen and intrusted by Christ to declare it to the world both by word

and writing. The scripture is an authentic record, wherein all things

are delivered to us both concerning our duties and privileges.

Therefore, when he saith our gospel, he doth not mean it of principal

revelation, but in regard of dispensation and trust: 1 Tim. i. 11, The

glorious gospel of the blessed God is committed to my trust.' Therefore

this word our gospel is--(1.) A word of fidelity, that argued the

conscience to this duty, that owneth the trust committed to him, and

that this was his chief work and charge: 1 Cor. ix. 17, A dispensation

of the gospel is committed unto me.' (2.) It is a word of esteem, love,

and affection; what we love we call ours: Rom. xvi. 25, Now to him that

is able to stablish you according to my gospel,' Paul was glad he had

such interest in it as to be a preacher of it; and believers should be

glad they are partakers of the benefit: Eph. i. 13, In whom ye trusted,

after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' It is

theirs and ours. Oh, blessed be God for this! (3.) It is a word

importing diligence--our gospel; that which he preached with so much

labour and hazard: he followed this work close: Acts xx. 24, I count

not my life dear, that I may finish my course with joy, and the

ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel

of the grace of God.' He was willing to die and suffer anything for the

gospel's sake. (4.) The consent and harmony between him and the rest of

the apostles. Sometimes he calleth it my gospel, to assert his own

apostolical authority, as Rom. ii. 16; sometimes our gospel, 2 Cor. iv.

3, to note their common consent, who were the authorised messengers of

our Lord Jesus Christ. It is our gospel, the same jointly attested by

all Christ's chosen messengers.

3. The ends of this calling. They are either subordinate or ultimate.

First, Subordinate: in the word Whereunto he hath called you;' that is,

to faith, holiness, and salvation; we are called to all.

[1.] God calleth us to the faith of the gospel; he hath not only

ordained us to believe, but called us to believe. Without calling there

can be no faith: Rom. x. 14, How shall they believe in him of whom they

have not heard?' But upon calling there must be faith, or else we make

void the dispensation of God which we are under.

(1.) There must be a belief of the gospel in general. The voice of the

creatures calleth upon the Gentiles to believe an infinite, eternal

power, that made man and all things; and the condemnation of the

Gentile world is that they know not God, and glorify not God as God,

after this revelation made to them. But to believe in Christ is a

mystery to nature, and dependeth upon God's special revelation in the

gospel. Therefore the external and internal power of the Spirit

accompanieth it, to convince the world that it is sin not to believe in

Christ--the external power in miracles, and the internal in the

illumination of the mind: John xvi. 9, The Spirit shall convince the

world of sin, because they believe not in me;' that is, receive not the

faith of the gospel, or believe not that Christ was the true Messiah,

the great prophet and doctor of the church.

(2.) This call doth aim at not only a belief of the truth of the gospel

in general, but also a particular affiance in Christ according to the

terms of the new covenant. General assent to the truth of the gospel is

only considerable as it leadeth on other things. Now, that I may not

wander, I will refer them to two things--(1.) A fiducial assent; (2.)

An obediential confidence. This is the belief of the truth we are

called unto.

(1st.) The assent must be fiducial, or accompanied with a trust in

Christ: Eph. i. 13, In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the

word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' The meaning is, the

Gentiles, after they heard the gospel and believed the truth, they did

trust themselves in the hands of Christ, to be brought by his saving

and healing methods to eternal happiness. It is a mighty thing to have

such a belief as may produce trust, or a venturing ourselves in the

hands of Christ against all hazards, and, whatever befalleth us, be

content to save our souls on his terms. This breedeth holy security or

courage: 2 Tim. i. 12, For I know whom I have believed, and I am

persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him

against that day.'

(2dly.) This confidence must be obediential, not a devout sloth or

carelessness. To trust in his mercies and neglect his precepts crosseth

the tenor of his covenant: Ps. cxix. 60, I made haste, and delayed not

to keep thy commandments.' It is true religion when faith, hope, and

love concur: Jude, vers. 20, 21, But ye, beloved, building up

yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep

yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus

Christ unto eternal life.' I know there is a trusting in his pardon for

our failings, and that justification is a great privilege, as well as

salvation; but pardon is promised to the sincere, that with an honest

heart perform their duty: Ps. xxxii. 2, Blessed is the man to whom the

Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile;' and

Rom. viii. 1, There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,

who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.' So that still our

confidence in Christ must be obediential.

[2.] We are called to holiness; this is everywhere asserted in the

scripture: 1 Thes. iv. 7, For God hath not called us to uncleanness,

but to holiness.' And it enforceth it on several grounds; as--

(1.) That there may be a likeness between the person calling and the

persons called: 1 Peter i. 15, But as he that called you is holy, so be

ye holy in all manner of conversation.' It is true religion to imitate

what we worship; for knowledge and esteem always work an assimilation;

and therefore, if we know the true God, and love him, we will study to

be like him. Certainly, we have not a true knowledge of God if we do

not know him to be a pure and holy God. He hath showed it in his laws,

showed in his providence, and showed in his gospel by which we are

called. The gods of the heathen taught sin by their own example. Their

impure lives are recorded by their poets. Austin telleth us of a young

man who was incited to wantonness by seeing the picture of Jupiter on

the wall committing adultery. Quo pacto non faceret, cum in templo

adorare cogeretur Jovem potius Catonem quam? But our God is pure, as

appeareth by his laws, which are all holy, just, and good,' Ps. cxix.

140. Surely such holy precepts could come from none but a pure and holy

God. As also by the work of his Spirit on his people: Eph. iv. 24, And

that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness

and true holiness;' and 2 Cor. iii. 18, We all, with open face,

beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the

same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' He

puts us into a nature that is very tender and shy of sin, troubled at

it in others: 2 Peter ii. 7, 8, And delivered just Lot, vexed with the

filthy conversation of the wicked; for that righteous man dwelling

amongst them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day

to day with their unlawful deeds.' He that made the eye, shall not he

see? He that put into us a clean heart, is not he pure and holy? This

appeareth also by the dispensations of his providence: Hab. i. 13, Thou

art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.

Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and boldest

thy tongue, when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous

than he?' Judgments on sinners, so on his own people: Prov. xi. 31,

Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in earth; much more the

wicked and the sinner.' As, for instance, in David: the child died, his

daughter is deflowered, Amnon slain, Absalom is in rebellion, his wives

ravished, himself banished from his house and kingdom. Eli's sons

slain, the ark taken, his daughter-in-law died, himself brake his neck.

But chiefly in the very foundation of the gospel: the Son of God dieth

a shameful, painful, accursed death before God would relax the rigour

of his law and set afoot the gospel, and all that there might be a

perfect demonstration of his justice and holiness, and displeasure

against sin: Rom. viii. 3, For what the law could not do, in that it

was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of

sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin, in the flesh.'

(2.) The very nature of this calling enforceth this sanctification, or

setting man apart from a common to a sacred use; for it is a calling us

not only from misery to happiness, but from sin to holiness, and the

one is indispensably necessary to the other; for none but those who are

in a holy estate can be in a blessed condition. Our calling is

sometimes called a heavenly calling,' Heb. iii. 1; sometimes an holy

calling,' 2 Tim. i. 9. Therefore the chief subordinate end is holiness:

Rom. i. 7, Called to be saints,'--from the devil, the world, and the

flesh, to God.

(3.) The grace and favour which is showed in our calling obligeth us to

be holy in point of gratitude; for when we consider in what a sinful

estate God found us, how freely he loved us, and that with a

discriminating, differencing love, when he passed by others worthier

than we, and to what estate he is ready to advance us--to the enjoyment

of himself, amongst all those that are sanctified by faith;--all these

are as so many strong bonds and obligations upon us to walk worthy of

God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory in Jesus Christ,' 1

Thes. ii. 12--worthy of his grace in calling; worthy of the glory to

which we are called; that is, with the worthiness of condecency, not of

condignity. We cannot fully answer this grace, but we must do that

which will become it.

(4.) This calling enableth us to be holy, because it giveth us all

things necessary both to holiness of heart and life: 2 Peter i. 3,

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that

pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath

called us to glory and virtue.' Now this grace must not lie idle,

otherwise we receive the Spirit in vain.

Secondly, The ultimate end: To obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus

Christ.' The same expression in 1 Peter v. 10, The God of all grace,

who hath called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.' It is his

glory.' Mark--(1.) Here is glory; (2.) It is the glory of our Lord

Jesus Christ.

[1.] It is glory for body and soul. The glory is so great we cannot

utter it, and conceive it. Now a little is revealed to us, but then it

shall be revealed in us. (1.) The soul is not annihilated after death,

nor doth it sleep till the resurrection, nor is it detained by the way

from immediate passing into glory; but as soon as it is loosed from the

body, is admitted into God's presence, and gathered unto the souls of

just men made perfect, where it seeth God and loveth him, and enjoyeth

what it seeth and loveth; for as soon as we are loosed from the body,

we are present with the Lord. And therefore the first benefit we

receive in the other world is the salvation of the soul: 1 Peter i, 9,

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.' It

flitteth hence to God. (2.) The body hath its glory also in due time;

for when it is raised up out of the grave, it will be another kind of

body than we now have, both for impassibility, clarity, agility--for

impassibility, called incorruption; clarity, called glory; agility,

called power; subtilty, called a spiritual body by the apostle: 1 Cor.

xv. 42, 43, It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it

is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown a natural body,

it is raised a spiritual body':--

(1.) Impassability doth not only exclude corruption, for so the bodies

of the damned are preserved for ever; but all grievances and pain: Rev.

xxi. 4, There shall not be any more pain.'

(2.) For glory, a shining brightness: Mat. xiii. 43, The righteous

shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.' Stephen's face

shone, in this life, as it were the face of an angel,' Acts vi. 15. And

Moses' face shone by converse with God in the mount, Exod. xxxiv. 30.

Our bodies shall be likened unto his glorious body,' Phil. iii. 21. In

the transfiguration, His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment did

shine as the light.'

(3.) For vigour, activity, and strength. It shall always be in the

height and excellency of it. God preserved Moses' natural vigour for a

long time, Deut. xxxiv. 7; but glorified bodies shall for ever remain

in an eternal spring of youth.

(4.) Subtilty, a spiritual body. Here we live an animal life, after the

manner of sensitive creatures, maintained by meat, drink, sleep; but

hereafter the body shall live after the manner of spirits, having no

need or use of these things. There we are isa'ngeloi, as the angels of

God.' Mat. xxii. 30; and 1 Cor. vi. 19, Our bodies are the temple of

the Holy Ghost.' Well, then, this is the glory put upon us.

[2.] Why is it called the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ?'

(1.) It is purchased by Christ. We were redeemed or bought by the price

of his blood, that we might attain to this glory: Eph. i. 7, In whom we

have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,

according to the riches of his grace.'

(2.) It is promised by Christ: John x. 28, I give unto them eternal

life, and they shall never perish.' All that obey this call have

eternal life already begun, nay, completed: 1 John ii. 25, And this is

the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.'

(3.) It is prayed for by Christ, which is a copy of his intercession:

John xvii. 14, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be

with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given

me.'

(4.) It is actually bestowed by Christ on his followers and called

people. He receiveth our departing souls as soon as they flit out of

the body: Acts vii. 59, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' They are with

him: Phil. i. 23, and 2 Cor. v. 8, when absent from the body,' they are

present with the Lord,' which is a mighty comfort to us. At the last

day he will solemnly introduce us into heaven: John xiv. 3, I will come

again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be

also.' The great shepherd of the sheep will lead the flock into their

everlasting fold.

(5.) We have not only glory by Christ, but with Christ. We shall have

the same glory Christ now hath, but in our measure; the same glory in

kind whereunto Christ's humanity is advanced, referring to him only his

privilege in the degree. So Rom. viii. 17, And if children, then heirs,

heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with

him, that we may be also glorified together;' Rev. iii. 21, To him that

overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also

overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.' We share with

him in his own blessedness, so far as we are capable.

II. That all those who are elected and chosen by God are thus called.

Election and vocation have a great respect one to another; and though

we cannot say that none are called that are not elected, for the Lord

calleth others not only by the voice of nature, but the gospel: Mat.

xxii. 14, Many are called, but few are chosen;' yet we may say that

none are chosen, but they are in time called, so that vocation is, as

it were, actual election. They are often put one for another; as John

xv. 19, I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hateth

you;' that is, called them, or pursued his choice. So 1 Cor. i. 26, Ye

see your calling, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh, not

many noble, not many mighty are called: for God hath chosen the foolish

things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak

things of the world to confound the things which are mighty,' ver. 27;

as if choosing and calling were all one. So Rom. xi. 28, 29, As

concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake; but as touching

the election, they are beloved for the Father's sake: for the gifts and

calling of God are without repentance.' So that calling is an

infallible consequent of election. And Rom. viii. 30, Whom he did

predestinate, them he also called.' Reason showeth it. (1.) Effectual

calling is that powerful operation of God, wherein he beginneth to

execute the purposes of his grace: Rom. viii. 28, And we know that all

things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are

the called according to his purpose' (kata` pro'thesin). The first

discovery of it to the creature is by drawing us to himself. (2.) This

act proceedeth immediately from his choice, as anteceding all that we

can do, all worthiness of ours, or supposed worthiness: 2 Tim. i. 9,

Who hath saved us, 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 Christ Jesus, before the world began.' Nothing induced God to do

it on our part, for what good thing could we do before we were made

good by calling? (3.) The effect doth infallibly follow: John vi. 37,

All that the Father hath given me shall come to me, and him that cometh

to me I will in no wise cast out.' In due time they are called, and are

obedient to the call, Rom. viii. 28.

Use 1. If it be so, then here is advice to all.

1. Let us apply ourselves to the means with reverence and seriousness;

because God's power is shown in them, in converting souls to himself:

Ps. lxv. 4, Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to draw

nigh unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts.' It is a good thing to

be in grace's way. The means have a ministerial efficacy: Acts xiv. 1,

They so spake, that a great multitude of the Jews and Greeks believed;'

with such clearness and force; so far God is with the minister. A dart

flung by a skilful hand will pierce deeper than by its own weight. But

yet, if you can but tarry, the hand of the Lord may be with you also.

You do not know the seasons of the Lord's grace; all are not called at

the first hour; some lie long at the pool, but yet wait still. Ere ever

you are aware, the Holy Ghost may fall upon you and open your hearts.

That heavenly doctrine may have its effect upon you.

2. Let us mind not only privileges, but duties. We have great

privileges; we are called to enjoy sweet fellowship with Christ here: 1

Cor. i. 9, Faithful is he who hath called you to the communion of

Christ Jesus our Lord,' and to a glorious estate hereafter. But we are

also called to the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the

truth; and we cannot obtain the one without the other. Do not so mind

comfort as to slight holiness, and divide one part of your calling from

the other. Comfort is consequent to holiness, and followeth it as heat

doth fire. The Spirit is more necessarily a sanctifier than a

comforter; for our duty and obedience to God is a greater thing than

our own peace. Holiness is the image of God upon the soul, and the

blessed perfection wherein we were created: Gen. i. 27, So God created

man in his own image.' And when it was lost by sin, Christ came and

paid our ransom, that he might renew us by his Spirit; Titus iii. 5,

According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and

renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Yea, much of our everlasting blessedness

lieth in it. For heaven is to be looked upon not only as a state of

complete felicity, but exact holiness: 1 John iii. 2, We know that when

he doth appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;'

Eph. v. 27, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not

having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy

and without blemish.' Then it is a glorious church. Christ hath done

his whole work. Holiness is the beauty of God himself, Exod. xv. 11,

and puts an excellency on us, if we love it, and imitate it: Prov. xii.

26, The righteous is more excel lent than his neighbour: but the way of

the wicked seduceth them.' We do not only excel other men, but we are

more amiable in the sight of God: Prov. xi. 20, The upright is his

delight.' In short, it is a part of salvation itself, and a means to

that which remaineth: Acts xxvi. 18, Inheritance among them which are

sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus.'

3. Let us reflect upon ourselves. Have we God's call? Have we obeyed

the gospel? This will clear up your election to you: 2 Peter i. 10,

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and

election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.' Do you

find such a belief wrought in you by the Spirit as begins in brokenness

of heart, and ends in holiness? For Christ came to call sinners to

repentance,' Mat. ix. 13; that is, men sensible of sin to holiness of

heart and life; to return to God, that we may first live to him, and

then with him.

4. To improve the belief of the glory promised. (1.) To sweeten

obedience, or a cause of holiness which for the present is so tedious

to the flesh. Now here is our labour, hereafter our recompense, 1 Cor.

xv. 58. Every day we should grow more meet for his glory, Col. i. 12.

(2.) To a contempt of all worldly things, good or evil. If good, many

are pleased with this world's good things, but have no affection to

spiritual and heavenly things; like the rebellious Israelites, who more

desired the onions and garlic of Egypt than the milk and honey of the

promised land, or the celestial manna, Num. xi. 5, 6; worse than

prodigals, that rest more satisfied with husks of swine, than bread

which is in their father's house: they have their good things. Now, we

should remember we are called off from these things, from dreggy

contentments, base enjoyments, to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(3.) The evils of the world--crosses, afflictions: After ye have

suffered a while, the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his

eternal glory by Christ Jesus, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen,

settle you;' and 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12, It is a faithful saying: for if we

be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall

also reign with him.' Our afflictions are both breves and leves, light

and momentary: 2 Cor. iv. 17, For our light affliction, which is but

for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of

glory.' Our sufferings are small if compared with the reward; the time

short, if compared with eternity. There is a twofold eternity--that

eternal death which the wicked must endure; that eternal life which we

enter into. This should sweeten all bitter waters. (4.) To dispose and

prepare us for death. The contemplation of immortality hath left strong

impressions on the hearts of heathens; some burnt themselves as

impatient to tarry longer. If a dark view, vain hope cause this, what

should a sure promise and earnest of the Spirit do?

Use 2. To the called. (1.) Bless God for this calling. The woful estate

out of which we are called, and the blessed estate into which we are

entered, compared together, should make us wonder: 1 Peter ii. 9, Ye

should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of

darkness into his marvellous light.' (2.) Walk answerably: Eph. iv. 1,

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy

of the vocation wherewith ye are called.' And 1 Thes. ii. 12, That ye

would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and

glory.'

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[4] Qu. called by the gospel to faith and holiness'?--ED.

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SERMON XIII.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have

been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.--2 Thes. II. 15.

THE apostle, after he had comforted the Thessalonians, he exhorteth

them to constancy in the truth, whatever temptations they had to the

contrary. The comforts he propoundeth to them were taken--(1.) From

their election, ver. 13; (2.) From their vocation, ver. 14. His

exhortation is to perseverance: Therefore, brethren,' &c.

In the words observe:--

1. The illative particle, therefore; because God hath chosen you and

called you, and given you such advantages against error and seduction.

2. The duty inferred: ste'kete, stand fast. It is a military word; you

have the same in other places: 1 Cor. xvi. 13, Watch ye, stand ye

fast,' &c.; Eph. vi. 14, Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about

with truth.' The word intimateth perseverance.

3. The means of perseverance: hold the traditions which you have been

taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Where observe:--(1.) The act; (2.) The object.

1. The act: krateite, hold with strong hand. The word implieth a

forcible holding against assaults, whether of error or persecution. The

Thessalonians were assaulted in both kinds; the heathens persecuted

them, and some were gone abroad that began the mystery of iniquity, and

were ready to pervert them.

2. The object, which is propounded--(1.) By a common and general term:

The traditions which ye have been taught.' (2.) By a distribution:

Whether by word, or our epistle.'

1. The common and general term, The traditions which ye have been

taught.' There are two sorts of traditions--human and divine.

First, Human traditions are certain external observances instituted by

men, and delivered from hand to hand, from progenitors to their

posterity. These may be either besides or contrary to the word of God.

(1.) Beside the word, as the institutions of the family of the

Rechabites, in the observance of which, from father to son, they were

so exact and punctual, that God produceth their example to shame the

disobedience of his people; Jer. xxxv. 6, 7, Jonadab the son of Rechab

our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, nor build

houses, nor plant vineyards,' &c. (2.) Contrary to the word of God,

such as were those of the pharisees: Mat. xv. 3, Why transgress ye the

commandment of God by your traditions?' Human inventions in religion

are contrary to, and destructive of, divine laws.

Secondly, Traditions divine are either heavenly doctrines revealed by

God, or institutions and ordinances appointed by him for the use of the

church. These are the rule and ground of our faith, worship, and

obedience. The whole doctrine of the gospel is a tradition delivered

and conveyed to us by fit messengers, such as the apostles were: 1 Cor.

xi. 2, Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things,

and keep the ordinances [marg. traditions] as I delivered them to you.'

So that holding the traditions is nothing else but perseverance in

apostolical doctrine.

2. The distribution, that no cheats might be put upon them under any

pretence; therefore he saith, Whether by word, or our epistle;' that

is, by word of mouth when present, or by epistle when absent; and he

saith, not epistles, but epistle, as alluding to the former he wrote

unto them. They were bound to yield to both alike credence and

obedience; for, whether in speaking or writing, the apostolical

authority was the same. To improve this verse for your benefit, I shall

lay down several propositions.

I. That whatever assurance we have of God's preserving us in the truth,

yet we are bound to use diligence and caution.

II. Our diligence and caution is to be employed about this, that we may

stand fast in the faith of Christ, and the profession and practice of

godliness.

III. That the means of standing fast in the faith of Christ, and the

profession and practice of godliness, is by holding the traditions

which were taught by the holy apostles.

IV. That while the apostles were in being, there were two ways of

delivering the truth--by word of mouth and writing.

V. That now when they are long since gone to God, and we cannot receive

from them the doctrine of life by word of mouth, we must stick to the

scriptures or written word.

I. That whatever assurance we have of God's preserving us in the truth,

yet we are bound to use diligence and caution. For the apostle had said

that God had chosen and called them to the belief of the truth,' and

yet saith, Therefore, brethren, stand fast.'

First, Reason will tell us that when we intend an end, we must use the

means; otherwise the bare intention and desire would suffice, and to

the accomplishing of any effect, we need no more than to will it; and

the sluggard would be the wisest man in the world, who is full of

wishings and wouldings, though his hands refuse to labour. But common

experience showeth that the end cannot be obtained without a diligent

use of the means: Prov. xiii. 4, The soul of the sluggard desireth, and

hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat:' that is,

rewarded with the intended benefit.

Secondly, The business in hand is, whether God's election, calling, or

promise, doth so secure the end to us, as that we need not be so

careful in the diligent use of means? Such a notion or conceit there

may be in the hearts of men, therefore let us attack it a little by

these considerations:--

1. God's decree is both of end and means, for all his purposes are

executed by fit means. He that hath chosen us to salvation, bringeth it

about by the belief of the truth, and sanctification of the Spirit, 2

Thes. ii. 13; and without faith and holiness no man shall see God, and

escape condemnation. God had assured Paul that there should be no loss

of any man's life among them, except of the ship,' Acts xxvii. 22. And

yet afterwards, ver. 31, Paul telleth them, Except these abide in the

ship, ye cannot be saved.' How could that assurance given to Paul from

God, and Paul's caution to the mariners, stand together? Doth the

purpose of God depend upon the uncertain will and actions of men? I

answer--Not as a cause, from whence it receiveth its force and

strength; but as a means, appointed also by God to the execution of his

decree. For by the same decree God appointeth the event, what he will

do, and the means by which he will have it to be done: and the Lord

revealing by his word this conjunction of end and means, there is a

necessity of duty lying upon man to use these means, and not to expect

the end without them. God intended to save all in the ship, and yet the

mariners must abide in the ship; therefore, what God hath joined

together, let no man separate. If we separate these things, God doth

not change his counsel, but we pervert his order to our own

destruction.

2. God, that hath bidden us to believe his promises, hath forbidden us

to tempt his providence, Mat. iv. 7. Now we tempt God when we desire

him to give an extraordinary proof of his care over us, when ordinary

means will serve the turn, or be useful to us.

3. Though the means seem to have no connection with the end, yet, if

God hath enjoined them for that end, we must use them. As in the

instance of Naaman; God was resolved to cure him, but Naaman must take

his prescribed way, though against his own fancy and conceit: 2 Kings

v. 10, Wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto

thee, and thou shalt be clean;' compare ver. 13, If the prophet had

bidden thee to do some great thing,' &c. So John xiii. 6, 7, Peter must

submit to be washed, though he could not see the benefit of it. So John

ix. 6, 7, the blind man must submit to have his eyes anointed with

clay, and wash in the pool of Siloam; though the clay seemed to put out

his eyes, rather than cure them, and the pool could not wash away his

blindness; but means appointed by God must be used, whatever

improbabilities are apprehended by us.

4. That when God's will is expressly declared concerning the event, yet

he will have the means used. As, for instance, 2 Kings xx. 5-7; God was

absolutely resolved to add fifteen years more to Hezekiah's life, yet

he must take a lump of figs and lay it on the boil; which plainly

showeth that no promise on God's part, nor assurance on ours, hindereth

the use of means. God will work by them, not without them.

5. In spiritual things, assurance of the event is an encouragement to

industry, not a pretence to sloth: 1 John ii. 27, 28, Ye shall abide in

him: and now, little children, abide in him.' The promise of

perseverance doth encourage us to use endeavours that we may persevere,

and quicken diligence rather than nourish security, or open a gap to

carnal liberty: 1 Cor. ix. 26, I run not as one that is uncertain.' We

are the more earnest, because we are assured the means shall not be

uneffectual.

II. Our duty is to stand fast in the faith of Christ and profession of

godliness, whatever temptations we have to the contrary. Stand fast

being a military word, it alludeth to a soldier's keeping his ground,

and is opposed to two things:--(1.) A cowardly flight; (2.) A

treacherous revolt.

1. A cowardly flight implieth our being overcome in the evil day, by

the many afflictions that befall us for the truth's sake: Eph. vi. 13,

Wherefore take to you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to

withstand in the evil day;' that after ye have done all things, ye may

stand. Their temptation was the many troubles and persecutions that

befell them, called there the evil day.' Their defence lay in the whole

armour of God,' which is there made of six pieces:--The girdle of truth

or sincerity, which is a strength to us as a girdle to the loins; the

breastplate of righteousness, or a holy inclination and desire to

perform our duty to God in all things; and the shield of faith, or a

steadfast adhering to the truths of the gospel, whether delivered in a

way of command, promise, or threatening; the helmet of hope, or a

certain and desirous expectation of the promised glory; the shoe of the

preparation of the gospel of peace, which is a readiness to endure all

encounters for Christ's sake, who hath made our peace with God; and the

sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Now, if we take this

armour and use it in our conflicts, what doth it serve for? To

withstand and stand. The first is the act of a soldier, the second is

the posture of a conqueror. Here is withstanding till the field be won,

and then standing when the day of evil is over. Here we make our way to

heaven by conflict and conquest, and hereafter we triumph.

2. A treacherous revolt, or yielding to the enemy, by complying with

those things which are against the interest of Christ and his kingdom

for advantage-sake: 2 Tim. iv. 10, Demas hath forsaken us, and loved

the present world.' Backsliders in heart are the worst sort of

apostates. Such as lose their affection to God, and delight in his

ways, and esteem not of his glorious recompenses, for a little

pleasure, profit, or pomp of living; sell their birthright for one

morsel of meat, Heb. xii. 15, 16. Some fail in their understandings,

but most miscarry by the perverse inclination of their wills; they are

carnal worldly hypocrites that never thoroughly mortified the fleshly

mind, prize things as they are commodious to the flesh, and will save

them from sufferings. The bias of such men's hearts doth easily prevail

against the light of their understandings.

III. The means of standing fast is, by holding the traditions which

were taught by the holy apostles. Here I will prove--(1.) That the

doctrine of Christianity taught by the apostles is a tradition; (2.)

That holding this tradition by strong hand, when others wrest it from

us, is the means of our perseverance.

1. That the doctrine of Christianity is a tradition, I prove it by two

arguments:--

First, Matters not evident by the light of nature, nor immediately

revealed to us by God, must be either an invention or a tradition. An

invention is something in religion not evident by natural light, nor

agreeable to sound reason, but is some cunningly-devised fable, in

vented by one or more, and obtruded by various artifices upon the

belief of the world. Inventions in this kind were man's disease, not

his remedy: Eccles. vii. 29, God made man upright, but they sought out

many inventions.' As when the philosophers sat a-brood upon religion, a

goodly chimera it was they hatched and brought forth: Rom. i. 21, 22,

They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was

darkened;' and professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.'

The inventions little became the nature of God; nor were they

profitable to man, for still the great sore of nature was unhealed,

which is a fear of death and the righteous wrath of God, Rom. i. 32. So

that neither man's comfort nor duty was well provided for. Surely the

gospel is none of this sort, not an invention of men, but a revelation

of God; and a revelation not made to us in person, but brought out of

the bosom of God by Jesus Christ, and by him manifested to chosen

witnesses, who might publish this mystery and secret to others. Well,

then, since the gospel is not an invention; it is a tradition, or a

delivery of the truth upon the testimony of one that came from God, to

instruct the world, or reduce it to him; not an invention of man, but a

secret brought out of the bosom of God by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore it is said, Heb. ii. 3, 4, How shall we escape if we neglect

so great salvation, first spoken by the Lord himself, and then

confirmed to us by them that heard him, the Lord bearing them witness?'

&c. Christ delivered it to the apostles, and the apostles delivered it

to others: 2 Tim. ii. 2, Those things which thou hast heard from me

among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall

be able to teach others also.' The apostles received the gospel from

Christ, and the churches and ministers from the apostles, and they

delivered it down to others until it came to us, which is the means of

our believing the truth, and confessing the name of Christ. This

testimony, delivered and conveyed to us by the most credible means, and

which we have no reason to doubt of, is as binding as if we had heard

Christ and his apostles in person; for we have their word in writing,

though we did not hear them preach and publish it with the lively

voice; their authority is the same, delivered either way. And that

these are their writings appeareth by the constant tradition of the

church, and the acknowledgment of friends and enemies, who still appeal

to them as a public authentic record. And as they have been attested by

the church, they have been owned by God, and blessed by him to the

conversion and sanctifying of many souls throughout all successions of

ages: and by this tradition Christianity hath held up the head against

all encounters of time; and the persecutions of adverse powers have not

suppressed it, nor the disputes of enemies silenced the profession of

it, but from age to age it hath been received, and transmitted to

future generations, though sometimes at a very dear rate. And this is

binding to us, though we saw not the persons and miracles by which they

confirmed their message, and heard not the first report. Yet the

universal tradition having handed it to us, is a sufficient ground of

faith, and so we believe through their word, and are concerned in

Christ's prayers, John xvii. 20; for with them and their successors, as

to these necessary things, Christ hath promised to be to the end of the

world, Mat. xxviii. 20.

Secondly, My next argument is--Because Christian religion must needs be

a tradition, partly because matter of fact is the foundation of it, and

it is in itself matter of faith. (1.) Because it is built upon matter

of fact: that the Son of God came from God, to bring us to God; that is

to say, appeared in human nature, instructed the world by his doctrine

and example, and at length died for sinners, confirming both in life

and death the truth of his mission, by such unquestionable miracles as

showed him to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Now, a

testimony, tradition, or report, is necessary in matters of fact, which

of necessity must be confined to some determinate time and place. It

was not fit that Christ should be always working miracles, always

dying, always rising, and ascending in every place, and in the view of

every man; but those things were to be once done in one place of the

world, in sight of some particular and competent witnesses. But because

the knowledge of them concerned all the rest of the world, they were by

them to be attested to others; matters of fact can only be proved by

credible witnesses, and this was the great office put upon the

apostles, Acts i. 8-22; ii. 32; iii. 15; x. 39-41. (2.) As it is matter

of faith, or the doctrine built upon this matter of fact. We cannot

properly be said to believe a thing but upon a report and testimony. I

may know a thing by sense or reason, but I cannot believe it, but as it

is affirmed or brought to me by credible testimony. As we are said to

see those things which we perceive by the eye, or the sense of seeing,

and to know those things which we receive by reason, or sure

demonstration; so we are said to believe those things which are brought

to us by valuable testimony, tradition, and report. As, for instance,

if any one ask you, Do you believe the sun shineth at noonday? You will

answer, I do not believe it, but see it. So if any one ask you, Do you

believe that twice two make four, and twice three make six? You will

say, I do not believe it, but know it, because certain and evident

reason telleth me that two is the half of four, and three of six; and

every whole consisteth of two halves or moieties. But if he should ask

you, Do you believe that the sun is bigger than the earth? You will

say, I believe it; for though your eye doth not discover it, nor doth

an ignorant man know any certain demonstration of it, yet, having the

authority of learned men, who are competent judges in the case, you

judge it a rash and foolish obstinacy not to believe it. Apply it now

to the mysteries of godliness revealed in the gospel. They cannot be

seen with the eye, for they are invisible; nor found out and

comprehended by any human understanding, because they exceed the reach

of man's reason, and depend upon the love and arbitrary will of God,

John iii. 16; yet you believe them, because God hath revealed them to

the prophets and apostles: and God, being truth and wisdom itself,

cannot deceive or be deceived; and therefore you believe them with the

certainty of divine faith, and do no more doubt of them than you do of

those things which you see with your eyes, and know and understand by a

sure demonstration. The sense of seeing may be deceived, and human

reason may err, but it is impossible God should deceive or be deceived.

It oftentimes falleth out that men do prefer the authority and report

of a man whom they judge to be wise and good before their own sense and

reason. As, for instance, that man who by his eye judges the sun to be

less than the earth, yet doth not obstinately stand in his opinion when

he hears a knowing and skilful philosopher assert the contrary. Now, If

we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater,' 1 John

v. 9. And this testimony of God is brought to us by his authorised

messengers as the ground of faith: and what is that but tradition? We

believe in God by hearing of him; and we hear by a preacher, Rom. x.

14. Ordinary common preachers give us notice; but Christ and his

apostles give us assurance; and by their testimony and tradition our

faith is ultimately resolved into the veracity of God.

2. That holding this tradition is the great means of standing fast in

the faith of Christ and the confession of his name. For in the word of

God delivered by Christ and his apostles, there is sure direction to

walk by, and sure promises to build upon. For whatever they made known

of Christ was not a fable but a certain truth; for they had the

testimony of sense, 2 Peter i. 16, 17; 1 John i. 2-4, and so could

plead both the authority of his command and the certainty of his

promise, and that with uncontrollable evidence; and without this

relation there can be neither faith nor obedience, nor sure expectation

of happiness. For we cannot trust God for what he hath not promised,

nor obey God in what he hath not commanded; nor in our difficulties and

distresses expect happiness from him without his war rant and

assurance. But by this doctrine delivered to us, we have all that

belongeth to faith, obedience, and happiness, and beyond that the

creature can desire no more. (1.) There can be no faith till we have a

sure testimony of God's revelation; for faith is a believing such

things as God hath revealed, because he hath revealed them. It is not

faith but fancy to believe such things as God hath never revealed; nor

is it trust and a regular confidence to think that he will certainly

give us what he hath never promised; this were to lay us open to all

manner of delusion; and therefore we are never upon sure and stable

ground but by sticking to such a tradition as may justly entitle itself

to God. (2.) Nor obedience: for obedience is a doing what God hath

commanded, because he hath commanded it. The fundamental reason of

obedience is the sight of God's will, 1 Thes. iv. 3, v. 18; 1 Peter ii.

15. To do what God never commanded, or not to do it upon that account,

but for other reasons, is not obedience; and in difficult cases the

soul can never be held to its duty till we are persuaded that so is

God's will concerning us. Now to know his will concerning us, we are

often bidden to search the scripture: but never bidden to consult with

the church, to know what unwritten traditions she hath in her keeping

to instruct us in our duty. (3.) No certain expectation of happiness.

We are never safe till we know by what rule Christ will judge us; that

is, reward or punish men at the last day. Now he will judge us

according to the gospel, Rom. ii. 16; 1 Thes. i. 8. Obey the gospel,

and you have a perfect rule to guide you to happiness; but if you

neglect this great salvation, or be unfaithful in the profession of it,

this word condemneth you, and God will ratify the sentence of it.

IV. That whilst the apostles were in being, there were two ways of

delivering the truth, and that was by word of mouth and writing. So in

the text: Whether by word or our epistle.' The apostles went up and

down and preached Christ everywhere; that needeth no proof, unless you

would have me to produce the whole book of the Acts of the Apostles.

But they did not preach only, but write; and both by the instinct of

the Holy Spirit, who guided their journeys, and moved them to write

epistles. For being often absent from churches newly planted, and

heresies arising, or some contentions, which could not be avoided among

weak Christians, God overruled these occasions for the profit of the

church in after ages: upon one occasion or another they saw a necessity

to write; ana'nken e'schon: Jude ver. 3, It was needful for me to write

unto you.' As, in the Old Testament, God himself delivered the law with

great majesty and terror, and afterwards caused the same to be written

in tables of stone, for the constant use of his people; and the

prophets first uttered their prophecies, and then wrote unto them; so

the apostles first preached evangelical doctrine, and then consigned it

to writing for the use of all ages. And though all things delivered by

them were not delivered in one sermon or one epistle, yet by degrees

the canon of the New Testament was constituted and made perfect by the

writings of the evangelists and apostles.

V. That now, when they are long since gone to God, and we cannot

receive from them the doctrine of life byword of mouth, we must stick

to the scriptures or written word. (1.) Because we are taught to do so

by Christ and his apostles. Christ always appealeth to the writings of

the Old Testament, both against traditions, which he condemneth, Mat.

xv. 2, and against pretended revelations: Luke xvi. 31, If they hear

not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded to repent,

if one should come from the dead.' And the apostles still have recourse

to this proof: Acts xxvi. 22, Witnessing no other things than the

prophets and Moses did say should come to pass.' And when they pleaded

they were eye and ear witnesses, and so their testimony was valuable;

yet they say we have bebaio'teron lo'gon, A surer word of prophecy,

whereunto ye shall do well to take heed,' 2 Peter i. 19. Now, how can

we do better than to imitate these great examples? (2.) Because those

things were written for our sakes: 1 John i. 4, These things write we

unto you, that your joy may be full.' The apostles, being to leave the

world, did know the slipperiness of man's memory, and the danger of

corrupting Christian doctrine, if there were not a sure authentic

record left; therefore they wrote, and so fully, that nothing is

wanting to complete our joy and happiness. (3.) Because the scriptures

are perfect. The perfection of scripture is known by its end and

intended use, which is to give us a knowledge of those things which

concern our faith, duty, and happiness. (1st.) Our faith in Christ. If

there be enough written for that end, we need not unwritten traditions

to complete our rule. Now, St John telleth us he might have written

more things: But these things are written that ye might believe in the

Son of God, and have life through his name,' John xx. 30, 31. Certainly

nothing is wanting to beget a faith in Christ. The object is

sufficiently propounded; the warrant or claim is laid down in the new

covenant, and the encouragements to believe it are clear and strong.

What would men have more? So that here is a perfect rule, perfect in

its kind, and for its proper use. (2dly.) For our duty; that is

sufficiently provided for. The apostle telleth us that the grace of

God'--take it objectively for the grace of the gospel, or subjectively

for grace in our hearts--teacheth us;'--if you mean objective grace, it

prescribeth, directeth; if subjective grace, it persuadeth and

exciteth; what to do? l To live soberly, righteously, godly in the

present world.' Titus ii. 12. There are all the branches of man's duty

enumerated: sobriety relateth to self-government; righteously, to our

carriage towards our neighbour; godly, to our commerce and communion

with God. What is there wanting that belongeth either to worship, or

justice, or personal holiness? Therefore certainly we need no other

rule; for it layeth down whatsoever men are bound to do in all ages and

places of the world, and in whatsoever circumstances God shall put

them. And so it is fit to be the law of the universal King and

Lawgiver; yea, it is so perfect, that whatever other way is set up, it

presently dasheth against those notions that we have, or should have,

of God, his service and worship; or it infringeth or perverteth the

liberty and nature of man. (3dly.) For our happiness. That doctrine and

institution which is able to make us wise unto salvation is enough for

us; but so the holy scriptures are said to do: 2 Tim. iii. 15, And that

from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to

make thee wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in Christ

Jesus.' Nay, afterwards, ver. 17, The man of God is by them made

perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good work.'

If the scriptures do thoroughly direct men to know God in Christ, and

save their own souls, why should we look any further? Now, they do not

only furnish every private Christian with this knowledge, but the man

of God,' who is to instruct others, he needeth look no further, but is

furnished out of the scripture with all things necessary to discharge

his office. Therefore here we fix and rest; we have a sufficient rule,

and a full record of all necessary Christian doctrine.

Use 1. The use of all is: Let us not seek another rule than the word of

God. Papists cry up unwritten traditions to be received with equal

respect and reverence, as we receive the holy scriptures. But you,

brethren, stand fast, holding the apostolical tradition. You can not

have it by word of mouth from them now; therefore you must stick to

what is written, or else you cannot preserve yourselves from the frauds

and impostures of Antichrist. These apostolical writings have been

received in all ages and times of the church from the beginning; and

all disputes among Christians have been tried by them. None were

allowed good or sincere Christians who doubted of the truth of them.

But because we have to do with a people that will sacrifice all to the

honour and interest of their church, and knowing they are not able to

stand before the light of scriptures, have, to the no little prejudice

of the Christian cause, done all they can to weaken the authority,

sufficiency, and perspicuity of them, that we might have no religion

without the testimony and recommendation of their church; therefore I

shall resume the matter and declare it afresh.

1. Mankind lying in darkness and in the shadow of death, it was

necessary that one way or another God should reveal his mind to them,

that we may have what belongeth to our duty and happiness, for our

.chief good and last end. Being altered by sin, we strangely mistake

things, and put light for darkness and darkness for light, good for

evil and evil for good, weighing all things in the balance of the

flesh, which we seek to please. We confound both the names and natures

of things, and wander in a maze of a thousand perplexities; therefore

Godwin, pity to mankind, hath given us a sure direction in his word,

which is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths,' Ps. cxix.

105. Mark the words of light and lamp. The use of a lamp is by night,

and in the day we have the light of the sun: whether it be day or night

with us, here we are taught how to carry ourselves. Mark again the

words of path and feet. The one signifieth our way and general course,

the other all our particular actions; so far as religion is concerned

in them, we have directions in the word about them. Besides, man's

condition is such, that he needeth a supernatural remedy by a Redeemer;

which, depending upon the mere love and free grace of God, cannot be

found out by natural light left to us; for that only can judge of

things necessary, but not of such things as depend upon the mere

pleasure of God; therefore a divine revelation there must be.

2. Since it is necessary that God should some way or other reveal his

mind to his people, it must be done by oracles, visions, dreams, or by

extraordinary messengers, who by word of mouth might convey it to us;

or else by writing, or by ordinary teachers, whose lips may preserve

knowledge in the church. The former ways might suffice while God saw

fit to reveal but a few truths, and such as do not burden the memory,

and men were long-lived, and of great simplicity, and the church was

confined within a small compass of ground, and not liable to so many

miseries and changes as now in the latter ages; but when once God had

spoken to us by his Son, those extraordinary ways ceased: Heb. i. 1, 2,

God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners,--spake in times past

to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last times spoken to us

by his Son.' As formerly God did speak polutro'pos, in divers

manners,--that is to say, by visions, oracles, dreams; and so

polumeros, at sundry times, by several steps and degrees, he acquainted

the world with the truths necessary for man to know, delivering them

out by portions, not altogether at once, till he came who had The

Spirit without measure,' John iii. 34. The prophets to whom God

revealed himself before by visions, oracles, dreams, or the coming of

the Spirit upon them, had the spirit ek me'trou, by measure, to fit

them for some particular errand or message on which God sent them. But

when God sent his Son out of his bosom to reveal the whole doctrine of

faith at once, and to declare his Father's will with full authority and

power, he fixed and closed up the rule of faith. So it was not fit that

after him there should come any extraordinary nuncios and ambassadors

from heaven, or any other should be owned as infallible messengers, but

such as he immediately sent abroad in the world to disciple the

nations. Therefore all former extraordinary ways ceased, and we are

left to the ordinary rule stated by Christ.

3. Being left to the ordinary rule, it was necessary it should be

taught, not only by word of mouth, but committed to writing; for Christ

is ascended into heaven, and the apostles do not live for ever; and we

have no men now that are immediately and divinely inspired; and

ordinary pastors and teachers cannot make more articles of faith, but

do only build on the apostles' foundation, 1 Cor. iii. 10, or that

divinely-inspired doctrine which they delivered to the church. Yea,

that doctrine cannot well be preserved from oblivion and corruption

without writing. Therefore God accounted this the safest way: those

things that are only delivered by word of mouth, or from hand to hand,

may easily be changed, corrupted, or utterly lost. Certainly, if you

consider man's sloth, treachery, levity, and the many vile affections

which may easily induce him to extinguish or corrupt the truth, which

is contrary to them, you will see that it is necessary there should be

an authentic record by which truth and error might be tried and

distinguished; yea, that the church, which is dispersed throughout the

world, might have truth at hand, and particular believers have this

doctrine ever by them for their comfort and use, it being the property

of a blessed man to delight in the law of God,' and to exercise himself

therein day and night,' Ps. i. 2. In short, while the apostles were

living, it was good to take the tradition from their mouth, but, now

they are dead, we take it from their writings. Surely if God saw some

writing necessary when those extraordinary ways we spake of before were

in use, and the church of the Old Testament was in a much quieter

estate than the church of the New, I say, if some writing were

necessary then, it is more necessary now, for the Christian church is

more exposed to dreadful storms of persecution, the deceits of here

tics of all sorts, especially to the frauds of Antichrist, which we are

forewarned of in this chapter, and are detected and discovered by their

contrariety to the written word.

4. This truth being written, it is both a safe and a full rule for us

to walk by. It is a safe rule, because it is written by the apostles

and evangelists, holy men moved by the Holy Ghost. The apostles did not

lose their infallibility when they committed what they preached to

writing. The same Spirit that assisted them in delivering the doctrine

by word of mouth, assisted them also when they delivered it by writing.

And it is a full and sufficient rule, because it containeth all things

which are necessary for men to believe and do in order to eternal life.

Let them name what is necessary, beyond what is recommended there or

may be delivered from thence. Yea, it doth contain not only all the

essential, but also the integral parts of the Christian religion; and

therefore nothing can be any part of our religion which is not there.

The direction of old was, Isa, viii. 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.' Everything was then tried by Moses and the

prophets; everything must be now tried by the prophets and apostles,

which is our foundation of faith, worship, and obedience, Eph. ii. 20.

5. That which we blame in the papists is, that they cry up a private,

unproved, unwritten tradition of their own, as of equal authority with

this safe and full rule which is contained in this written word of God.

Their crime and fault may be considered partly with respect to the

object and matter--that these traditions are not indifferent customs,

but essential points necessary to faith and Christian practice. And so,

though a Christian be never so thorough and sound in his obedience to

the word of God, and true to the baptismal covenant, yet, if he

submitteth not to these unwritten traditions, he wants some point

necessary to faith and practice, and so to life eternal, which is

contrary to Mark xvi. 16, He that believeth and is baptized shall be

saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;' and John xvii. 3,

This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus

Christ, whom thou hast sent.' Partly as to the subject, as they make

their own faction to be the only keepers of these things, and that

nothing is to be owned as apostolical tradition but what is delivered

as such by their authority; which is to leave the church to the tyranny

and usurpation of a corrupt faction, to declare for apostolical

tradition anything which serveth their end and interest, and for which

no true historical evidence is produced. Now the unjust and fraudulent

practices which they have used to promote this usurpation over the

churches of Christ render them false men, most unfit to be trusted in

this kind. Partly with respect to the manner: they will have these

things to be received pari reverentia et pietatis affectu--with the

same reverence and pious affection with which we receive the holy

scriptures; and so man's post is set by God's, and unproved traditions

equalled with doctrines of faith. Their opinion is bad enough, but

their practice is worse; for there they show they value these things

more than the scriptures; as superstition always aboundeth in its own

things. Did ever any of their doctors say the same things of traditions

which they take the boldness to say of scripture? Did they ever call

them pen and inkhorn, or parchment divinity, a nose of wax, a dumb

rule, an obscure and ambiguous doctrine? These blasphemies they vent

boldly against the scriptures; but did they ever speak these of

traditions? And again, their common people are a thousand times better

instructed in their traditions than in the doctrine of salvation. They

skill more of Lent and Ember-weeks, &c., than they truly understand the

doctrine of man's misery and remedy. And call you this reverence and

pious affection to the scriptures and traditions? Partly because they

would never give us a catalogue of unwritten traditions necessary to be

observed by all Christians. It may be lest they should amaze the people

with the multitude of them, or else that the people may not know how

many of their doctrines are destitute of scripture proof, and so they

plainly be discovered to be imposers on the belief of the Christian

world.

6. Though we blame this in papists, yet we reject not all traditions:--

[1.] Because scripture itself is a tradition, as we proved before, and!

is conveyed to us by the most credible means, which we have no reason

to doubt of. The scriptures of the Old Testament were preserved by the

Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God.' Rom. iii. 2,

Protestants received all the books which they admitted into their

canon. And for the books of the New Testament, the Christian church

hath received them as the writings of those whose names they bear. And

by the constant universal tradition of the church they are transmitted

to us; and we have no more reason to doubt of them than we do of

statutes and laws made by kings and parliaments who lived long before

we had a being. Yea; we may be much more confident, as the matter is of

greater weight and consequence, and these writings have the signature

and stamp of God's Spirit on them, and have been blessed by God to the

converting and sanctifying of many souls; and have been delivered down

to us by a succession of believers unto this very day. And by them

Christianity hath been preserved in the world, notwithstanding the

wickedness of it, and hath held up head against all the encounters of

time. The persecutions of adverse powers have not suppressed it, nor

the disputes of enemies silenced the profession of it; but still from

age to age God's truth is received and transmitted to posterity.

[2.] Because the truth of Christianity depending upon matter of fact,

chiefly Christ's rising from the dead, it can only be proved by a

testimony which, in so extraordinary a case, must be made valuable, and

authorised to the world by the miracles accompanying it. Now the notice

of these things is brought to us by tradition, which, being

unquestionable, giveth us as good ground of faith as it did to them

that lived in the apostles' time, and heard their doctrine and saw

their miracles. God's wonderful works were never intended for the

benefit of that age only in which they were done, but for the benefit

also of those that should hear of them by any credible means what

soever, Ps. cxlv. 4; Joel i. 3; Ps. lxxviii. 3-7: these things were

told them that they might set their hope in God,' &c.

[3.] Because there are some doctrines drawn by just consequence from

scripture, but are the more confirmed to us when they are backed with

constant church usage and practice; as baptism of infants, Lord's-day,

singing of psalms in our public worship, &c.

[4.] Because there are certain words which are not found in scripture

indeed, yet agreeable thereto, and are very useful to discover the

frauds of heretics; as Trinity, divine providence, consubstantial,

procession of the Holy Ghost, satisfaction, &c.

[5.] We reject not all church history, or the records of ancient

writers concerning the providences of God in their days in owning the

gospel, which make much for our instruction in manners, and help to

encourage us to put our trust in God.

[6.] There are certain usages and innocent customs or circum stances,

common to sacred and other actions, which we despise not, but

acknowledge and receive as far as their own variable nature and

condition requireth; not rejecting them, because anciently practised;

nor regarding them, when the general law of edification requireth the

omission of them. But that which we detest is, that the traditions of

men should be made equal in dignity and authority with the express

revelation of God; yea, that manifest corruptions and usurpations,--as

making Rome the mistress of other churches, and superinducing the Pope

as the head of the universal visible church, and the vicar of Christ,

without his leave and appointment, and such like other points, should

be obtruded upon the world as apostolical traditions, and to be

received with like religious reverence as we do articles of faith set

down in scripture. This is that we cannot sufficiently abhor, as

apparently false, and destructive to Christianity.

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SERMON XIV.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath

loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope, through

grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and

work.--2 Thes. II. 16, 17.

THE apostle--1. Giveth thanks for their election and vocation, vers.

13, 14.

2. Exhorteth them to stick fast to the truths delivered by epistles, or

word of mouth, ver. 15.

3. Prayeth for them, in the words now read. So that is the third means

of confirming their faith in the truth of the gospel; prayer to God for

them. Now in a prayer all things are plain; we must put off our shoes

when we draw nigh to God, appear before the Lord with naked and bare

feet. Therefore here nothing of difficulty will occur; our prayers, the

more simply and plainly they are expressed, the more sincere they are.

In this prayer observe:--

I. The persons to whom this prayer is addressed: now our Lord Jesus

Christ himself, and God, even our Father.

II. The grounds of audience and success are intimated, which are

two:--(1.) God's love: which hath loved us. (2.) The pledges of his

love; which are also two:--First, Without us; Secondly, Within us.

1. He hath given us everlasting consolation.

2. Good hope through grace.

III. The blessings prayed for.

1. Increase of comfort: comfort your hearts.

2. Perseverance or establishment: and stablish you in every good word

and work; where, by every good word' is meant the sound doctrine of the

gospel; by every good work,' holiness of life.

So that here is a great harvest of matter, but we must gather it in by

degrees, for all cannot be spoken of at once.

First, We begin with the persons to whom the prayer is addressed: Now

our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father;' that is, I

beseech the Lord our Saviour, and God our Father, to comfort and

stablish you. The observations for this branch shall be brief and

short, because the proper seat of them lieth elsewhere.

I. That exhortations prevail little without prayer. He had exhorted

them to hold fast the traditions, and presently addeth, Our Lord Jesus

Christ and God the Father stablish you in every good word and work.' It

is good to observe how all the parts of the apostle's discourse cohere

and agree together. He first blesseth God for their election, and then

showeth how it is accomplished by vocation or effectual calling. Yet

the effectually called need quickening and exhortation, that we may

concur to our salvation in that way which is proper to us. But lest the

business should seem wholly to rest upon our will, he carrieth up the

matter to God again by prayer. Election doth not exclude God's means,

which is vocation, nor man's means, which is exhortation; but that

availeth little unless the matter be brought before God again by

prayer.

Now this method is necessary:--

1. Because all from first to last come from God; he is Alpha and Omega,

first and last; all things are from him, through him, and to him. The

business began with God in his election, and is still carried on

through God, not only by effectual calling, but actual assistance,

which giveth success and blessing; and then the glory of all redoundeth

to him.

2. Because what cometh from God must be sought of God: Ezek. xxxvi. 37,

I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for

them;' compared with the 26th verse, A new heart will I give you, and a

new spirit will I put within you.' We must express our desires to God

for things agreeable to his will, for God will not force spiritual

blessings upon us, nor give them to us, unless we desire them. Some

things he gave us unasked, and without our desire, consent, or

knowledge, as a Mediator, a new covenant, or offers of grace, yea, the

first gift of the Spirit; but in other things we are obliged to ask.

3. A great part of man's duty dependeth on prayer seriously performed.

There is nothing so conducible to the maintaining of communion between

us and God as a daily sense of our emptiness, and God's both fulness

and readiness to supply all our wants.

[1.] That it is so, that we are empty, and God is all-sufficient,

otherwise there would not be a foundation for practical godliness. That

we are empty: John xv. 5, Without me ye can do nothing.' Not only nihil

magnum, but nihil. So 2 Cor. iii. 5, Not that we are sufficient of

ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves, for our sufficiency is of

God;' that is, we are not able to think anything in order to the

conversion of other men or ourselves; we cannot imagine to enter upon

this design with any hope of success without God. That there is a

fulness in God to supply all our wants: Eph. iii. 20, Now unto him that

is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think;'

that is, above what we can imagine and pray for. If any man seriously

address himself to any serious business, he is full of

imaginations--may it be effected, yea, or no? Alas! God outworketh

their thoughts and prayers, and doth things which never entered into

our hearts to conceive. That there is a readiness in God to supply all

our wants, otherwise our prayers would be little encouraged, and be

dead in the mouth. Now James i. 5, If any man lack wisdom, let him ask

it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.' You

need not make scruple, or be ashamed to consult with God upon every

occasion, for he is ready, and hath not a confined bounty like ours,

who waste by giving, and give from ourselves what we impart to others.

[2.] That without this, communion with God would be interrupted, and

all religion would die and languish; for if we had the stock in our

hands, we would forget and forsake our Father. But when still we must

be enabled by God to every good work, and we cannot have it unless we

acknowledge him, and seek it of him by prayer, this keepeth up a

sensible dependence of the creature upon God; this dependence begets

observance, Phil. ii. 12; and they that continually receive their dole

and portion from him are obliged to please him in all things.

Use of direction. When you come to wait on the word, or receive here

any quickening exhortation, call God into the business, that the thing

may not die away in your hearts. Make conscience of praying as well as

hearing. You hear from man in God's name, but carry it again to God,

that he may bless it. All religion is carried on between the pulpit and

the throne of grace. You will thrive if you conscientiously make use of

both ordinances--if you hear of Christ in the word, and make use of him

in prayer.

II. Observation. That prayer must be made to God alone: Ps. lxv. 2,

thou that nearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.' The apostle

here addresseth himself to God, and so must all flesh.

1. He alone is capable of hearing prayers. We conceive of God as an

infinite being, wise, powerful, and good; as knowing all things, as

able to do all things, as willing to give all things that we can in

reason and righteousness ask of him.

[1.] He knoweth all things, our persons, wants, necessities, prayers.

Our persons: God knoweth that there is such a creature in the world as

thou art; for surely God knoweth whom he hath made, and whom he

supporteth and governeth. A notable instance we have: Acts ix. 11, And

the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street that is called

Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of

Tarsus; for behold he prayeth.' What a description is here of God's

particular providence!--the city of Damascus; the street called

Straight; the house of one Judas; the person (a lodger there), one Saul

of Tarsus; the action he was employed in, behold, he prayeth! He

knoweth our wants and necessities: Mat. vi. 8, Your Father knoweth what

things ye have need of before you ask him.' He observed every weary

step of David in the wilderness, and all his tears and sorrows: Ps.

lvi. 8, Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears in thy bottle:

are they not in thy book?' He particularly took notice of all the

troubles and sorrows of his exile and wandering condition, as if his

tears had been preserved in a bottle, and his troubles registered or

recorded in a book. The doctrine of the Gentiles was, Dii magna curant,

parva negligunt--that great and weighty matters the Lord took into his

care, but left other things to their own event and chance; but the

doctrine of the scripture is otherwise; God taketh notice of every

particular person. For our prayers: Ps. xxxiv. 6, This poor man cried

unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his

troubles.' How obscure soever the worshipper be in the account of the

world, if he depend on God, the Lord will regard him.

[2.] For his power. He is able to do all things: Mark xiv. 36, Abba,

Father, all things are possible to thee.'

[3.] For his goodness. He relieveth all his creatures; heareth the

moans of the beasts, much more the prayers of the saints: Ps. cxlv. 15,

16, The eyes of all things wait upon the Lord, and thou givest them

their meat in due season,' c. Now this he makes a ground of fulfilling

the desires of them that fear him, and being near to all that call upon

him,' vers. 18, 19. He that feedeth a kite, will he not provide for a

child? Surely we have more reason to trust in God than they, if you

think this belongeth to his common bounty. But in spiritual things it

is otherwise; he is most pleased when we ask spiritual blessings: 1

Kings iii. 10, It pleased the Lord that Solomon asked this thing.'

Well, then, since none other is capable, and God is, to him must we

come.

2. The scriptures, which are the proper rule of worship, direct us to

no other. When Christ taught his disciples to pray, he directed them to

God: Luke xi. 2, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven.'

Invocation is divine worship, and so done to God alone.

3. When the Spirit moveth us to pray, he inclineth us to come to God:

Rom. viii. 15, Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, where by we

cry, Abba, Father;' Gal. iv. 5, 6, Because ye are sons, he hath sent

forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' He

doth not move us to go to the saints, but to God.

The use. Well, then, if any trouble befall us, let us call on God,

unbosom ourselves to him: Ps. l. 15, Call upon me in the day of

trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' If we want

any grace, let us go to the God of all grace, in the name of Christ:

Heb. iv. 16, Seeing, therefore, we have a great high priest that is

entered into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly to the

throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in

a time of need.' We can pray to none but to him in whom we trust: Ps.

lxii. 8, Trust in the Lord at all times; pour out your hearts before

him.' Trust is the foundation of prayer. They that look to God for all

will frequently apply themselves to him. Our necessities and wants are

continual, both as to the temporal and spiritual things. We need not

only daily bread, but daily pardon, daily strength against temptations;

therefore let us often come to God.

III. Observation. That Jesus Christ is invoked together with the Father

as an author of grace, and thereby his Godhead is proved; for he that

is an object both of internal and external worship is God. Now such is

Christ. Of internal worship: John xiv. 1, Ye believe in God, believe

also in me.' Though Christ died as man, yet he is God equal with the

Father, and an object of faith and trust. For external worship, or

prayer, the text is clear: Our Lord Jesus Christ, and God, even our

Father.' That is much for the comfort of the faithful, that we have God

to trust in, and Christ to trust in; that we that have sinned with both

hands earnestly, have a double ground of our comfort and hope--the

infinite mercy and power of God, and the infinite merit of a mediator.

There is a great latitude in the object of faith, and so of invocation:

The Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father.' There is no pain so

great that God in Christ cannot remove; no danger so dreadful but he

can prevent; no misery so deep but he can deliver from it; no enemy so

strong, but he can vanquish them; no want that he cannot supply. When

we have a want that he cannot supply, or a sickness that he cannot

cure, or a danger that he cannot prevent, or a misery that he cannot

remove, or enemies that are too hard for him, then we may sit down and

despair, and die. I speak of both as one, for God and Christ are here

joined as to the same effect: Comforting their hearts, and stablishing

them in every good word and work.'

IV. Observation. We can obtain nothing from God unless we seek it in

Jesus Christ. Therefore the apostle beginneth his prayer, Now our Lord

Christ, and God,' &c. God alone is abundantly enough for our happiness,

for there is in him more than abundantly enough to satisfy all the

capacities of the creature; but without a mediator how shall we come to

receive of his fulness? If man had kept innocent, God had been enough

to us, for in innocency there was no mediator; but to man fallen a

mediator is necessary

1. I shall state the necessity of it. Because of distance and

difference; we are unworthy to approach his holy presence; and God hath

a quarrel and controversy with us, which till it be taken up, we can

expect no good thing from him.

[1.] Distance. We are estranged from God by the fall, and have lost his

image, lost his favour and fellowship, and all communion with him, so

that God now is looked upon by us as out of the reach of our commerce,

which hindereth our love and confidence in him; for we can hardly

depend upon one so far above us that he will take notice of us, or take

care for us, so as to relieve us in our necessities, or help us in our

miseries, and give us the blessings we ask of him; or that we shall be

welcome to him, when we come with our prayers and supplications. God

taught the Israelites their distance; and the apostle telleth us that

all that dispensation the Holy Ghost did signify, that the way into the

holiest was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was

standing.' Heb. ix. 8. They could not come near God without danger of

death; he would not have them so familiar with him.

[2.] Difference, or controversy. A mediator is used only between

disagreeing parties. When man was guilty, God was angry. Conscience of

sin presents God terrible, and taketh away all confidence from us, so

that we are obnoxious to his wrath and righteous vengeance: 1 Sam. vi.

20, Who is able to stand before this Holy God?' Isa. xxxiii. 14, And

who can dwell with everlasting burnings?' We cannot approach God in any

friendly manner.

2. I shall show what provision God hath made for us. The Lord Jesus

took this office at God's appointment, of reconciling God to us, and

appeasing his wrath, and us to God, by bringing us back again, our

alienated and estranged affections to God. How so? what hath he done?

[1.] The distance is in truth taken away by his very person. He is

God-man; God and man meet together in the person of Christ. God doth

condescend and come down to man, and man is encouraged to ascend to

God. God in Christ is nearer to man than he was before, that we may

have more familiar thoughts of him. The pure Deity is at so vast a

distance from us, that we are amazed and confounded when we think of

it, and cannot conceive an hope that he should concern himself in our

affairs. But the Son of God is come in our nature: John i. 14, The word

was made flesh, and dwelt among us;' 1 Tim. iii. 16, Great is the

mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh;' so that he is more

accessible to us, and nearer at hand, and more readily inclined to help

us, for he will not be strange to his own flesh.

[2.] The difference and controversy is taken up by the work of his

redemption; for God hath set him forth to be a propitiation,' or a

means of appeasing his wrath, Rom. iii. 25, and to be the foundation of

that new covenant wherein pardon and life is offered to us. It is not

enough to our recovery that God be reconciled, but man must be renewed,

otherwise we remain for ever under the displeasure of God. Now he hath

purchased the grace of the Spirit, to be dispensed by the covenant, to

bring us home to God: Titus iii. 5, 6, Not by works of righteousness

which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the

washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed

on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;' and Rom. viii. 2,

For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free

from the law of sin and death.'

Use. Let us be sensible of this unspeakable mercy, that God hath

provided a Mediator for us, that we may come to God by him: Heb. vii,

25, Wherefore he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto

God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us;'

that the legal exclusion is removed, and a way opened to the Father:

John xiv. 6, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to

the Father but by me;' otherwise we could not immediately converse with

God, nor trust in him.

1. We see God in our nature as near at hand, and ready to help us; he

came down amongst us, and became one of us; was bone of our bone, and

flesh of our flesh.' And though he hath removed his dwelling into

heaven again, it is for our sakes; he hath carried our nature thither,

to take possession of that blessed place in our name, if we have a mind

to follow him: John xiv. 2, I go to prepare a place for you.'

2. Here we see the means of appeasing God's wrath: 2 Cor. v. 19, God

was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.' There is a full

ransom paid; all that enter into God's peace shall have the benefit of

it.

3. By him we are encouraged to come to pray for every blessing we stand

in need of: Eph. ii. 18, Through him we both have an access by one

Spirit unto the Father.' Liberty to approach unto God is a privilege

which we cannot enough value; the wall of partition between God and us

is broken down by Christ; he hath completely satisfied God's justice,

Heb. x. 19. He is now at the right hand of God interceding for us: 1

Tim. ii. 5, There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the

man Christ Jesus;' and remaineth with God as the great agent of the

saints: Heb. viii. 1, 2, We have such an high priest, who is set on the

right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a minister of

the sanctuary,' &c. Perfuming their prayers with the smoke of his

incense: Rev. viii. 3, 4, 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 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.'

V. Observation. Mark the distinct titles given to God and the Mediator:

Christ is called our Lord, and God our Father. Let us see what these

titles import, of Lord and Father.

1. Christ is represented to us as the Lord; so he was set forth by the

apostles at the first preaching of the gospel: Acts x. 36, We preach

peace by Christ Jesus, he is Lord of all;' 2 Cor. iv. 5, We preach

Christ Jesus the Lord;' Col. ii. 6, If ye have received Christ Jesus

the Lord, so walk in him.' Christ is Lord two ways:--

[1.] By that right which belongeth to him as Creator, and is common and

equal to him with the Father and the Spirit. Surely the Creator of the

world is the sovereign of it. This right continueth still, and shall

continue while man receiveth his being from God by creation, and the

continuance of his being by daily preservation and providence.

[2.] There is novum jus dominii et imperii--a new right of empire and

government which belongeth to him as Redeemer, and this accrueth to

him:--

(1.) Partly by the donation of God: Acts ii. 36, Let all the house of

Israel know that this Jesus, whom ye have crucified, is made Lord and

Christ.' This office of Lord is derivative, and cannot be supreme, but

subordinate; it is derived from God: All power is given to me, both in

heaven and earth,' Mat. xxviii. 18; and it is referred to him: Phil.

ii. 11, That every tongue should confess that Christ is Lord, to the

glory of God the Father.' The supreme right of governing is still in

God, and subjection to him is not vacated, but established and

reserved.

(2.) It is acquired by his own purchase: Rom. xiv. 9, For this end

Christ both died and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord

both of dead and living;' 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, Ye are not your own, for

ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in

your spirit, which are God's.' He had a full right in us before, but

this lordship and dominion which the Redeemer is possessed of is

comfortable and beneficial to us, and the end of it is to effect man's

cure and recovery. We could not by our sin make void God's right and

title to govern us; but yet it was not comfortable to us, it was but

such a right as a prince hath to chastise his rebellious subjects. We

forfeited our interest in his gracious protection, therefore was this

new interest set afoot to save and recover fallen man; therefore this

lordship is spoken of as medicinal and restorative, to reduce man to

the obedience of God that made him: Acts x. 38, God anointed Jesus of

Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power, who went about doing

good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil.' It is a

lordship that conduceth to make peace between God and man, that we may

again enjoy his favour, and live in his obedience: Acts v. 31, Him hath

God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, for to

give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins.' This new Lord hath

made a new law of grace, which is lex remedians, a remedy propounded

for the recovering the lapsed world of mankind. The great benefit is

remission of sins; the great duty, repentance.

Use 1. To persuade us to submit ourselves to this blessed Lord by our

voluntary consent: Ps. xlv. 11, He is thy Lord; worship thou him.'

There is a passive subjection and a voluntary submission. By a passive

subjection all creatures are under the power of the Son of God and our

Redeemer; and amongst the rest, the devils themselves, though grievous

revolters and rebels, are not exempted; every knee is forced to bow to

Christ. By voluntary submission: Those are Christ's subjects, and

admitted into his kingdom, who willingly give up them selves to the

Redeemer to be saved upon his own terms: 2 Cor. viii. 5, They first

gave their own selves to the Lord.' The devils and wicked men are his

against their wills; but all Christ's people are his by their own

consent.

Use 2. Let us perform the duties which this title calleth for; our

obedience is the best testimony of our subjection to him. Many seem to

like Christ as a Saviour, but refuse him as a Lord; whereas Christ is

not only a Saviour to bless, but a Lord to rule and command. Therefore

if we catch at comforts and neglect duty, we do not own Christ's

authority. The libertine, yokeless spirit is very natural to all: Luke

xix. 14, We will not have this man to reign over us;' Ps. xii. 4, With

our tongues we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is Lord over

us?' Ps. ii. 3, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their

cords from us.' Some are so in opinion, but most in practice. We would

not be under command; we love privileges, but decline duties. But he is

the head of the church' who is the Saviour of the body,' Eph. v. 23. If

we would have privileges by him, we must set ourselves to obey his

laws. If thou hast no care to obey him as a lord, thy esteem of Christ

is but imaginary, thy knowledge but partial, thy application of him

unsound. But we will own him as lord. How is that understood? Will you

give him an empty title, or some superficial compliments and

observances? Luke vi. 46, And why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not

the things that I say?' It is a mockage. Or will you please yourselves

with strict opinions? Mat. vi. 21, 22, For where your treasure is,

there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye; if

therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light;

if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that

darkness!' No; nothing less than a thorough subjection to his holy

laws, forsaking all other lords: Isa. xxvi. 13, Lord our God, other

lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we

make mention of thy name.' And then a strict observance: Col. i. 11,

Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all

patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness.'

Use 3. Depend upon Christ for the effects of his love to you, which are

the privileges of his kingdom, which are pardon of sins: Col. i. 14, In

whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our

sins.' The sanctification of the Spirit; Heb. viii. 10, This is the

covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,

saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in

their hearts.' Assistance in carrying on the spiritual life; that here

surely our Lord will not desert us, but help us in our obedience to

him. Finally, everlasting life: Heb. v. 9, And being made perfect, he

became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.'

When the devil and his instruments are cast into hell, Christ's

faithful subjects and servants are advanced into eternal glory and

blessedness.

Secondly, God is represented under the title of a father: And God, even

our Father.' God is a word of power; Father expresseth his good will

and love. God standeth in both relations to us, as he did also to

Christ: John xx. 17, I go to my God and your God, my Father and your

Father.' Both joined together signify his power and readiness to do

good. He that is our Father is true God also, and he that is true God

is also our Father; and therefore we may depend on him. That which we

are to open is the term Father, which speaketh both comfort and duty to

us.

1. Comfort. For God's dealing with us will be very fatherly; as a

father loveth his children, so will God love his people: 2 Cor. vi. 18,

I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith

the Lord.'

[1.] He will pardon our sins and frailties, and spare us and pity us,

notwithstanding our ill-deservings: Ps. ciii. 13, Like as a father

pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;' Mal.

iii. 17, They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when

I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son

that serveth him.' Surely this is a grace we stand in need of, because

of our manifold infirmities and daily failings.

[2.] He will give grace, that we may serve him better: Luke xi. 13, If

ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how

much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that

ask him?' Do but cry to him, as an hungry child to his father for

bread, and God will not deny this great gift to you.

[3.] God will provide for us, and give such an allowance of temporal

mercies as are convenient: Mat. vi. 25, Take no thought for your life,

what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what

ye shall put on;' and ver. 32, For after all these things do the

Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of

all these things.' The belief of adoption and particular providence

kills all distrustful fears and cares at the very root.

[4.] He will protect you and preserve you against temptations: 1 Peter

i. 3, 5, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which,

according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively

hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, &c., who are

kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.'

[5.] He will give you the kingdom: Luke xii. 32, Fear not, little

flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

2. On the other side, this relation bespeaketh duty. For if God be a

father, we must carry ourselves as children by our subjection, to him;

that is, by submission to his disposing will, and obedience to his

governing will.

[1.] By an absolute submission to his disposing will. For if you would

enjoy the privileges of God's family, you must submit to the discipline

of his family: Heb. xii. 6-9, For whom God loveth he chasteneth, and

scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If you endure chastening, God

dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father

chasteneth not? But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are

partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had

fathers of our flesh, which chastened us, and we gave them reverence;

shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and

live?' In heaven, where there is no danger of sin, there is no use of

the rod; but while we are in the flesh, we need correction, and if God

should not give it us. we are no'thoi, not legitimate, but degenerate

sons. But in the 10th verse, the apostle argueth from God's paternal

authority: For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own

pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his

holiness.' Children, though they take it ill to be beaten by others,

yet not by their parents, who (under God) are the cause of their being,

and love them, and in correction of them seek their good; much more do

we owe this respect to our heavenly Father, who hath a more absolute

right over us. Parents may err through want of wisdom--their

chastisements may be arbitrary and irregular; do much in passion rather

than compassion; but all God's chastisements come from purest love, and

are regulated by perfect wisdom, and tend to and end in holiness and

happiness.

[2.] Obedience to his governing will. The great duty of children is to

love, please, obey, and honour their father: Mal. i. 6, A son honoureth

his father, and a servant his master. If I be a father, where is mine

honour? If I be a master, where is my fear?' 1 Peter i. 14, 15, As

obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former

lusts in your ignorance. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be

ye holy in all manner of conversation;' John xv. 8, Herein is my Father

glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.' There

should be a great tenderness upon us not to do anything that may be a

breach of God's law, or tend to God's dishonour. What diligent

observers were the Rechabites of the institutions of their family: Jer.

xxxv. 6, But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of

Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither

ye, nor your sons for ever.'

VI. Observation. They to whom Christ is a lord, to them God is a

father. His special fatherly love floweth in the channel of redemption,

and is brought about by the gospel. The Lord, from all eternity,

predeterminated some to the adoption of sons: Eph. i. 5, Having

predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to

himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.' But how doth he

bring to pass this decree? By the redemption of Christ. It is no mean

privilege, Christians, that needeth so much ado to establish it: Gal.

iv. 4, 5, But when the fulness of the 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.' Christ came

to be the foundation of a new covenant, before we could have this

privilege. Well, but whence ariseth our actual interest? I answer--By

accepting the offer of the gospel, or receiving and owning Christ to

the ends for which he came into the world, or God sent him into the

world: John i. 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;' that

is, by depending on his merits for our reconciliation with God, and

submitting to his laws, that he might reduce us to our primitive

obedience and love to them.

Use. Therefore, if you would have a share in this blessed privilege:--

1. You must be regenerated by his Spirit; for the relative change

dependeth on the real: our state is not changed till our natures be

changed: John i. 12, 13, Being born again of the will of God.' If you

would enter into God's family, and enjoy the privileges thereof, you

must be changed by the Spirit.

2. There is required on our part an entrance into the kingdom of the

Mediator by faith and repentance: Mat. xviii. 3, Except ye be

converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the

kingdom of God.' As little children are newly entered into the world

and beginning their life, all things are become new to them; so those

that have the privileges of God's children must become as little

children, enter into a new state, carry on a new life and trade, with

which they were not acquainted before. Our first admission is by a

consent to the new covenant: Gal. iii. 26, Ye are all made children of

God by faith in Christ;' depending on the merit of Christ's sacrifice,

and binding ourselves by a solemn word to perform the duties required

of us, which we renew again in the Lord's Supper.

VII. That we most comfortably come to God by Christ for grace, when we

consider our interest in him and relation to him. Our relation is here

intimated, for Jesus Christ is our Lord, and God is our Father; and

surely our Lord will not refuse his own subjects, nor our Father be

strange to his own children.

1. It is certain that among men relation to any person or thing

endeareth them to us. To` anton pasin e de'a philo'teknoi, [5] men love

their own children; though not so fair and good as others, yet they are

their own. And is it not so as to God? See John xiii. 1, Having loved

his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end;' and John

xvii. 6, I have manifested thy name to the men which thou gavest me out

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

kept thy word.'

2. Interest giveth us more encouragement: Isa. lxiii. 19, We are thine:

thou never barest rule over them; they were never called by thy name;'

that is, we are thy people, thy subjects, so called, so accounted. That

interest giveth some hope and confidence is evident, because sometimes

the saints plead the common relation that they are the workmanship of

his hands: Ps. cxix. 73, Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; give

me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.' They will not

quit their interest in God; if they cannot come as his special

servants, yet as his creatures, one way or another, they will entitle

themselves to him.

Use. To direct the servants of God, when they ask any grace of him, to

bring it to this still, Our Lord and our Father.' But how shall they do

so, if they have no assurance? I answer:--

1. There are some titles which imply a claim to benefits and

privileges; others that infer an obligation to duty: these latter may

be used without any usurpation: John xx. 28, My Lord, and my God.'

2. Resignation of yourselves to him showeth you are his, and in time

you will come to know that he is yours, if you make it good: Ps. cxix.

94, I am thine; save me, for I have sought thy precepts.' Resolve to

obey him, and serve him, however he deal with you. Choice of God for

our portion, and Christ for our Lord, showeth you are resolved to be

his.

3. Speak as the covenant speaketh that you are under, till your

sincerity be more unquestionable. God offers himself to be our God, and

Redeemer, and Father; Christ to be our Lord and Saviour: Isa. lxiii.

16, Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us,

and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our

Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.' God offered himself to be so,

and God is angry for not owning it: Jer. iii. 4, Wilt thou not from

this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?'

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[5] A misprint, which can only be conjecturally rectified. Perhaps ta`

auton pasin ede'a philote'knois.--ED.

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SERMON XV.

Which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good

hope through grace.--2 Thes. II. 16.

WE come now to the second branch, the ground of audience and success in

prayer: Which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and

good hope through grace.' Where three grounds of acceptance are

intimated:--

I. The first is taken from the rise and foundation of all the love of

God: he hath loved us.

II. From the matter of our comfort: he hath given us everlasting

consolation.

III. From the way whereby we receive it and entertain it: and good hope

through grace.

The first relateth to our redemption by Christ.

The second to the new covenant.

The third to the disposition of our hearts, and how we are affected in

the reception of these things, as will appear more in the explication

of each branch.

First, I begin with the rise and foundation of that grace which we

expect and beg of God in prayer: he hath loved us.'

Doct. That God's love to sinners, manifested in our redemption by

Christ, giveth great boldness and encouragement in prayer.

1. I shall prove this is the love here intended.

2. That this giveth boldness in prayer.

I. That this is the love here intended, for these reasons:--

1. This is a visible effect and demonstration of his love to us: 1 John

iii. 16, Hereby perceive we the love of God to us, in that he laid down

his life for us;' and 1 John iv. 9, 10, In this was manifested the love

of God towards us, in that he sent his only-begotten Son into the

world, that we might live by him. Herein was love, not that we loved

God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for

our sins.' From these places I gather, that to found our confidence and

hope, it was needful that the love God had to us should show itself by

some manifest and real proof. How can we tell how God's heart standeth

affected to mankind but by the effects? Whatever benevolence or

good-will he has towards us, it is not evident to us till it break

forth into some action, and real performance of some great thing for

us. Now this was fully manifested in giving his Son to die for a sinful

world, that he hath a love for us, and doth really desire our

salvation. There is a hidden love of God, which is his eternal purpose

and decree; and there is an open and declared love, and that is first

and most seen in our redemption by Christ. In predestination his love

was conceived in his heart; in redemption it is manifested in the

effects; that was the rise, this the visible demonstration and sign of

it. Now the apostle would not reason from what was hidden and secret,

but from what is open and manifest.

2. This is not only, the demonstration and visible proof of the reality

of his love, but an ample representation and commendation of the

greatness of his love: Rom. v. 8, But God commendeth his love to us, in

that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' A thing may be

demonstrated to be real that yet is not commended or set forth as great

and glorious. But God would express his love in such an astonishing

instance, that we might admire the greatness as well as believe the

reality of it: John iii. 16, God so loved the world,' &c.; that is, so

unspeakably, so inconceivably would he express his love to mankind, as

to send his Son to assume our nature, and die for our transgressions.

He doth not tell you how, but leaveth you to admire at it, and rejoice

in it. What may we not expect from this love, this great love? If God

loveth us at such a rate, surely he is in good earnest; his heart is

set upon our salvation, or else he would never have taken this course

of giving his only Son to suffer an accursed and shameful death. Now

when the apostle saith God hath loved us,' he meaneth it of the great

instance of his love. Analogum per se positum, stat pro suo significatu

famosiori--words not restrained by the context must be interpreted in

the most famous and known sense.

3. This is the first motive to draw our hearts to him: 1 John iv. 19,

We loved him, because he loved us first.' The first motive of our

affection is not his special electing love to us above others, for that

we cannot know before we love him; but his common love and mercy to

sinners, and that was manifested in Christ's being sent to be a

propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins

of the whole world. This is that which is propounded to us to recover

and reconcile our alienated and estranged affections to God: 2 Cor. v.

19, 20, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not

imputing their trespasses unto him.' This grace God offereth to us, as

well as others; namely, that for Christ's sake he will pardon our sins,

if we will lay down our weapons and enter into his peace. None are

bound to believe that God specially loveth them, but those that are

specially beloved by him, for none are bound to believe a falsehood,

and a false hood it is to us, till we have the saving effects and

benefits. Therefore, it is not the special, but the general love which

first draweth in our hearts to God; yea, the saints, after some

testimonies received of God's special love, still make this to be the

great engaging motive: Gal. ii. 20, I live by faith in the Son of God,

who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Well, then, this is most likely

to be meant by the apostle.

II. This must needs give great boldness in prayer.

1. By this we see that God's love is not a cold, ineffectual love, that

consists only in raw wishes, but an operative, active love, that

issueth forth to accomplish what he intendeth to us, though by the most

costly means, and acted at the dearest rate. God is good, and doth

good,' Ps. cxix. 68. He hath a love to us, and will do good to us. Our

love many times goes no further than good wishes or good words be

warmed, be clothed, but giveth not those things which are needful to

the body, James ii. 16; but God resteth not in kind wishes, but giveth

a full demonstration of it. If Christ be needful to the saints, they

shall have him; if God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for

us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

2. It is an act of such infinite love in God to give us Christ to die

for us, such as may raise our wonder and astonishment. God's love is an

immeasurable love, and so enlargeth our expectations and capacity for

the reception of other things: Eph. iii. 18, 19, That ye may comprehend

with all saints to know what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and

height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that

ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.' There is such an

immensity in the love of Christ as raiseth our desires and hopes to

expect all other things from God that belong to our duty and happiness.

If God will do this, what will he not do for those whom he loveth? He

that hath given the greatest gift will not stick at lesser things. He

that hath given a talent, shall he not give a penny? He that hath given

Christ, will he not give pardon to cancel our debts, grace to do our

duty, comfort to support us in afflictions, supplies to maintain and

protect us during our service? Finally, will he not reward us when our

work is over? Reconciliation by his death is propounded as more

difficult than salvation by his life: Rom. v. 10, For if, when we were

enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more,

being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.'

3. It is a gift in order to other things, and therefore he will

complete that gift. Christ came to purchase all manner of blessings for

us: the favour of God, the fruition of God, the everlasting fruition of

God in glory, and all things by the way necessary thereunto. There are

two arguments implied:--

[1.] That God may now do us good without any impeachment of his honour.

His justice and holiness is sufficiently demonstrated, the authority of

his law, and truth of his threatenings kept up: Rom. iii. 25, 26, Whom

God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to

declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,

through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his

righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that

believeth in Jesus.'

[2.] That after God by an antecedent bounty hath laid the foundation so

broad and deep, the consequent bounty, which is as the upper building

for which this foundation was intended, will be laid on also. It was

said of the foolish builder, that he began and was not able to finish.

Surely the wise God, if we be qualified, and put no impediment on our

part, will finish what he hath begun.

4. Because the giving of Christ showeth how freely God will give all

things to us. He gave Christ unasked, unsought too; in this instance we

see his free and undeserved love. This was love to rebels and enemies.

When the world had corrupted their way and cast off God, then Christ

died for us; a consideration which serveth to support our confidence,

notwithstanding the sense of our unworthiness. In the covenant of

grace, great and wonderful mercies are given out to a world of sinners,

and to ourselves among the rest. We see how loth God is sinners should

perish; that sins may be pardoned if we will accept God's terms, that

hath given such general testimony of his love to mankind, his love to

miserable sinners, that is willing they should be reconciled; that

there is not so much difference between us and others as between him

and all. Now this encourageth us to fulfil the conditions of the

gospel, notwithstanding our unworthiness of the privileges thereof.

Use 1. Is caution. Let us not have wrong thoughts of God when we come

to him. We think of God the Father as one that is all wrath and

justice, and unwilling to be reconciled to man, or brought to it with

much difficulty. No; Christ came on purpose to show the love and

loveliness of God to us; for our redemption came first out of the bosom

of God; and Christ's mission into the world, and dying for sinners, was

the fruit of his love; and mainly for this end, to give us a full

demonstration of the love of God, and his pity to the lost world of

sinners, that when our guilt had made him frightful to us, we might not

fly from him as a condemning God, but love him, and serve him, and pray

to him, as one willing to be reconciled to us: therefore take heed what

picture of God you draw in your minds. Light and heat are not more

abundant in the sun than love is in God.

Use 2. Of direction to us how to conceive of God in prayer, as one that

loveth us. We have gained a great point when we are persuaded of this,

and can come with this thought into his presence, that I am praying to

a God that loveth me, and will do me good. You will say, If I could

come to that, I have gained a great point indeed. But what hindereth?

There is, I confess, a twofold love,--his general love, and his special

love. His general love, which intendeth benefits to us; and his special

love, which hath already put us in possession of them. His general love

to the lost world; and his love and mercy to us in particular, putting

us in possession of the saving benefits purchased and intended.

1. The general love to the lost world, that is a great thing the devil

seeketh to hide and obscure, the wonderful love of God revealed in our

Redeemer, that we may still fly from God, as more willing to punish

than to save; and many poor dark creatures gratify his design. We are

still seeking signs and tokens of God's love, something to warrant us

to come to God by Christ, and to persuade us that we shall be welcome

if we do so; and because we cannot find anything in ourselves that he

will admit us, we are troubled. But all this while we are but seeking

the sun with a candle. What greater evidence of God's willingness to

receive you than the death of Christ, than the institutions of the

gospel? This is above all evidences, that he sent his Son to die for

us. This is like the Jews, who, when they had seen many wonders wrought

by Christ, would still have a new sign: the greatest sign is given

already, Christ dying for a sinful world. Men and angels cannot find

out a sign, pledge, and confirmation of the love of God above that.

Yet, if that be not enough, we have another sign, the promises and

invitations of the gospel, which show his willingness to welcome

sinners. Salvation is offered, but not to named, but described persons.

Therefore, if we are willing to come under these hopes upon God's

terms, this may satisfy our scrupulous minds; there is no bar put to us

but what we put to ourselves by our refusing the grace as God offereth

it. Certainly God's love and mercy to lost mankind is our first motive,

and his willingness to impart good things to them upon his own terms;

and surely he is well pleased with our acceptance of them.

2. There is special love where this grace is applied to us: Eph. ii. 4,

5, But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved

us, hath quickened us, when we were dead in trespasses and sins.' He

did not begin to love us when we were converted--that is of a more

ancient and eternal rise--but then he did begin to apply his love to

us; and this is no ordinary, but great love, when God was angry with

us, and pronounced wrath on us in the sentence of the law, and appeared

as an enemy in the course of his providence, and the apprehensions of

our guilty fears, then to be reconciled; and surely this is a great

advantage to draw nigh to God as a reconciled Father. This is the

object of our everlasting love and joy: Rom. v. 11, And not only so,

but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have

now received the atonement.' And this is a prop of confidence in

prayer. Could we once believe that he dearly loves us, and is

reconciled to us, and taketh us for his children, that he delighteth in

our prosperity; oh, how cheerfully could we come into his presence!

John xvi. 27, The Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me,

and believe that I came out from God.' They have not only his

intercession, but the Father's especial love, which is the ground and

hope of audience. Now this particular interest dependeth on some thing

wrought in our souls by the Holy Spirit. Our Lord mentioneth two

things--their faith in Christ, and love to God. (1.) Faith in Christ,

or a thankful acceptance of him as our Lord and Saviour, therefore

called receiving Christ, and entitling us to the privileges of Christ's

children: John i. 12, To as many as received him, to them gave he

liberty to become the children of God, even to as many as believe in

his name.' (2.) Love to God: John xiv. 21, He that hath my commandments

and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall

be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to

him;' and ver. 23, If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my

Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode

with him.' We cannot perceive our interest in the special love of God

but by our sincerity, faith in Christ, and love to God. When we see

God's love taken in our hearts, we may know that he loveth us,

especially the latter; for by the latter the former is manifested also:

Gal. v. 6, Faith worketh by love.' Now the evidences of sincere love to

God are seeking after God and delighting in him; if you cannot find the

latter, the former will evidence it to you: Prov. viii. 17, I love them

that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.' The

desiderium unionis, the desiring, seeking love, if it be serious and

earnest, it is sincere, though you find not such delightful

apprehensions of his grace to you. Clear that once, and when you come

to prayer, you may know God loveth you; and the dearest friend we have

in the world hath not the thousandth part so much as he: yea, the

highest angel doth not love God so much as he loveth the lowest saint.

God loveth like himself, becoming the greatness and infiniteness of has

own being; and with this persuasion pray to him.

Secondly, The second ground of audience is from the fruit of his love,

as demonstrated in the new covenant, wherein we have the matter of

everlasting consolation. Surely this clause respects not the effect and

sense in our own hearts, but respects the matter and object of our

comfort; for he prayeth for the application of it afterwards: Comfort

your hearts,' &c. And besides, nothing is more fleeting and oftener

interrupted than our comfort in this life. It would contradict plain

sense to call that comfort which Christians feel, and actually enjoy,

everlasting comfort. Therefore I understand it of the matter, and

observe this doctrine:--

That God hath given all true believers solid ground of perpetual and

endless comfort.

I will prove it by three arguments:--

1. The comforts propounded are of an everlasting tendency and

benefit--pardon and life, to free us from everlasting death, and to

bring us into the possession of everlasting happiness, when our souls

and bodies shall be for ever glorified in heaven. Now the consolation

grounded on the promise of eternal life, whatever it be in our feeling,

is in its causes and foundation eternal. The scripture often insists

upon this: 1 John ii. 25, And this is the promise that he hath promised

us, even eternal life;' Heb. v. 9, And being made perfect, he became

the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' We have

by Christ deliverance from sin, and all the consequents of it, not only

for a time, but for ever; eternal peace and felicity is our portion. So

it is said, Ps. cxix. 111, Thy testimonies have I taken for an heritage

for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' It is not an

heritage to lean upon for a while, as all our worldly comforts are, but

for ever: so Ps. lxxiii. 26, God is my portion for ever;' that is, when

all other things fail, have spent their allowance, can afford us no

more relief, then we begin to enjoy our true and proper portion. It

were endless to heap up places. Man for his sin was cast out of

paradise; but surely in the other world there is no change of estate:

for men are past their trial, and must be what they are for ever. If

you could imagine (as some have had the large charity to conceit it)

that the condition of the wicked should be changed, yet there is no

reason at all why the state of the godly should be changed, who have

passed the pikes, and are triumphing with God, that they should ever

lose that estate again.

2. They depend on everlasting foundations, such as are these:--

[1.] The everlasting love of God: Ps. ciii. 17, The mercy of the Lord

is from everlasting to everlasting on them that fear him.' Not only

from the beginning of the world to the end of the world, but from

eternity to eternity. It was an ordinary form of praising God in the

Old Testament: For his mercy endureth for ever.'

[2.] The everlasting merit of Christ, which never loseth its force and

effect: Heb. ix. 12, He hath obtained eternal redemption for us.' Not

that Christ is always propitiating. No; the work was performed in a

short time, but the virtue of it is of everlasting continuance.

[3.] There is an eternal and unchangeable covenant: Heb. xiii. 20,

Through the blood of the everlasting covenant.' Though the covenant

made with Israel was abolished, yet this is everlasting, and continueth

for ever, and shall never be altered; because it was able to reach the

end for which it was appointed, which is the eternal salvation of man.

That was a temporary covenant, this eternal. Now, because this is the

main circumstance, and the next ground of our eternal consolation, the

covenant of life and peace that God hath made with us in Christ, I

shall prove the eternal truth and immutable constancy of this covenant.

That a promise be immutable, certain, and firm, three things are

required:--

(1.) That it be seriously and heartily made, with a purpose to perform

it.

(2.) That he that hath promised continue in his purpose without change

of mind.

(3.) That it be in the power of him that promiseth to perform what he

hath promised. Now, of all these things there can be no doubt.

(1.) God meaneth as he speaketh when he promiseth to give eternal life

to those that believe and obey the gospel. There is no question but he

is so minded, when he sent the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to assure

us of it by his doctrine, to die the death to purchase it for us, and

afterward to rise again and enter into that happiness that he spake of;

and as soon as he was ascended up on high, gave gifts to men to give

notice of this blessed estate to be had upon the terms of his new

covenant, his Spirit attesting the truth of it by divers signs and

wonders, partly to alarm the drowsy world to regard it, and assure the

incredulous world that it is no fable; and because they live not for

ever, did inspire those holy men, before they went out of the body, to

write a book of this salvation for the use of the world in all ages. To

think that God is not serious in all this; is to make him a liar

indeed; yea, to establish a falsehood with the greatest solemnity and

demonstration that can be offered to mankind; yea, to make a lie

necessary, not only to the governing, but sanctifying of the world.

Surely, then, there is a truth in that great promise which he hath

promised us, even eternal life.

(2.) That God doth continue in his purpose without change of mind.

There is no doubt of it, if we consider his eternal and unchangeable

nature: Mal. iii. 6, I am the Lord, I change not;' James i. 17, With

him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' And what should

alter his purpose? Doth he meet with anything that he fore saw not, or

knew not before? No; this is a weakness incident to man; God doth never

repent and call back his grant, which he hath by this condescending act

of grace insured to the heirs of promise. 1 Sam. xv. 29, The strength

of Israel will not lie nor repent, for he is not as man, that he should

repent;' Ps. cx. 4, I have sworn, and will not repent; thou art a

priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.' Christ is by oath

instated in full power of entertaining and blessing his faithful

servants, which shall never be retracted and reversed. To take off all

doubt, he hath given double assurance his word and his oath: Heb. vi.

17, 18, God, being willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of

promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it with an oath;

that by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie,

we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold

on the hope that is set before us.' That we might know that the new

covenant is unchangeable and irrevocable, and so our comfort be the

more strong, certain, and stable, God was pleased to give sincere

believers this double assurance,--by his word and oath, having regard

to our infirmity, and those many doubts wherewith we are haunted about

the world to come. God hath ever been tender of his word; above all

that is famed or believed of him, this is most conspicuous: Ps.

cxxxviii. 2, Thou has magnified thy word above all thy name;' and Mat.

xxiv. 35, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass

away;' and an oath is megi'ste par' anthro'pois pi'stis; and the

apostle tells us it is pe'ras antilogi'as. It is interposed usually

indeed in a doubtful matter. But though here it needed not, God would

show his extraordinary care for our salvation; we see his good-will in

the promise, his solicitude in the oath; in short, God would never be

so fast bound, but that he doth and will still continue his purpose.

(3.) That he is able to perform it. Faith looks to that also; for this

was the ground and prop of Abraham's faith: Rom. iv. 21, Being fully

persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform;' so must

all Abraham's children that would give glory to God in believing. The

way of salvation is so rare and mysterious, and so many difficulties

object themselves to our view, that we are soon puddered, unless we

reflect upon the power of God. God is able to find out a way whereby

sinners may be reconciled, our corrupt hearts sanctified, and our sins

subdued by his Spirit, whereby his interest in us may be preserved

against the assaults and temptations of the devil, world, and flesh; he

is able to receive our souls to himself after they flit out of the

body; and finally, he is able to raise our vile bodies after they are

eaten out by worms, and turned into dust: Phil. iii. 21, Who shall

change our vile bodies, that they may be like unto his own glorious

body; according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all

things unto himself.' Matters of faith being wholly or mainly future or

to come, and difficult to be performed, and in the meantime, we being

exercised with so many trials, an express belief of God's power is

necessary to convert such an obstinate creature as man is: to sanctify

such a sinful creature, to preserve us in the midst of temptations, to

raise the dead, are no slight things.

3. It is called everlasting consolation,' because it is sufficient to

do its work; that is to say--

[1.] To reduce us from temporal and flesh-pleasing vanities. Alas! the

pleasures of sin are but for a season, not worthy to be compared to the

recompense of reward which Christ hath promised: Heb. xi. 25, 26,

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to

enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of

Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect

to the recompense of reward.' Whatever is temporal, we may soon see the

end of it. All carnal enjoyments, like flowers, wither while we smell

on them; and the most shining glory in the world is soon burned to a

snuff; but eternal life, and eternal glory, and eternal pleasure, are

secured to us by Christ's promise; all the delights in the world are

but a May-game to these eternal pleasures, which we shall have at God's

right hand for evermore: Ps. xvi. 11, Thou wilt show me the path of

life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are

pleasures for evermore.' Now, will you sell your birthright for one

morsel of meat? part with your eternal inheritance for a little carnal

satisfaction? We have souls that will not perish; and shall we spend

our whole time in seeking after things that perish in the using?

Temporal things carry no proportion with an immortal spirit. We shall

live for ever; we should look after things that will abide for ever: 1

John ii. 17, The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that

doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.' Otherwise what will you do

when the soul shall be turned out of doors? To what regions must the

poor shiftless, harbourless soul betake itself? Surely then this

consolation, though we feel it not always, and it be frequently

interrupted, may be well called eternal consolation, because it

affordeth argument enough to check our worldly and sensual

inclinations, and to call us off from time to eternity.

[2.] To make us stedfast in the truth, and cheerful under sufferings,

for he saith here, The Lord, that hath given us everlasting

consolation, comfort your hearts and establish you.' The great use of

everlasting consolation is to comfort and stablish us in a suffering

condition. The loss of temporal comforts is grievous, but it is

recompensed with the promise of eternal joys revealed in the gospel:

Heb. x. 34, Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in

yourselves that in heaven ye have a better and an enduring substance;

cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of

reward.' And all our pains and afflictions are sweetened, so far as to

keep us from fainting: 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, Our light affliction, which

is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal

weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at

the things that are not seen: for the things which are seen are

temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.' The end of

God's covenant and promises is to give us strong consolation in the

midst of temptations, persecutions, and trials. Worldly joys appear and

vanish in a moment, every blast of temptation scattereth them. It is

eternal blessedness which is the cause of solid comfort in all dangers,

storms, and tempests; hither we retreat as to our sanctuary, and find

relief. In the world all is unstable and uncertain, but the covenant

provideth for us eternal joy and bliss.

[3.] The third effect which it is to produce in us, is an increase of

holiness, to stablish us in every good word; that is, not only in sound

doctrine, but in every good work. In holiness of life, our endeavours

should answer our motives and ends: Abound in the work of the Lord,

forasmuch as your labour is not in vain in the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Diligence should not be grievous to us when there is everlasting

consolation at the back of it; surely this should put life into all our

endeavours. Should we trifle away that time which we are to improve for

eternity? John vi. 27, Labour not for the meat that perishes, but for

that which is to endure to everlasting life.' Faith in Christ, joined

with solid goodness, will lead you to eternal life. There should be in

the saints an eternal principle, which is the grace of the Holy Spirit;

and an eternal end, which is the pleasing, glorifying, and enjoying of

God; and an eternal rule, which is the will of God; and they will have

eternal consolation and reward.

Use, of exhortation:--

1. Look upon the new covenant as it is in itself, as containing the

only solid grounds of rejoicing; the blessings of it are real, certain,

stable, and suitable to the great necessities of mankind. The blessings

are pardon and life; they are real, no fancies or chimeras. The gospel

is not a dream or well-devised fable, but the greatest reality in the

world; it speaketh much for itself, commending itself to the conscience

by rational evidence: 2 Cor. iv. 2, By manifestation of the truth,

commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God;'

but more by the authority of the Son of God, who came from heaven to

show us the way thither; and if it had not been so, he would have told

us, John xiv. 2; for he used great plainness of speech and fidelity;

and is more fully ratified by the Spirit: John xvi. 8-11, He will

reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.' They are

stable and unchangeable, as appeareth by the covenant form, in which

the conveyance is so strong and firm as will make a plea in law: 2 Sam.

xxiii. 5, He hath made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all

things, and sure,' in which is all my hope and desire, and suitable to

many necessities. Here is a cure for our great sore by pardon, and

satisfaction to our desires by a fit happiness.

2. Let it be so to you; do you fulfil the duties required; if there be

any room for doubting, it must be of your qualification; therefore that

must be made more explicit: 1 John iii. 19 Hereby we know that we are

of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' We miss much of

this everlasting consolation, because we are upon such loose terms with

God: never hope to have peace upon cheaper terms than clear and

undoubted holiness. You are not to model God's covenant and new make

it, and bring it down to your humour and liking. No; the covenant is

unalterable and eternal; so the duties, as well as the privileges. You

must take it as you find it, and choose the things that please God,

Isa. lvi. 4. There is your claim; follow that close: Henceforth is laid

up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous

Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them

that love his appearing.'

3. Carry it so as those to whom God hath given grounds of everlasting

consolation. We are up when we have the world with us, but dead in the

nest when our temporal dependences are broken. The covenant is the same

still; and there should be your hope and your joy: 2 Cor. i. 20, All

the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of

God by us;' 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, Although my house be not so with God, yet

he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things,

and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he

make it not to grow.' Heaven is where it was; the world cannot make

void your interest in it; therefore you should rejoice in the Lord

always: Phil. iv. 4, Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say

rejoice.'

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SERMON XVI.

And good hope through grace.--2 Thes. II. 16.

WE now come to the third ground of audience and acceptance. He hath

given us good hope through grace.' This showeth how we entertain the

everlasting consolation offered in the gospel--with good hope, and this

wrought in us by God. Here is--

1. The gift: good hope.

2. The moving cause: through grace.

Doct. That it is a great advantage, when we pray for consolation and

confirmation in holiness, to consider that God hath already given us

the hope of eternal life.

Here I shall--

I. Open the gift.

II. Show what encouragement this is in prayer.

I. In the opening the gift, let me inquire:--

1. What is this good hope mentioned, and what are the properties of it?

2. That this is the free gift of God.

1. What is this good hope?

[1.] Hope is sometimes put for the object or thing hoped for; as Prov.

xiii. 12, Hope deferred maketh the heart sad;' that is, the delay of

the good expected is very tedious and troublesome to us. So in

Christian hope: Col. i. 5, For the hope which is laid up for you in

heaven;' where hope is put for the object of it, the blessed and

glorious estate which is reserved for us hereafter. The great objects

of hope, which yet do not exclude intervening blessings, are these:--

(1.) The coining of Christ to our comfort: Titus ii. 13, Looking for

the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our

Saviour Jesus Christ;' 1 Peter i. 13, Gird up the loins of your minds,

and be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought

unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' Hope is there described by

its singular object, the coming of Christ, called there the revelation

of Christ. Christ is now under a veil, his bodily presence being

removed, and his spiritual glory seen but darkly, as in a glass; but

then he shall appear in person and in his glory. When Christ withdrew

out of sight, our comfort seemed to be gone with him; but he will come

again. He is not gone in anger, but about business, to set all things

at rights against the day of solemn espousals; and then he cometh to

possess what he hath purchased, and to carry the church into the

everlasting place of her abode. This is the great hope of Christians,

and a blessed and good hope it is indeed.

(2.) The resurrection of the dead: Acts ii. 26, My flesh shall rest in

hope;' Acts xxiv. 15, I have hope towards God that there shall be a

resurrection both of the just and unjust;' Acts xxvi. 6-8, Now I stand

judged for the hope of the promise made unto the fathers, unto which

promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to

come. Why should it be thought an incredible thing with you that God

should raise the dead?' Death seemeth to make void all the promises at

once; but there is an estate after death; the dead shall rise; and to

men bred up in the bosom of the church this should not seem incredible.

It is not incredible in itself, considering the justice and power of

God. But why to you, since all religion tendeth to it? But it is a

matter of undoubted certainty all believers do look for, long for, and

prepare for this blessedness, otherwise why should they trouble

themselves about religion, which abridgeth us of present delights, and

exposeth us to great difficulties and sufferings? But there is another

life after this, where all is happy and joyful, and therefore we serve

God instantly day and night.'

(3.) The vision of God, that at length we shall be admitted into his

blessed presence, and see him as he is, and be made like him both for

holiness and happiness, 1 John iii. 2.

(4.) Our heavenly inheritance: 1 Peter i. 4, An inheritance

incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven

for us.' Called eternal life: Titus i. 2, In hope of eternal life,

which God, that cannot lie, promised us.' The glory of God: Rom. v. 2,

We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Well, then, all this is a good

hope, if there be the things hoped for; for the object of our hope is

the chiefest good, the eternal vision and fruition of God; this is that

we must aim at as our happiness: Ps. xvii. 15, As for me, I shall

behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake

with thy likeness.' We must seek after it and make it our constant

work: Heb. xi. 6, God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'

This is that we must take hold of, as having a right and title to it:

Heb. vi. 18, Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set

before us.' We challenge it by the law of grace; as we fulfil the

conditions, our hold is more strong, right more evident; as we get

greater measures of the first-fruits, we gain more security and

confidence in the spiritual conflict: ver. 19, Which hope we have as an

anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast.' By good works we enter upon the

possession of it, in part, as we get the first-fruits of the Spirit:

Rom. viii. 23, We ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the

Spirit, even we ourselves groan within our selves, waiting for the

adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body;' 2 Cor. v. 5, Now he that

hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given

unto us the earnest of the Spirit.' In whole, when we come to heaven,

for then we enter into our Master's joy.' Mat. xxv. 21. When we die our

souls enter into that blessed place, where the spirits of just men are

made perfect; not only preserved in manu Dei, but admitted in

conspectum Dei: 1 Peter i. 9, Receiving the end of your faith, the

salvation of your souls.' But after the resurrection and general

judgment: John xiv. 3, I will come again, and receive you to myself;

that where I am, there ye may be also.' Then, in body and soul, we

enter into our everlasting mansions.

[2.] Sometimes hope is put for the reasons and causes of hoping; and so

he that giveth me solid reasons of hoping, giveth me good hope. In this

sense it is taken, Heb. vii. 19, The law made nothing perfect, but the

bringing in of a better hope did, whereby we draw nigh to God.' By the

better hope is meant the sure and comfortable promises of the gospel,

depending merely on the grace of God, which gives hope to lost sinners

of recovering commerce and communion with God; that is, solid grounds

upon which they may expect the pardon of their sins and eternal life.

In this sense, good hope is hope well warranted. The solid reasons are

contained in the word of God: Rom. xv. 4, Whatsoever things were

written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through

patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.' The great end

of the scriptures is, that we might have a sure hope in God--quod agit

tota scriptura, ut credamus in Deum. The business of the scripture is

to bring us to believe in God, and wait upon him for eternal salvation.

There the rule of commerce between God and us is stated; whatever is

promised is sure. There may be reason to expect some things from God's

merciful nature, though we have no promise about them; but the sure and

certain hope is grounded on the promise; that is an express ground of

confidence and hope that will never leave us ashamed; it is

well-grounded hope, therefore good hope, built on the promise and word

of the eternal God.

[3.] By the act or grace of hope itself. This may be called good either

in itself or with respect to the degree.

(1.) In itself: It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait

for the salvation of the Lord.' Lam. iii. 26. Bonum is either honestum,

jucundum, or utile: it is good in all regards. It is our duty to rest

assured in God's promise. It is pleasant to anticipate and forecast a

blessing to come. Surely it is delightful to live in the fore sight of

endless glory. It is profitable to support our hearts under present

difficulties and troubles, and the uncertainties of the present life.

(2.) In respect of the degree and measure of it. That is good hope

which is most able to do its office, when it is lively hope: 1 Peter i.

3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which,

according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively

hope;' such as doth most support and quicken us. The more serious and

earnest our reflections are upon eternal life, the better is the hope:

Heb. vi. 11, Show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto

the end.' We should still keep up this sure and desirous expectation.

Briefly, hope the grace is twofold.

(1st.) There is a hope which is the immediate effect of regeneration,

and is a constitutive part of the new creature. Of that the apostle

speaketh, 1 Peter i. 3, Begotten to a lively hope.' This merely floweth

from our acceptance of the new covenant, and dependeth upon the

conditional offer of eternal life. We take it for our happiness,

resolving to seek it in God's way; without this a man cannot be a

Christian, till he hope for eternal life to be given him upon Christ's

terms.

(2dly.) There is a hope which is the fruit of experience, and belongeth

to the seasoned and tried Christian, who hath approved his own fidelity

to God, and hath much trial of God's fidelity and faithfulness to him.

Of this it is said, Rom. v. 4, that Experience worketh hope.' It

differeth from the former, because it produceth not only a conditional

certainty, but an actual confidence of our own salvation. The former is

necessary, for we live and act by it; the other is very comfortable,

for it facilitateth all our acts when we know there is reserved for us

a crown of life, which the righteous Judge will give in that day;' and

do not only believe a resurrection both of the just and unjust,' but

our own resurrection unto eternal life.

But now for the effects. I shall instance in two which suit with the

prayer in the text--consolation in troubles, and confirmation in

holiness.

First, Support in troubles. When we are certainly persuaded of a happy

issue, we are the better kept from fainting: Phil. i. 19, I know that

this shall turn to my salvation,' &c. He speaketh it of his troubles,

and the machinations of his adversaries; and this knowledge he calleth

in the 20th verse, his earnest expectation and his hope.' The bitterest

cross is sweetened by hope. This carried him through his sufferings,

not only with patience, but comfort; as men in a storm, when they see

land, take courage; it is but enduring a little more tempest and they

shall be safe on shore. To a hoping Christian, his whole life is a

rough voyage, but a short one.

Secondly, To encourage us in working. It is hope sets the whole world

a-work: 1 Cor. ix. 10, That he that plougheth should plough in hope;

and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.'

Certainly it is hope sets the Christian a-work: Acts xxvi. 7, Unto

which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night,

hope to come.' Why are God's children so hard at work for God, but out

of love to him, and hope to enjoy him for ever? Oh! let us continually

be serving God. Let us live always either for heaven, as seeking it, or

upon heaven, as solacing ourselves with the hopes of it; do whatever we

do in order to eternal life, and not be taken up with trifles, and this

will put life into our endeavours. It is for a glorious and blessed

estate on which we employ all this labour.

2. That this is the free gift of God. I must prove two things:--

[1.] That good hope is his gift. He doth not only give us objective

grace,--this is the free and undeserved mercy of the gospel, or a

sufficient warrant to hope for it, which are his gracious promises; but

subjective grace: the hope by which we expect this blessedness is

freely wrought in us by his Holy Spirit, which is a further

confirmation of his love to us, that he hath not only given us the

blessedness we hope for, but the very hope itself. The Spirit's work is

necessary--

(1.) By way of illumination, to open the eyes of our minds, that we may

see what is the hope of his calling.' Eph. i. 18. Alas! otherwise our

sight cannot pierce so far, nor discern any reality in a happiness that

lieth in an unseen and an unknown world, so as to venture and forsake

all that we see and love for a God and a glory that we never saw.

Nature, if it be not blind in discerning the duty of man, yet it is

purblind; it cannot foresee the happiness of man, which lieth afar off

from us: 2 Peter i. 9, But he that lacketh these things is blind, and

cannot see afar off.' A short-sighted man cannot see things at a

distance from him: not from any defect in the object, but through the

fault in his eyes. So the natural man, blinded by delusions, doth

either not believe, or forget the world to come; though these things be

set before him in the promises of the gospel, they leave no impression

upon his heart. There needeth a very quick sight to be able to look

from earth to heaven; therefore, till we are enlightened by the Spirit,

we can have no saving knowledge of those things which pertain to the

kingdom of God or eternal life.

(2.) By way of inclination. The Spirit doth not only open the eyes of

our mind, but he doth also incline our hearts to mind and seek after

these things as our portion and happiness: Acts xvi. 14, God opened the

heart of Lydia.' There is an opening of our mind, and an opening of our

hearts necessary; for the wisdom of the flesh is kneaded into our

natures, and we are prepossessed and entangled with divers foolish and

hurtful lusts. Though we know these things, we regard them not, and

therefore the work of the Spirit is necessary to incline us earnestly

to look and long, and patiently to wait, for blessedness to come: Gal.

v. 5, For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by

faith.' Alas! otherwise we should never regard these things, certainly

we would not wait for them with so much patience and self-denial, and

solace our hearts with these hopes in the midst of all our labours,

adversities, and troubles, when all is in expectation, and so little in

possession.

(3.) By way of excitation, he doth quicken us and comfort us, by

raising our thoughts, desires, and endeavours after the promised glory

and blessedness: Rom. xv. 13, Now, the God of hope fill you with all

joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the

power of the Holy Ghost.' It is by his lively impressions that this

grace is acted in us with any profit; our hope is acted and increased

by his power, blessing the promises of the gospel to this end.

[2.] That it is his free gift. That which moveth God to give us this

hope is his mere love and grace.

(1.) The matter of hope is God's free, undeserved mercy. The mercy of

God is everywhere made the great invitation of hope to the fallen

creature: Ps. cxxx. 7, Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord

is mercy and plenteous redemption.' Without this there were no hope for

us, and therefore the saints make this their anchor-hold: Ps. xiii. 5,

I have trusted in thy mercy, therefore my soul shall rejoice in thy

salvation;' let others trust in what they will, Lord, I will trust in

thy mercy. This is that which maketh hope lift up the head: Jude 21,

Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;'

there is our best and strongest plea. But--

(2.) For the grace of hope, it is the mere fruit of the Lord's mercy;

such are our undeservings and ill-deservings, that nothing else could

in cline him to give us this hope. He was not induced by any merits of

ours, which are none; nor hindered by any demerits or sins of ours,

which were many and great; only his grace moved him to bring us under

the hopes of the gospel, that we might set ourselves with longing and

certain expectation in the way of holiness, to seek after the eternal

enjoyment of himself: 1 Peter i. 3, Of his abundant mercy he hath

begotten us to a lively hope.' There were so many provocations on our

part, such great privileges to be enjoyed, that nothing but abundant

mercy could give us this hope.

II. What encouragement is this in prayer, if God hath given us good

hope through grace?

1. God would not invite and raise a hope to disappoint it; for surely

the Lord will not deceive his creature that dependeth upon his word,

and therefore we are allowed to challenge him: Ps. cxix. 49, Remember

thy word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope.' The

words contain a double argument: the promise was of God's making, and

the hope of his operation,--it is thy word, and thou hast caused me to

hope; his grant in the new covenant, and his influence by the Spirit.

We have a strong tie upon him, as he giveth us the promise, which is a

ground of hope. Surely we may put his bonds in suit, Chirographa tua

tibi injiciebat, Domine. But when his Spirit hath caused us to hope, it

is not with a purpose to defeat it; and therefore we may expect

necessary blessings, such as are support and establishment in holiness.

Sometimes God promiseth that we may believe, and then promiseth again

because we do believe and trust in him: Isa. xxvi. 3, Thou wilt keep

him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth

in thee.' Actual hope and trust giveth a fresh claim or new interest,

for God will not fail a trusting soul, as a generous man will not fail

his friend if he rely on him. We count this to be the strongest bond we

can lay upon another, to be mindful of us, and faithful to us--I wholly

trust upon you. Now, much more will God do so: when he hath sent his

work before, he will bring his reward with him; when he hath invited

hope by his promise, and caused hope by his Spirit, he will give the

mercy you hope for, for he hath prepared you for it by his preventing

grace. I remember the prophet telleth God, Jer. xx. 7, O Lord, thou

hast deceived me, and I was deceived;' words that seem to intrench upon

the honour of God. Some interpret them as if they were spoken by the

prophet in a passion; others soften them by another rendering, Thou

hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded,' that is, to undertake the

prophetical office, to which I was nothing forward of myself, and have

found it more troublesome than I expected. But why may not the words be

spoken as a supposition: If I be deceived, thou hast deceived me'? God

had told him that he would make him as a brazen wall, and had raised a

faith and hope in him that he would hear him out in his work; and so it

signifies no more but I cannot be deceived.' When you have God's word,

and a well-grounded hope, it is not a foolish imagination or vain

expectation. God will not deceive a poor creature that trusts in him

for necessary things, such as perseverance and establishment in

holiness.

2. He that giveth us hope will give us all things necessary to the

thing hoped for; therefore when God hath called us to the hope of

eternal glory by Jesus Christ, we may with the more confidence pray for

necessary support and establishment in the way. This argument seemeth

to be urged by the apostle: 1 Peter v. 10, The God of all grace, who

called you to his heavenly glory by Jesus Christ, after ye have

suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.'

God, that called us to eternal glory, foresaw the difficulties and

troubles we should meet with by the way, and therefore provided grace

answerable, which we are to sue out by prayer. Surely he that called

them to the possession of everlasting blessedness by the Mediator, did

not flatter them into a vain hope, as it will prove, if he help us not.

Therefore he will assist us in these difficulties, and though he will

not exempt us from the conflict, yet he will not deny strength. When we

consent to his calling, it is a sure ground to our faith that he that

hath called will give us all things necessary to our perseverance; for

his calling, when it is effectual, will not be in vain and to no

purpose: 1 Cor. i. 9, God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the

fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;' 1 Cor. x. 13, There hath

no temptation taken you but what is common to men: but God is faithful,

who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will

with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to

bear it.' The intent of his calling is to bring them to the possession

of what he hath called them to. If he would at first take us with all

our faults, and put us under the hopes of the gospel when we were

sinners, he will follow the first grace with continual aids and

supports, until he hath perfected his work; and therefore, when a

people are sincere, and willing to run all hazards for Christ, God will

not only give them glory at the end of their journey, but bear their

expenses by the way; and therefore we need not be discouraged, and say,

How shall we hold out? God, that hath given such hope as to venture

upon the difficulties, will support you under them; he will add more

grace to that grace that we have received.

3. They that have received good hope through grace, have God's nature

and promise to rest upon; his nature, as he is a gracious God, and his

promise, as he is a faithful God.

[1.] His nature, as he is a God merciful and gracious. That former

experience doth fully manifest; he is sufficiently inclined to do us

good, and therefore will not fail us in our necessities. He hath ever

borne us good-will, never discovered any backwardness to help us,

thought of us before the world was, sent his Son to die for us before

we were born or had a being in the world, called us when we were

unworthy, warned us of our danger when we did not fear it, offered

happiness to us when we had no thought of it; and lest we should turn

our backs upon it, followed us with an earnest and incessant

importunity, till we came to anxious thoughts about Christ, and began

to make it our business to seek after it; by the secret drawings of his

Spirit, inclined us to choose him for our portion, and to rejoice in

the hopes offered. How many contradictions and stragglings of heart

were we conscious to ere we were brought to this! Ever since he hath

been tender of us in the whole conduct of his providence; afflicted us

when we needed it, delivered us when we were ready to sink; hath

pardoned our failings, visited us in ordinances, supported us in

doubts, helped us in temptations, and is still mindful of us at every

turn, as if he would not lose us; and shall not we hope in him to the

last? We may reason as they, Judges xiii. 23, If the Lord had a mind to

destroy us, he would not have received a sacrifice at our hands.' And

so if God had no mind to save us, he would not use such methods of

grace about us.

[2.] His promise, so that we must trust his faithfulness, after we come

under the hopes of the gospel. There are two great promises to support

us: his presence with us in the midst of our afflictions, and our being

ever present with the Lord in eternal glory. This is that we have hope

of; all the difficulty is, how far God hath promised his presence with

us. Certainly he hath promised it: Ps. xci. 15, I will be with them in

troubles;' and again, I will be with them in fire and water.' And

again, certain it is, that God is most with his afflicted people, as

the mother keepeth most with the sick child, or the blood runneth to

comfort the wounded part. And again, that he will never leave us to

unsupportable difficulties: Heb. xiii. 5, I will never leave you, nor

forsake you;' a negative gradation. And besides, there is a general

promise, though the particulars be not absolutely made certain to us;

namely, that all shall work together for good,' Rom. viii. 28. That

giveth us but a probability of health, and outward protection, and

deliverance, of a ready support in every temptation, because we are

uncertain how far they are for our good; but for necessary grace to our

preservation, there is express provision in the covenant: Jer. xxxii.

40, I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn

away from them to do them good,' &c.

4. It giveth us encouragement in prayer; because they that have this

hope are so much exposed to the scorn of the world, because they trust

in an invisible God, and look for all their recompense in a world to

come. They think Christians are a company of credulous fools, that

please themselves with dreams and fancies: Ps. xxii. 7, 8, They laugh

me to scorn, because, they say, he trusted in the Lord;' 1 Tim. iv. 10,

We therefore labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living

God.' Christians thought their reward sure, and therefore endured all

things; but atheists and infidels scoff at them, and at all their

comforts, as fanatical illusions, and persecute them. Therefore God is

in point of honour engaged to stand by them, and to justify their hope

and trust; not always by temporal deliverance, but by spiritual support

and establishment; that it may be seen there is a Spirit of God and

glory resteth upon them, that is glorified by him, however he be evil

spoken of in the world, 1 Peter iv. 14. God will do so in condescension

to his people. Nothing goeth so near their hearts as a disappointment

of their hope in God. It is a mighty damp to their spirits when God

doth as it were spit in their faces, and reject their prayers: Ps. xxv.

2, O my God! I trust in thee; let me not be ashamed.' At such times the

Lord seemeth to countenance the slanders of their enemies, and to cover

their faces with shame.

Use 1. To persuade you to get this hope of eternal life wrought in your

hearts.

1. This is the characteristic and note of difference betwixt God's

people and others. By this we are distinguished from pagans, who are

described to be such as Have no hope, and without God in the world.'

Eph. ii. 12; and 1 Thes. iv. 13, Sorrow not as them without hope.' But

Christians are such as have good hope through grace;' and by this we

are distinguished from temporary and slight believers: Heb. iii. 6, His

house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm

unto the end;' so also ver. 14, If we hold the beginning of our

confidence stedfast unto the end.' Their hope is slight and fluid: the

temporary loseth his joy and comfort, which he conceived in the offers

of the gospel, and so either casts off the profession of godliness, or

neglecteth the power and practice of it; but the true Christian is

serious, patient, heavenly, and holy; because he is always looking to

his end, and sweeteneth his work by his great hope, keeping up his

taste or lively expectation of the mercy of Christ to everlasting life.

Nay, this differenceth the children of God, those that are in their

conflict from those that are in their triumph, the sanctified and

glorified; those that are in their way, and those that are at home.

They that are at home are enjoying what we expect, and in possession of

that supreme good that we yet hope for; they have neither miseries to

fear nor blessings to desire beyond what they do enjoy; they see what

they love, and possess what they see. But the time of our advancement

is not yet come, and therefore we can only look and long for it; this

is our work and present happiness.

2. Now the covenant of God is contrived to raise hope in us. The Jachin

and Boaz, the two pillars that support it, are mercy and truth: Micah

vii. 20, Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to

Abraham;' Ps. xxv. 10, All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth

unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies;' and Ps. cxxxviii.

2, I will praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and truth; for thou

hast magnified thy word above all thy name;' and in many other

scriptures.

[1.] The mercy and grace of the covenant.

I.) In the frame of it, where excellent benefits are dispensed upon

free terms, that our faith and hope may be in God. The Lord would not

leave the sinful creature under despair, but hath provided a way how we

may be reconciled and glorified: Ps. cxxx. 4, There is forgiveness with

thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Mercy opens the door for us; the

very offer speaks much mercy, the terms are mercy. So much duty is

required as is necessary, and doth arise from the nature of the thing.

Violence would be offered to the reason of a serious creature, if such

things were not required.

(2.) In the dispensations of the blessings of the covenant. Now, Gal.

vi. 16, To as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them,

and mercy, and on the Israel of God.' There are many infirmities and

frailties, but God passeth them by when there is sincerity. Our faith

is weak, and mingled with doubtings, our love to God clogged with much

inordinate self-love, our obedience often interrupted, too much

deadness and coldness in holy things; yet these do not cast us out of

the favour of God, nor make void our interest in the covenant, where

the heart for the main is set to serve him, and please him: Mal. iii.

17, I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.'

(3.) At the very close of all it is grace: Hope unto the end, for the

grace that is brought unto you at the revelation of Christ,' 1 Peter i.

13. Then there will be the fullest and largest manifestation of God's

love and free grace. There is grace brought to us now, by the

revelation of Jesus Christ in the gospel; but when his person shall be

revealed, grace shall be seen in all its graciousness. We see his grace

in the pardon of sins, and that measure of sanctification which now we

attain unto, that he is pleased to pass by our offences, and take us

into his family, and give us right to his heavenly kingdom, and some

taste of his love and remote service. But when pardon shall be

pronounced by the judge's mouth, when he shall take us not only into

his family, but into his palace and Father's house, and give us not

right only, but possession, and we shall be admitted to the immediate

vision and fruition of God, and be everlastingly employed in heavenly

praising and delighting in him, then grace will be grace indeed.

[2.] His truth and mercy openeth the door for us. Truth keepeth it

open; mercy is the pipe; truth is the conveyance. Now God bindeth

himself by promise, and hath ever been tender of his word. We may see

for the present that a covenant-interest is no fruitless thing. He hath

confirmed this hope to the world by miracles; to us within the church

by the seal and earnest of his Spirit, or the impression of his image,

preparing the hearts of the faithful for this blessed estate: Eph. iv.

30, Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the

day of redemption;' 2 Cor. v. 5, Who hath given us the earnest of his

Spirit.' He hath appointed ordinances to revive our hopes: 1 Cor. xi.

26, For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show

the Lord's death till he come.' By daily experience we see many of

God's children have gone out of the world cheerfully professing this

hope; we have the same Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and

earth is named.' Eph. iii. 15; are reconciled to him by the same

Christ: Col. i. 20, Having made peace through the blood of the cross,

by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they

be things in earth, or things in heaven.' If he be so good to that part

of the family that is now in heaven, he will be good to them also that

are working out their salvation with fear and trembling.

[3.] What an advantage it is to the spiritual life to have good hope

wrought in us through grace.

(1.) It maketh us diligent and serious. Christianity implieth a serious

application of our heart and mind to do what Christ requireth, that we

may obtain what he hath offered; to do it as our first work and chief

business: Phil. ii. 12, Work out your own salvation with fear and

trembling;' Heb. iv. 1, Let us labour to enter into that rest;' that

is, employ our utmost care and diligence. Now all the executive powers

are fortified and strengthened in their operation by hope.

(2.) To be patient and mortified, that we subdue our lusts, and bear

the loss of our interests with an humble and quiet mind: Rom. xii. 12,

Patient in tribulation, rejoicing in hope.' And for lusts: 1 John iii.

3, He that hath this hope, purifieth himself even as he is pure.'

(3.) To be heavenly and holy; the one respects our end, the other our

race. For it is not a few dead lifeless thoughts now and then, bat the

continual and delightful foresight of eternal bliss. What is the way to

heaven but hope? And who more pure and holy than they that look for

such things? 2 Peter iii. 14, Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for

such things, be diligent that ye be found of him in peace, without

spot, and blameless.'

Use 2. Well, then, get this hope. But what must we do? You will say, It

is God's gift: yet you are bound to use the means.

1. Remove the impediments: 1 Peter i. 13, Be sober, and hope to the

end.' Draw off the affections from carnal vanities, and the delights of

the senses, and consider what God offereth to you in the gospel: there

can be no certain and desirous expectation of better things, while the

mind and heart is so occupied and thronged with vanity, and deadened by

carnal satisfaction.

2. Wait on all the opportunities of profiting, and use the known means

of grace more conscionably. Certain it is that the grace of hope is of

God, not acquired, but infused; but God will bless his own means. The

propounding of the object, the offering of the solid grounds, maketh

way for the infusing of the grace: Titus i. 1, 2, Paul was the apostle

to bring them to the acknowledgment of the truth, for the hope of

eternal life.' And it is called, the hope of the gospel,' Col. i. 23,

because it is wrought by the preaching of the gospel.

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SERMON XVII.

Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.--2

Thes. II. 17.

WE come now, thirdly, to the prayer itself. He asketh two benefits:--

1. Comfort.

2. Establishment.

First, Comfort: Comfort your hearts.' But why doth the apostle pray for

that which they had already? He had told them, in the former verse,

that God had given them everlasting consolation, and now he prayeth

that God would comfort them. The answer given by some is, that he

prayeth that God would give them an increase of comfort; by others,

that God would give them the continuance of it. Bather, by everlasting

consolation is meant the solid matter of comfort; by his prayer, now

the effectual application of it; for though sufficient matter of

comfort be provided for us, yet God must powerfully apply it. The

gospel is a sovereign plaster, yet God's hand must make it stick.

Observe here:--

Doct. That all true and solid and heart-comfort is of God. He is called

the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort,' 2 Cor. i. 3; and

again, The God of patience and consolation.' Rom. xv. 5. His Spirit

taketh an office upon him to accomplish, this effect in us, therefore

called the Comforter.

1. I shall inquire what comfort is.

2. Show why it is of God.

3. What advantage we have thereby.

I. What comfort is. Three things are to be explained:--

1. Comfort.

2. Comforting.

3. In what sense it is of God.

I. 1. What comfort is. We call two things by that name:--

[1.] Our natural refreshment.

[2.] Our support in troubles.

[1.] Our natural refreshment, or the benefit that we have by the

creatures for the support of nature. We cannot enjoy our temporal

mercies with any delight and pleasure without God's leave and blessing;

as to eat and drink with comfort, that the soul may enjoy good by its

labour. In one place it is said, it is by the hand of God,' Eccles. ii.

24. In another place it is said to be the gift of God.' Eccles. iii.

13. It is by his power and his grace that the comfort of the creature

is not in man's hands but God's; nor can the creature yield to us any

comfort without his gift or grant. And because of our forfeiture by

sin, we have neither these mercies from ourselves, nor the use; nor the

natural benefit from the bare creature, which is health, strength, and

cheerfulness. All goodness resideth chiefly in God, and it is to be

found in the creatures only by participation, and that at his pleasure:

Acts xiv. 17, He gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons,

filling our hearts with food and gladness;' that is, for the

comfortable use of food, we must still look to the giver. But the

apostle here doth not speak of the comfort of the creatures, but the

comfort of the scriptures; not the supply of the body, but the support

of the soul.

[2.] Comfort is taken for support in troubles. The Thessalonians were

now under great persecutions. Comfort is a strengthening of the mind

when it is in danger to be weakened by fears and sorrows, or the

strength and stay of the heart in trouble: Ps. cxix. 50, This is my

comfort in my afflictions, thy word hath quickened me;' and 2 Cor. i.

4, Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to

comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort where with we are

comforted of God.' As cordials are for a fainting time, so are comforts

for a time of afflictions. Indeed spiritual comfort is never out of

season; because we are now in the house of our pilgrim age, and our

chief good is at a distance from us; and because of the labours and

difficulties of the spiritual life: therefore it is said, Acts ix. 31,

When the churches had rest, they walked in the fear of God, and the

comfort of the Holy Ghost.' But the great need of comfort is in our

afflictions, therefore here I shall show three things:--

(1.) That God can give his people comfort in the greatest tribulation:

his favour is enough to support them against the frowns of all the

world: Isa. li. 12, I, even I, am he that comforteth thee. Who art thou

that thou shouldest be afraid of man that shall die, and the son of man

that shall be made as the grass?' As long as we have the almighty and

immortal God to stand by us, and the promise of eternal life, it will

counterbalance all our trouble: Rom. v. 2, 3, We rejoice in hope of the

glory of God: and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also;' 2

Cor. iv. 17, This light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh

for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' There is

everlasting joy against a heaviness for a season, and everlasting ease

and rest against a little present pain; there is enough to outweigh all

that we can suffer for and from God. So the pardon of sin: Isa, xl. 1,

2, Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith my God.' Why? Because her

iniquity is pardoned.' Mat. ix. 2, Be of good cheer; thy sin is

forgiven thee.' Here is sound comfort, the sting of all our troubles is

taken away. Well, then, this the people of God have to support them in

all their tribulation. They can set God against the creature, heaven

against earth, pardon of sins against all the bitterness they meet with

in the world.

(2.) That there is a special allowance of comfort for God's children in

their afflictions. The Lord is more tender of his people then, when

they want comfort, than at another time; they have a more plentiful

measure of the supporting operations of his Spirit then: as 1 Peter iv.

14, If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the

Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.' As the mother keepeth

most with the sick child, so God looketh to the afflicted. This is the

difference between God and the world: the world ever runneth most after

those that are prosperous, and flourish and rejoice, as rivers into the

sea, where there is water enough; but forsaketh those that are in

poverty, disgrace, and want; but God is most mindful of his afflicted

people, visiteth them most, vouchsafeth most of his comfortable

presence to those that holily and meekly bear the afflictions he layeth

upon them: He comforteth us in all our tribulations,' 2 Cor. i. 4. The

soul is then more capable of spiritual comforts, because their taste is

more purged and refined from the dregs of sense, and grace is more

lively and exercised now; the more grace, the more comfort. And prayers

are more frequent; and prayers are seldom in vain.

(3.) That our comforts carry proportion with our sorrows: 2 Cor. i. 5,

As our afflictions abound, so do our consolations.' This cometh from

the wisdom of God, that the evil may not be greater than our support;

and from the faithfulness of God, who will not suffer us to be tempted

above what we are able to bear,' 1 Cor. x. 13. And therefore, if he

bring on heavy troubles, he puts a suitable measure of comfort and

cheerfulness into our hearts. This is comfort.

2. What it is to have our hearts comforted. It showeth that the heart

is the proper seat of spiritual comfort: Ps. iv. 7, Thou hast put

gladness into my heart.' God's comfort is like a soaking shower, that

goes to the root, and refresheth the plants of the earth more than a

morning dew, that wets only the surface. Other comforts tickle the

senses and refresh the outward man, but this penetrateth to the very

heart. Christ prayeth, John xvii. 13, That they may have my joy

fulfilled in themselves.' Christ's comforts are not reported to the ear

only, but felt in the heart. The joy of the world maketh a great noise,

but in the midst of it the heart is sorrowful. But God feasts his

children with hidden manna; they have meat and drink which the world

knoweth not of. In their outward man they are exposed to great

difficulties, but their hearts are filled with joy unspeakable, and

full of glory.' The joy of the carnal in outward things is foreign; and

as much as their senses are pleased, their hearts are full of

tormenting fears and secret disgusts. They may put a good face upon it,

but dig the most jovial of them to the bottom, they have their inward

stings and secret horrors of conscience. But in comforting his children

God chiefly deals with the heart: Rom. v. 5, The love of God is shed

abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto. us;' and 2 Cor. i.

22, He hath given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' In

establishing this comfort, God doth immediately work upon the soul. He

useth means indeed; as the word: Rom. xv,. 4, 4 That you through

patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.' There we have

the grounds of comfort set forth--Christ's redemption, the promises of

the gospel, both of pardon and life, and the ordinances, as the

sacraments; as the eunuch after his baptism: Acts viii. 39, He went

away rejoicing.' So in the Lord's Supper, we come to eat of Christ's

peace-offerings that we may rejoice in God: Ps. xxii. 26, The meek

shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him:

your heart shall live for ever.' But his Spirit worketh immediately

upon the soul; either--(1.) By opening the understanding to see the

grounds and reasons of comfort: Rom. xv. 13, Now the God of hope fill

you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope,

through the power of the Holy Ghost;' or (2.) By raising the heart to

the lively act of joy: Acts xiii. 52, The disciples were filled with

joy, and with the Holy Ghost.' Certainly God comforteth the heart both

ways by seeing the grounds as he worketh faith. Man is a reasonable

creature, and it is not imaginable that the Holy Ghost should comfort

us we know not why: he revealeth indeed supernatural grounds of

comfort; but if they be not evident to reason, they are evident to

faith. But then the very joy is executed by the efficacy of his

impression. But of that more anon.

3. In what sense comfort may be said to be of God? I answer--Three

ways:--

[1.] When it is allowed by him.

[2.] When the matter is provided by him.

[3.] When it is wrought by him.

[1.] When it is allowed by him, and warranted by him. Every man affects

comfort and oblectation of mind; for otherwise they could never be

pleased in that condition they are in, nor satisfy themselves. It would

much undeceive the carnal world, and make them see the folly of their

unreasonable joy and quiet, if they would put conscience to the

question, Is our joy from God or no? that is, Doth God allow it me?

Certainly God doth allow us to rejoice in our outward portion: Eccles.

v. 18, It is good and comely for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the

good of all his labours that he taketh under the sun, all the days of

his life which God giveth him, for it is his portion;' but so that his

favour may be the matter of our chief joy, for otherwise it is

exceeding folly and gross carnality to rejoice in the creature apart

from God. And in the midst of the greatest soul-dangers, you must first

inquire, Are all things right between God and me? It is a mighty

contempt of God, yea, brutish atheism, to sit down contented with

anything on this side God, Luke xii. 19, and to say, Soul, take thine

ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years.' To sing lullabies to our

souls when God is angry for sin, this comfort is not allowed by God:

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' Isa. lvii. 21. It is

spiritual madness to dance about the brink of hell.

[2.] When the matter is provided by him. God in the new covenant hath

propounded excellent grounds of comfort: John xiv. 1, Let not your

hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.' The two

great general grounds of support against heart-trouble are God's

merciful nature and Christ's mediation; more particularly in the new

covenant, the promises of pardon and life,--of pardon of sin: Rom. v.

1-3, Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through

our Lord Jesus Christ,' &c.; and of life eternal: 1 Thes. iv. 18, And

so shall we ever be with the Lord; wherefore comfort one another with

these words.' It is good to see what comforts we live upon and propound

to ourselves and others, more expressly as to afflictions, God's

particular providence, that nothing falleth out with out God's

appointment: 1 Thes. iii. 3, That no man should be moved with these

afflictions, for yourselves know that we were appointed thereunto.' It

is not chance or a natural accident, but that which God hath appointed.

If any Shimei rail, the Lord hath bid him curse. If any evil come to

us, is it without God's fatherly care over his people, who ordereth all

things for their profit? Heb. xii. 10, They verily for a few days

chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we

might be partakers of his holiness.' And his unchangeable love, which

doth not vary and alter with our condition: Heb. xii. 6, Whom the Lord

loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' He is

our God still, though he seemeth to deal hardly with us. We learn of

Christ on the very cross to cry, My God.' Mat. xxvii. 46; and if we

cannot find enough in him when the creatures and our natural comforts

fail, it is meet we should lose them: Hab. iii. 18, Though the fig-tree

should not blossom, &c., yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in

the God of my salvation.' This is the sum of God's comforts; and when

these things are suggested to us, God comforteth our hearts.

[3.] When by these means God worketh comfort in us. Joy is often called

the comfort of the Spirit,' and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17.

Now all the Spirit's works are singular, and do much exceed the natural

work of man's heart. The groans which he stirreth up in prayer are

unutterable.' Rom. viii. 26; his joys unspeakable and glorious,' 1

Peter i. 8. The heathens counted that fire more fit and pure for their

altars which was enkindled by a sunbeam rather than a coal taken from a

common hearth. So this comfort which is raised in us by the Holy Ghost

is more rich and glorious and effective than that which is the fruit of

our bare reason, or the mere working of our human spirit, even in the

common grounds of Christian comfort; or as elementary fire differeth

from culinary and kitchen fire, and is much more pure, so doth this

joy, which is immediately wrought in us by the Spirit, from all joy

that we can work by ourselves, out of the scriptural grounds of

comfort. Carnal men have their joy at the second or third hand, as God

blesseth the order and influence of inferior causes; it comes to them

from creature to creature, so as they discern not the work of God in

it; yea, the joy of common Christians in the proper grounds of comfort

is not so strong as that which is raised in us by the immediate

impression of the comforting Spirit.

II. Why this is of God.

1. Because God challengeth this as his own right to comfort the heart

of man; and therefore, whatever the means of the comfort be, God will

be owned as the spring and fountain of it. He keepeth this as his great

bridle upon the world, to govern the hearts of men: Job xxxiv. 29, When

he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his

face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or

against a man only.' Our peace and trouble is in God's hands, and at

his disposing. It is true he exerciseth his sovereignty according to

law, and in his internal government according to the law of grace,

penally withdrawing his comforting Spirit, and leaving us to our

doubts, and troubles, and fears; by the rewarding our obedience and

faithfulness with the manifest tokens of his love, as the matter shall

require. It is enough for the point in hand that God alone doth

powerfully dispense peace or trouble. And when he will give comfort,

none can make his gift void; for it is at his command; and in both, a

nation is all one with a particular person as to any ability to resist

God.

2. Though grounds of comfort be never so clear, yet if God concur not,

we find not the effect; therefore it is his Spirit that can only

comfort the heart. To have God's warrant for our comfort is much, but

to have his impression is more; both must concur, or the soul will not

be comforted. It falleth out many ways, sometimes out of ignorance.

When a well of comfort was near, poor Hagar saw it not, and was almost

famished with thirst, until God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of

water.' Gen. xxi. 19. We know not the grounds of our comfort. Sometimes

out of passion; grief is obstinate, and will admit no remedy: as Rachel

would not be comforted,' Jer. xxxi. 15. They are so peevishly addicted

to their worldly comforts, that if they be crossed in them, they will

not admit of God's comforts, though they are evident, clear, and

pertinent. Sometimes out of forgetfulness: Heb. xii. 5, Ye have

forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children.'

And oblivion is an ignorance for the present. Had they remembered, they

would not have fainted and waxed weary. It is a great work of the

Spirit to bring to remembrance. Sometimes questioning their interest in

comfort; besides that, there are general comforts, when interest is not

clear. Now the Spirit, that showeth us the things given us of God, doth

also reveal and evidence our right to them. What is wrought in our

hearts that is to say, by quickening us to exercise grace,--he

evidenceth the truth of grace; and in our afflictions by patience

maketh out our comfort: Rom. v. 3-5, We glory in tribulations, knowing

that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and

experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God

is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto

us.' From the whole, there can be no true solid comfort but what God

bestoweth; his favour, and our interest in his favour, is manifested to

us by his Spirit.

III. What advantages we have by this, that all solid comfort is of God.

1. It assureth us of God's readiness to comfort poor afflicted

creatures that humbly submit to him. He that is the God of all comfort

is also the Father of mercies; his mercy and compassion inclineth him

to comfort us. God hath his name from this effect--Nomina sunt a

notioribus--God that comforteth those that are cast down,' 2 Cor. vii.

6. He is very tender of all afflicted creatures, much more of his

people.

2. God's comforts come with more authority, and silence all our doubts

and fears: Ps. xciv. 19, In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy

comforts delight my soul.' We have many intricate, perplexing thoughts,

out of which we cannot disentangle ourselves; no comforts come with

such authority and power as God's comforts. In the comfort we have it

is good to consider whence it cometh: Is it God's comfort, or a fancy

of our own? If it be made up by our own fancy, it will be like a

spider's web, that is weaved out of its own bowels, but is gone and

swept away with the least turn of a besom; but God's comforts are more

durable: they flow from the true fountain of comfort, upon whose frowns

or smiles our happiness and misery dependeth. There is little warmth in

a fire of our own kindling. God's comforts are built on his covenant,

and have a commanding force and over powering efficacy on the soul. God

in his word speaketh by sovereign authority; in our hearts he worketh

by powerful efficacy. The authority of his word we own when we speak to

others or to ourselves, when we know trouble but in supposition or

imagination. The efficacy of his grace we feel when trouble comes

actually upon us; many that strengthen others, when it cometh upon them

faint themselves: Job iv. 4, 5, Thy words have upholden him that is

falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is

come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art

troubled.' Which showeth that not only the matter of comfort, but the

effectual blessing cometh from God, or comforting of souls is his work.

3. That God's comforts are full and strong. For he worketh like

himself^ and therefore can and will support his people in the greatest

difficulties. It is sometimes represented as full: Acts xiii. 52, The

disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost;' and, I am

filled with comfort, and am exceeding joyful in all our tribulations,'

2 Cor. vii. 4: huperperisseuomai te chara. And our Lord Jesus, when he

took care for our comfort, took care for our full comfort: John xv. 11,

These things have I spoken, that my joy may remain in you, and your joy

might be full.' Thus we see the joy of believers is a full joy, that no

other joy needeth to be added to it; it is a full joy to hear us out

under all discouragements. For what is wanting to them who have God for

their portion, and the promised glory for their inheritance, and God's

providence engaged for their protection, safety, and comfort, while

they are here by the way? And it is strong as well as full: Heb. vi.

18, That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to

lie, we might have strong consolation.' Other comforts are weak and of

little force; they are not affliction-proof, much less are they

death-proof, and judgment-proof; they cannot stand before a few

serious, sober thoughts of the world to come. The comforts of the world

cannot stay and revive the heart; for every blast of a temptation

scattereth them.

Use 1. To reprove Christians for their over-much dejection and fainting

in troubles. Why are we so much cast down? Is there no balm in Gilead,

nor comfort in God? Why hath God taken the name upon him of being the

God of all comfort, and put this office upon his Spirit to be the

comforter? Hath he not made sufficient provision in the new covenant?

Is there any evil which the promise of eternal life cannot countervail?

Is God backward to give you comfort? Why, then, did he send Christ,

write scriptures, appoint a ministry and ordinances, seek to prepare

you for it by the seal and earnest of his Spirit, and invite you so

earnestly to trust in him, to cast all your care upon him, and so often

forbid your fear and sorrow?

Use 2. If all comfort be of God, let us go to God for it. But then take

these three directions:--

1. See you be qualified for it. Comfort follows holiness, as heat doth

fire: the Spirit is first a sanctifier and then a comforter; and

according to God's promise, is more necessarily a sanctifier than a

comforter: Eph. i. 13, 14, In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard

the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after

that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,

which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the

purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.' Comfort is our

happiness; but we are made holy before happy. Hereafter we enter into

our master's joy, we have a taste of it in the world. But who have this

taste but the sanctified and self-denying Christians? The work of

sanctification is carried on more certainly, but his comforting work is

many times obscure and interrupted. Do your work thoroughly and

faithfully, and you may refer yourselves to God for comfort.

2. Expect not a singular way of comfort besides the word. It was

Eliphaz's charge upon Job, chap. xv. 11, Are the consolations of God

small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?' The charge is,

that he undervalued the common consolation of God, and looked for some

secret way peculiar to himself of getting comfort, besides humbling of

himself, and turning unto God. No; God hath sufficiently provided for

the comfort of his people, and we must not expect singular

manifestations of his love, and special signs and tokens, beyond the

common allowance given to the whole family. It is a thousand to one but

it is some false consolation and dream of comfort which they affect and

cry up, beyond or besides the usual comforts of his word.

3. Do not compare lower discoveries of God with that great revelation

he hath made of his mind in the word, for the comfort of his people;

for this argueth great unthankfulness, and a secret desire to set up

man's comfort against those which are unquestionably of the Lord. Sure

it is, that whatever good is in nature, is from God; but it is mingled

with so many weaknesses, that what is of God can scarce be seen in it.

I speak of those that cry up heathen philosophy, to the disparagement

of the word of God, as if it were a better institution to quiet the

mind, and fortify it against all troubles, than Christianity. But alas!

they neither know the true ground of misery, which is sin, nor the true

ground of comfort, which is Christ, And that which mere man offereth

can neither come with such authority and blessing as what cometh

immediately from God. This is a moonlight that rotteth things before it

ripeneth them. In short, philosophers were never acquainted with

Christ, the foundation of comfort; nor the Spirit, the efficient cause

of comfort; nor the promise of pardon and life, which is the matter of

comfort; nor faith, which is the light by which we know things that

depend upon divine revelation, and so the proper instrument of comfort.

This I thought good to say, because comfort and rest for souls is one

of the great benefits of our religion: Jer. vi. 16, Stand in the way

and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk

therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls;' Mat. vi. 28, 29, Come

unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you

rest.'

Use 3. Seek it in the use of means and ordinances which God hath

appointed for the raising of comfort in us, as the word, prayer, and

the Lord's Supper. In solemn duties God reneweth the pledges of his

love to us, exciteth grace, and by grace comfort. It must needs be so,

because then the grounds of comfort are anew laid in the view of

conscience; graces are in their lively exercise, and God is not wanting

to his own institution. Take all these three together, and the reverent

use of the Lord's Supper must needs increase our comfort. The ground of

comfort is reconciliation with God by Christ, Rom. v. 11, We joy in God

through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the

atonement.' And here we raise up our faith and love: Cant. i. 4, The

King hath brought me into his chamber. We will be glad and rejoice in

thee; we will remember thy love more than wine. The upright love thee.'

God's ordinances are not empty; there is some participation: 1 Cor. x.

16, The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the

blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of

the body of Christ?'

Use 4. Consider the ends why God giveth us comfort. It is to fortify us

against the enemies of our salvation, so far as they are vexing, and

troubling, and molesting us in the way to heaven. The Spirit hath two

great offices--to be a sanctifier and comforter; and both serve all the

needs of Christians. When we are enticed to sin, he helps us as a

sanctifier; when we are discouraged in God's service, he helps us a

comforter. And therefore Christians are to consider their condition,

and what their present state requireth; for God dispenseth his grace

according to the assaults made upon them by the enemies of their

salvation. As for instance, our enemies are the devil, the world, and

the flesh. These we renounced in baptism; and in the progress of

Christianity, these are those with whom we conflict and must overcome.

As for instance, the devil is a tempting devil, who seeketh to draw

away the saints from God, and, by the love of the flesh, to weaken our

love and obedience to our proper and our rightful Lord. Now what are we

to do in this case? To beg comfort and peace, that we may not be

troubled, though we yield unto his temptations? Alas! this were to turn

the grace of God into wantonness. No; we are to be sober and watchful,'

1 Peter v. 8--to use all the rules of sobriety and vigilancy, that our

worldly comforts may not be a snare to us (sobriety is a holy

moderation in the use of all earthly things: vigilancy is a holy

diligence and seriousness in the use of means); and also add to both

the help of the sanctifying Spirit, that we may keep up our love to

God, and be faithful in our obedience to him. But the devil is not only

a tempting devil, but a vexing and disquieting devil, who accuseth us

before God day and night.' Rev. xii. 10, raiseth in us many troublesome

fears to make our service uncomfortable, and tire us and clog us. What

is our duty then? To beg the help of the Comforter, not only to show

love to God, but that we may have some persuasion of his love to us,

and quench his fiery darts, that we may go on cheerfully in our work,

because the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.'

Rom. xvi. 20. So for the world. The world is a tempting world, drawing

our affections from God and heaven to present things; and when it

smileth on us, encroaches upon our hearts more and more: 2 Tim. iv. 10,

Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' Now what is

our business then? To beg comfort and assurance of God's love? No; that

would be our bane; there is work for the Sanctifier rather than the

Comforter, that the worldly spirit may be subdued in us; there is need

of mortification rather than assurance, that we may be crucified to the

world.' Gal. vi. 14. But sometimes the world is a persecuting world,

and reproacheth and troubleth us with all manner of vexations; then

there is work for the Comforter, to seal up to our souls the love of

God, our interest in Christ: John xvi. 33, These things have I spoken

to you, that in me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have

tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;' and to

become to our souls the earnest of eternal glory. Comfort is for

tribulation; at other times we are glutted with it, but then it is our

great support. When all things fail, we feel the great necessity of the

joys of faith. It is good to time well our duties. David saith, Ps.

lvi. 3, What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.' So for the flesh;

it enticeth us: James i. 14, Every man is tempted when he is drawn away

of his own lust and enticed.' Many times it draweth to actual sin by

indulgence to its desires; yea, disposeth us often to apostasy and

falseness of heart; for apostasy usually begins at falseness of heart,

when the fleshly mind and interest is not thoroughly overcome. Well,

when we are conscious to this, what shall we do in such a case?

Certainly the great and proper work is to beg the Spirit, and implore

the Spirit as a sanctifier, and to be more obedient to his sanctifying

motions. Comfort will come in time. Well, but the flesh is not only

enticing, but troublesome and grievous to the saints; witness Paul's

groans: Rom. vii. 24, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me

from the body of this death?' We are quite wearied and tired out with

the importunity of its motions; we would serve God more purely and

perfectly. Then there is work for the Comforter, and confidence in his

operations to help the faithful soul: Phil. i. 6, Being confident of

this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will

perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.' Then it is seasonable to

remember the covenant we are under: Rom. vi. 14, For sin shall not have

dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' The

serious, striving soul will not be left destitute. Thus must we expect

comfort.

Use 5. Remember that comfort hath a latitude in it, and is expressed by

divers words.

1. Sometimes by it support is implied, when the sense of sin and fear

of God's wrath is not altogether removed and taken away, but so

mitigated and abated, that hope doth more easily prevail in the soul

than fear; and we resolve to wait on God, though we cannot so fully

clear up our interest in him. You have many conflicts and fears, yet

some hope and expectation towards God: Jonah ii. 4, 5, I am cast out of

thy sight, yet will I look again to thy holy temple.' Resolute

adherence giveth great support: Job xiii. 15, Though he slay me, yet

will I trust in him; I will maintain my own ways before him.' He

dependeth merely on the covenant.

2. Peace, or some rest from troubles and accusations of conscience.

There is some calm and quiet of soul: Rom. v. 1, Being justified by

faith, we have peace with God;' Gal. vi. 16, As many as walk according

to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy.' Assaulted with none or

light fears: John xvi. 33, In me ye shall have peace.' I will give you

peace, though not full spiritual suavities.

3. The third word is joy: 1 Peter i. 8, Ye rejoice with joy

unspeakable, and full of glory.' In peace all things are quiet, they

have no anxious thoughts; but in joy there is a sensible motion of

pleasure and delight. They are feasted with the pleasures of faith,

love, and hope. Let us then bless God for any degree of comfort.

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SERMON XVIII.

And stablish you in every good word and work.--2 Thes. II. 17.

WE come now to the apostle's second request for them: And stablish you

in every good word and work.' By every good word' is meant sound

doctrine; by every good work,' holiness of life.

Doct. Establishment in faith and holiness is a needful blessing, and

earnestly to be sought of God.

1. What this establishment is.

2. How needful.

3. Why it is to be sought of God.

I. What this establishment is? Ans. Confirmation in the grace that we

have received. Now this confirmation must be distinguished.

1. With respect to the power wherewith we are assisted; there is

habitual confirmation, and actual confirmation.

[1.] The habitual confirmation is when the habits of grace are more

settled and increased: 1 Peter v. 10, The God of all grace strengthen,

stablish, settle you.' God hath effectually called and converted them,

and he beggeth the strengthening of the grace which they had received.

Now thus we are established, when faith, love and hope are increased in

us; for these are the principles of all spiritual operations; and when

they have gotten good strength in us, a Christian is more established.

(1.) Faith is necessary, for we stand by faith: Rom. xi. 20, Because of

unbelief they were broken off, but thou standest by faith.' We do not

only live by it, but stand by it, and are kept by it: 1 Peter i. 5, Who

are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' He is

strong that is strong in faith, as Abraham was, that believeth the

gospel, and can venture his all upon it, and trust himself in God's

hands, whatever befalleth him: Luke xxii. 32, I have prayed for thee

that thy faith fail not.' That was the grace likely to be assaulted,

and would most keep him; had he been persuaded that Jesus was the Son

of God, would he have denied him with oaths and execrations? (2.) Love

is strong. We are told, Cant. viii. 6, 7, That love is as strong as

death; many waters cannot quench it: if a man would give all the

substance of his house, it would utterly be contemned.' It will not be

bribed or quenched. Our backsliding cometh from losing our complacency

in or desire of God: there is an averseness from sin and zeal against

it; as long as we have a sense of our obligations to God, and a value

and esteem of his grace in Christ, then we continue in delightful

obedience to him, and level and direct our actions to his glory. (3.)

Hope is necessary to stablish the soul on the promise of eternal life;

for this is the sure and stedfast anchor of the soul: Heb vi. 19, Which

hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.' If hope

be strong and lively, present things do not greatly move us.

[2.] Actual establishment, when these habits are fortified and

quickened by the actual influence of God. As God doth establish by

these habitual principles, so by the actual motions of his Spirit; for

otherwise neither the stability of our resolutions nor of gracious

habits will support us. Not stability of resolutions: Ps. lxxiii. 2, As

for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped.' Not

habit: Rev. iii. 2, Be watchful, and strengthen those things which

remain, that are ready to die.' It is true, God ordinarily worketh most

strongly with strongest graces, because their hearts are most prepared;

yet sometimes weak Christians have gone through great temptations when

strong ones have failed: Rev. iii. 8, Thou hast a little strength, and

hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.' Sometimes the strong

Christian stumbleth and falleth when the weak standeth. God may in an

instant confirm a weak person in some particular temptation, by his

free assistance, but ordinarily concurreth with the strongest grace.

Thus with respect to the power wherewith we are assisted.

2. With respect to the object or matter about which it is conversant:

stablished in every good word and work; stability in the doctrine of

faith and practice of godliness.

[1.] In the doctrine of faith. It is a great advantage in the spiritual

life to have a sound judgment. Some men are never well grounded in the

truth, and in the nature and reasons of that religion which they do

profess, and then are always left to a wandering uncertainty, because

they resolve not upon evidence; as men ordinarily abide not in the

place to which they are driven by a tempest, or the current of the

tides, rather than by aim and choice, though they take shelter there

for the present: 1 Thes. v. 21, Prove all things, hold fast that which

is good.' Certainly religion in the general must be taken up by choice,

and not by chance; not because we know no other, but because we know no

better: as Jer. vi. 16, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the

old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.' And the same is

true of particular opinions and controversies about religion, till we

have i'dion ste'rigma, our own stedfastness,' 2 Peter iii. 17. We stand

by the stedfastness of others, when we profess the truth merely because

of company; and when the chain is broken, we all fall to pieces. Now we

ought to be well settled, lest we appear to the world with a various

face, which breedeth atheism in others, and shame to ourselves. It is

possible, in particular things, future light may disprove present

practice; but then we must be able to give a very sufficient account of

it. Luther, when he was charged with apostasy, Confitetur se esse

apostatam, sed beatum et sanctum, qui fidem Diabolo datam non servavit.

While we cry up constancy, we must not cherish stubborn prejudice,

which shuts the door upon truth. However, to avoid the opinion of

lightness, before religious persons profess anything, their warrant

need to be very clear, both for the world's sake and their own, that

they may not make needless troubles, and afterwards change their mind,

to the scandalising of others: and their own sake: dipsuchos aner,

James i. 8, A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' And we

had need to take care to be right, because every error hath an

influence upon the heart and practice: upon the heart, as it weakeneth

faith and love; and practice: some opinions have no malignity in

themselves, yet the profession of them may divide the church, and make

us by contentions enemies of the growth and progress of Christ's

kingdom. Now, if we would be established in the truth, we must see what

influence every truth hath upon the new nature, either as it worketh

towards God by faith, to keep up our respects to him, or men by love,

as it furthereth our duties to them. A man will not easily let go truth

that is wont to turn it into practice, and to live as he believeth.

Once more, we need to be established in the present truth; it is no

zeal to fight with ghosts and antiquated errors, but to take God's part

in our time; but usually the orthodoxy of the world is an age too

short, men please themselves in things received.

[2.] In every good work, or in holiness of life. Here needeth the

greatest establishment, that we may hold on our course to heaven; and

the usual apostasy and backsliding that men are guilty of is from the

practice of religion. It is ill when the mind is tainted, but worse

when the heart is alienated from God; and commonly it is the perverse

inclination of the will that tainteth the mind. Therefore the great

establishment is to be settled in a course of godliness: 1 Thes. iii.

13, That he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before

God, even our Father, until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with

all his saints.' Now this establishment is very difficult.

First, Because of the contrariety of the principles that are within us:

Gal. v. 17, For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit

against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other, so that ye

cannot do the things that ye would.' The garrison is not free from

danger that hath an enemy lodged within. The love of the world and the

flesh was in the heart before the love of God and holiness, and these

are not wholly rooted out. Yea, these are natural to us, whereas grace

is a plant planted in us contrary to nature; and the ground that

bringeth forth weeds and thistles of its own accord, but the flowers

and good herbs with much tillage and cultivation, if it be neglected,

the weeds will soon overgrow the flowers.

Secondly, Because it is more hard to continue in conversion than to

convert ourselves at first. In our first conversion we are more

passive; it is God that converteth us, and draweth us to himself, and

quickens and plants us into Christ; but in perseverance and fulfilling

our covenanting duty, we are more active; it is our work, though we

perform it by God's grace. An infant in the mother's womb is nourished

by the nourishment of the mother, but afterwards he must suck and seek

his own nourishment; and the older he groweth, the more care of his

life is devolved upon himself. Now, that which is more our work is more

difficult. It is true that God, that hath begun a good work, doth

perfect it, but not without our care, Phil. i. 6. When we are fitted

and prepared unto good works, God expecteth from us that we should walk

in them. God stablisheth us in the text, but it is in every good work.

Besides, in conversion, we make covenant with God, but by perseverance

we keep covenant with him. Now it is easier to consent to conditions

than it is to fulfil them; the ceremonies, at first consent of

marriage, are not so difficult as to perform the duties of the marriage

covenant. It is more easy to build a castle in a time of peace than to

keep it in a time of war. Peter more easily consented to come to Christ

upon the water; but when he began to try it, his feet were ready to

sink, Mat. xiv. 29, 30. When winds and waves are against us, alas! how

soon do we fail! Therefore, a good spring doth not always foreshow a

fruitful harvest, nor plenty of blossoms store of fruit. We are carried

on with great life and earnestness for a while in the profession of

religion, we consent to follow Christ; but when we meet with

difficulties not foreseen or allowed for, we faint and are discouraged.

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3. With respect to the subject in which it is seated, which is the soul

with its faculties. The strength of the body is known by experience

rather than by description; but the strength of the soul must be

determined by its right constitution towards good and evil. The

faculties of the soul are either the understanding, wherein lieth the

directive counsel, or the will, wherein lieth the imperial power, or

the affections, wherein lieth the executive power of the soul.

[1.] The mind or understanding is established when we have a clear,

certain, and full apprehension of the truth of the gospel; it is called

knowledge; the sure, and sound, and certain apprehension of them is

called faith, or intellectual assent, or the full assurance of

understanding.' Col. ii. 2, when there is a due knowledge of what God

hath revealed, with a certain persuasion of the truth of it, wrought in

us by the Holy Spirit. Now, the more clearly, and orderly, and

certainly we know these things, the more powerfully do they affect the

heart, and the more we are established. He that hath little knowledge

and little certainty is called weak in the faith: Rom. xiv. 1, Him that

is weak in the faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations.' And

those that have a clearer understanding are called strong; as Rom. xv.

1, We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak;'

meaning strong in knowledge. So also for certainty of persuasion, it is

said, Rom. iv. 20, Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God;'

when in all his trials he bore up himself upon the confidence of God's

word and promise. Well, then, the mind is confirmed and established

when we have a good stock of knowledge, and do firmly believe what we

know of God and Christ and eternal salvation. But alas! how few truths

do many Christians know, especially in their order, and as to their

worth, and weight, and certainty, and so that, if we know these things,

we know them not as we ought to know them: 1 Cor. viii. 2, If any man

think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to

know them.' If we know them speculatively, we know them not

practically. If we are able to discourse of these things, we do not

live by them. If we know them generally, we do not know them

particularly, to direct us in all cases wherein they concern us, but

are blinded with temptations. If we know them comprehensively, so as to

look about the compass of them, yet not certainly, John xvii. 8, And

have known surely that I came out from thee--' so as to venture our

interests upon them. If we know them darkly, and with a half light, we

do not know them clearly and with a full light. There is many times

conviction in the ore, which is not refined into a clear and distinct

knowledge, such as may awe the heart. If we know these things

habitually, we know them not actually, when we should remember them in

their season; and oblivion is a sort of ignorance. Hence come the many

doubts we are assaulted with, and all the unevenness and uncertainty of

our lives, so that the mind needeth to be established in grace.

[2.] The will, which is the imperial power of the soul. Now, the will's

establishment is known by its firm and thorough resolution for God and

against sin. For God: as Acts xi. 23, Barnabas, when he had seen the

grace of God, was very glad, and exhorted them all that, with full

purpose of heart, they would cleave to the Lord.' First choosing, then

cleaving, and this with full purpose, when the will is so fixed in the

knowledge and faith of the gospel that they resolve to abide by their

choice: Ps. xxvii. 4, One thing have I desired of the Lord; this will I

seek after.' When spiritual resolution carrieth the .force and

authority of a principle in the soul, and nothing can break it: 1 Peter

iv. 1 Arm yourselves with the same mind.' As constantly as Christ

persevered in the work of mediation, so be you in the work of

obedience, notwithstanding the difficulties of it. This powerful will,

that beareth down oppositions and temptations, and the greatest

impediments in the way to heaven, so that you rather make advantage of

opposition than are discouraged by it, when sensual or carnal good is

of little force to you, and you can despise the most pleasing baits of

sin.

[3.] The affections are the executive power, and do excite and stir us

up to do what the mind is convinced of and the will resolved upon as to

the necessary duties of the gospel in order to eternal happiness. There

is a backwardness within and many temptations without; but a holy

delight overcometh the unwilling backwardness within, and overbalanceth

either worldly fear or worldly hope without, that the soul is carried

on powerfully towards God. We never work better than when we work in

the strength of some eminent affection, when the heart is enlarged: Ps.

cxix. 32, I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt

enlarge my heart.' Either love or hope. Love filleth us with delight,

overcoming our natural slackness and sluggishness in the ways of God:

Ps. xl. 8, I delight to do thy will, my God, yea, thy love is within my

heart;' 1 John v. 3, For this is the love of God, that we keep his

commandments, and his commandments are not grievous;' Ps. cxii. 1,

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in

his commandments.' Hope beareth us up in contempt of present delights

and terrors of sense: Heb. iii. 6, Whose house are we, if we hold fast

the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;' so that we

serve God with vigour and alacrity. When our affections are damped,

grace falleth into a consumption; and if you lose your taste, your

practice will languish, your service of God will not be so uniform. It

is a great part of our establishment to keep up the vigour and fervency

of our affections.

4. With respect to the uses for which it serveth, as to duties,

sufferings, conflicts.

; [1.] Doing the will of God, or discharging our doings with delight,

cheerfulness, and constancy; for all strength is for work: Eph. iii.

16, That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be

strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' That we may do

our work with that readiness of mind which becomes faith in Christ and

love to God. This is often spoken of in scripture: Phil, ii. 13, For it

is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good

pleasure,' to thelein kai to energein; and Heb. xiii. 21, Make you

perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well

pleasing in his sight.' It is of great use to our establishment that

the soul be kept doing; for as wells are the sweeter for draining, so

are we the more lively for exercise. Frequent omission of good duties,

or seldom exercise of grace, necessarily produceth a decay; as a key

rusteth that is seldom turned in the lock; thereby we lose the life and

comfort of religion, and at length cast it off as a needless and

unprofitable thing.

[2.] For bearing afflictions, and passing through all conditions with

honour to God and safety to ourselves: Phil. iv. 13, I can do all

things through Christ, which strengtheneth me;' Col. i. 11,

Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, with all

patience.' The great use of establishment is to fortify us against all

the evils and inconveniences of the present life, that we may hold on

our course to heaven in fair way or foul, and not be greatly moved by

anything that befalleth us within time.

[3.] For conflicts with temptations from the devil, the world, and the

flesh. The world is round about us, and we are accustomed to these

inveigling objects whose importunity prevaileth at length. The devil

seeketh to work upon our affections and inclinations, and the flesh

urgeth us to gratify them. How, then, is a Christian safe? God

establisheth him: Eph. vi. 10, Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in

the power of his might.' A Christian here is in a military state, and

we of ourselves, left unto ourselves, are like reeds shaken with every

wind; we have need of establishment in regard of our own feebleness,

and the force of our enemies. We must be established against the devil

soliciting; against the world, the silent argument by which he

soliciteth us and draweth us from God and heaven; against the flesh,

the rebelling principle which is apt to be wrought upon by Satan. Well,

then, this establishment is that grace which enableth us to carry on

the duties of religion with constancy, frequency, and delight; to bear

all the inconveniences of religion with patience and fortitude; to be

more deaf and resolute against all the suggestions of the devil, or the

machinations of the flesh, stirred up by the world.

5. With respect to the degree, it is such a strengthening of the soul

as doth prevent not only our fall, but our shaking. Before falling

away, or our being drawn to apostasy, there may be a shaking, a

doubtfulness, and wavering of mind with respect to the truth, and much

inconstancy and unevenness of life with respect to practice. Now,

Christians, as they must not draw back to perdition, so they must not

be always fluctuating and unfixed, either in matters of opinion, but

settled in the truth, or in matters of practice; there must be a

strength and stability of holy inclinations and resolutions for God and

the world to come still kept up, or else there will be no evenness or

uniformity in the course of our lives. And though we avoid apostasy,

yet we cannot avoid scandal; though there be no falling back, there is

a stepping out into bypaths: 1 Cor. xv. 58, Be stedfast and unmoveable,

always abounding in the work of the Lord;' and Eph. iii. 17, That ye

being rooted and grounded in love,' &c.; and Col. i. 23, If ye continue

in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope

of the gospel.' If we do not look to the degree, our weakness and

instability groweth upon us; as in matters of opinion, some have an

unsettled head of a vertiginous spirit: Eph. iv. 14, Carried about with

every wind of doctrine.' They never were well grounded in the truth,

nor took up the ways they are engaged in upon sufficient evidence; and

therefore, by their own weakness, and the cunning and diligence of the

seducers, are drawn into error. Light chaff is blown up and down by

every wind, when solid grain hitcheth in, and resteth in the floor

where it is winnowed. A half light maketh us uncertain in our course.

For matter of practice, if we allow our selves in our first declinings,

the evil will grow upon us; when the judgment reasoneth more remissly

against sin than it did before, and the will doth oppose it with less

resolution, or with greater faintness and indifferency, or when

opposition doth more discourage us. No; there must be a resolved

conquest of temptations that would pervert you; this will only serve

our turn: Heb. xii. 3, Consider him that endured such contradictions,

lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.' Weariness is a lesser degree

of deficiency. Many a man is weary that is not faint or quite spent; so

with the practice of godliness, when the heart begins to be alienated

and estranged from God, and the life of duty doth decay. When our first

love is gone, our first works will in a great measure cease: Rev. ii.

4, 5, Nevertheless I have some thing against thee, because thou hast

left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen,

and repent, and do thy first works.' Well, then, the degree must be

minded; for though a man may be stedfast in the main, yet he may be

somewhat moved and shaken; but a Christian should not only be stedfast,

but unmoveable; otherwise we shall be very uncertain in our motions.

II. How needful it is: this is in a great measure showed already. But

yet more fully.

1. Man at best is but a creature. The new creation doth carry a great

correspondence with the old and first creation. It is not enough that

the creature be, but he must be sustained in being; we have our being

in God still: Acts xvii. 28, For in him we live, and move, and have our

being.' As providence is a continual creation, so stablishing grace is

the continuance of the new creation. The same grace that sets us in the

state of the new creation, the same stablisheth us. God found no

stability in the angels, therefore it is said he trusteth them not: Job

xv. 15, Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are

not clean in his sight.' They stand by the grace and favour of God.

Take the best creatures even as creatures, they are defective and

unstable in themselves; for God will have the creature, as a creature,

to be a dependent thing on the Creator, who only is a being of himself.

Man at his best estate was but an unstable creature--for Adam gave out

at the first assault--and since, we are very unstable, blown down with

the blast of every little temptation. Even in the state of grace, we

are like a glass without a bottom, broken as soon as out of hand; and,

therefore, God alone is able to make us stand, and persevere in this

grace that we have received: 2 Cor. i. 21, Now, he that stablisheth us

with you in Christ is God.' After we are in Christ, our stability is in

God alone.

2. The indisposition of our natures both to every good word and work.

(1.) To every good word. The truths of the gospel are supernatural.

Now, things that are planted in us contrary to nature can hardly

subsist and maintain themselves. We have some seeds of the law yet left

in our hearts, Rom. ii. 14. But the gospel dependeth on sure

revelation; therefore are there so many heresies against the gospel,

but none against the law. Therefore, as they depend upon a divine

revelation, they must be settled in our hearts by a divine power, and

by a divine power preserved there; that as the doctrine is

supernatural, so the grace may be also by which we do receive it. Faith

is the gift of God: Eph. ii. 8, For by grace ye are saved, through

faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God;' both as to

its beginning, so to its preservation and increase. (2.) To every good

work. There is not only slowness and backwardness of heart to the

duties of the gospel, but somewhat of the old enmity and averseness

remaineth still. Our hearts are not only inconstant and unsettled, but

very wayward: Jer. xiv. 10, Thus saith the Lord to this people, Thus

have they loved to wander;' Ps. xcv. 10, It is a people that do err in

their heart.' Moses was no sooner gone aside with God in the mount, but

the Israelites, after their solemn covenant, fell to idolatry. Before

the law could be written, they brake it. Now, we that have a warring

principle within, how can we stand unless God establish us? There is a

back-bias, there are the seeds of wantonness, anger, revenge, envy,

impatience, worldliness, ambition, and sensuality. God knoweth how

little the fleshly mind and interest is conquered in us; and therefore,

if he did not establish us, we should soon show ourselves.

3. In regard of those oppositions that are made against us after once

we be in Christ. It is not enough that we are brought out of the

kingdom of Satan, but after we are rescued out of his hand and power,

he pursueth us with continual malice; therefore there must be the same

power to stablish us still in grace that first brought us into the

state of grace: Col. i. 13, Who has delivered us from the power of

darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son;'

compared with 1 John iv. 4, Ye are of God, little children, and have

overcome them; because greater is he that is in you than he that is in

the world.' The world runneth a quite contrary course than those do

that set their faces heavenward, and therefore maligns them, and

pursues them with reproaches and troubles: 1 Peter iv. 4, 5, Wherein

they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of

riot, speaking evil of you; who shall give account to him that is ready

to judge the quick and the dead.' And most commonly our supports are

invisible, and we have no temporal interest to leant to; but, 2 Tim. i.

12, For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am

not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is

able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' We

bear these afflictions by the power of God.

4. We see here the saints miscarry when God withdraweth his supporting

grace but in part, as Peter, David. Peter was in the state of grace,

and Christ prayed that his faith might not utterly fail; yet, when God

did not establish him, you see what sins he was guilty of in that

combat. David was a man after God's own heart;' but how did he fall

when God upheld him not! Ps. li. Hezekiah; 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, Howbeit

in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent

unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left

him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' Thus is

God fain to humble his children, to teach them dependence, and to put

them in mind that they do not stand by their own strength..

III. Why it is to be sought of God?

1. He only is able: Rom. xvi. 25, Now to him that is of power to

establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus

Christ,' &c. Surely God never made a creature too hard for himself. He

is able to defeat the power of enemies, and to preserve his people in

the midst of temptations. So Jude, ver. 24, To him that is able to keep

you from falling,' &c.; and He is able to keep that which I have

committed to him,' 2 Tim. i. 12. The saints gather much comfort from

this, for it is a relief to their thoughts against the dreadful and

powerful opposition of the world; they have no reason to doubt of their

Father's love. That which surpriseth them is to see all the world

against them. It is the dreadfulness of power in the temptation and

sense of their own weakness; therefore the power of God is a fit relief

to them.

2. God is not very forward to cast you off, when he hath a just cause

to do it. Your constant experience evidenceth this. If he here had done

so, what had become of you long ago? For you have given him abundant

occasion, you have weaned him with your sins, abused his mercies; and

yet he hath not cast you off. He hath not utterly forsaken you, when

you have turned the back upon him and have been ready to forsake him,

but hath kept you from dangers and in dangers; yea, called you to his

grace, confirmed you hitherto. Why should you doubt of his grace for

the future? 2 Cor. i. 10, Who delivered us from so great a death, and

doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;' 2 Tim. iv.

17, 18, Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me;

that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the

Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve

me unto his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Amen.'

3. He hath made promises of sustentation and preservation: Ps. lxxiii.

23, Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my

right hand.' Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for God

upholdeth him with his hand. If God hath promised to preserve that

grace which he hath once given, should not we pray for the continuance

of it with the more encouragement?

4. The experience of the saints: Ps. xciv. 18, When I said my foot

slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.' God's manutenancy is there

asserted.

Use. Is to press us at all times to look up to God for establishment;

but especially in two seasons:--

1. When we begin to decline, and grow more remiss and indifferent in

the practice of godliness. If grace be weak, you must get it

strengthened. When you grow bolder in sin, and more strange to God and

Jesus Christ, and have little converse with him in the Spirit, oh! it

is time to be instant and earnest with God, that he would recover you.

Though you have embezzled your strength, yet you have to do with a

merciful God; go to him for help: Ps. xvii. 5, Hold up my goings in thy

path, that my footsteps slip not.' You have forfeited the more

plentiful aids of grace; but beg him not to forsake you utterly. You

must confess the sin, but God must remedy the evil: Ps. cxix. 133,

Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over

me.' Lord, I am apt to be led away with worldly allurements; my

spiritual taste is distempered with carnal vanities: but, let not

iniquity have dominion over me.'

2. In unsettled times, when we are full of fears, and think we shall

never hold out in a holy course. God, that keepeth us in times of

peace, will hold us up in times of trouble: Ps. xvi. 8, I have set the

Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be

moved.'

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A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION

UPON THE

FIFTY-THIRD CHAPTER OF ISAIAH.

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TO THE READER

THE character of Dr Manton is so generally known by his celebrated

preaching so many years in this city, and by the numerous collections

of excellent discourses published since his death, that I cannot think

it needful to give any account of him here, as I do not pretend to add

anything to the accounts already given by those excellent persons that

published his former works. It will be sufficient to remark, that his

works have been esteemed by some of the best judges one of the most

valuable collections of scriptural and practical divinity, and to have

been as generally serviceable to the world as most that have appeared

in these latter ages, and in many respects no way inferior to some of

the ancient monuments of the Christian church.

I shall reckon myself concerned only to give some account of this

treatise.

As to the subject of it, I shall only observe, that as the prophecy of

Isaiah contains the clearest revelations of the Messiah, and is writ in

the loftiest style of any part of the Old Testament, so this excellent

chapter is an eminent instance of both, containing an exact description

both of his sufferings and his glories, represented in bright and

lively colours, and in a phrase, though somewhat difficult and obscure,

exceeding lofty and sublime. The veil of the temple seemed to have been

drawn aside, though not yet rent asunder, and the light of the gospel

shone forth with a brighter glory than ever it had appeared before.

Upon those accounts this chapter has exercised the thoughts and

employed the diligence of several eminent persons in former and later

times; though, through some or other misfortune, they have been buried

with their authors, and have never seen the light. Perhaps this is the

only thing that can pretend to a just discourse now extant.

It would not be proper, in the preface to a practical discourse, to

undertake the defence of this chapter, and to rescue it from the

violence offered it in the posthumous annotations of a learned critic,

who, with a great deal of force, and frequent absurdity, has applied

this whole chapter to the prophet Jeremiah; not only cross to the

brightest evidence of truth, and the general consent of Christian

interpreters, but in flat contradiction to himself in two very accurate

and elaborate treatises published by himself,--in the one [6] of which,

arguing against the Jews, he has these remarkable words, That the

Messiah was to pass through sufferings and death in the way to his

kingdom, and in order to bestow invaluable blessings on his seed, there

is no man can doubt that carefully considers Isaiah liii.' And

afterwards he adds, To whom of all the kings and prophets can this

agree? To none.' In the other [7] he settles the true sense of the e,

and exposes the perverse glosses of Socinus.

As to these discourses themselves, they bear the lively signatures of

the excellent author, and are of a piece with the rest of his works.

There is a judicious choice of pertinent matter, disposed in a regular

method, expressed in a plain and native elegance, quickened and

enlivened with proper images, and tinctured throughout with a deep

savour of true piety. And though they may be thought neither so

polished nor correct as his riper years and his last hand could easily

have made them, or as were necessary to gratify the nice and the

curious; yet they seem, however, excellently fitted to a better

end,--to promote saving knowledge and real godliness, to move and to

instruct the mind, and give entertainment as well as profit to the

serious and the wise, and are particularly suitable to sacramental

occasions.

It will be only further necessary to acquaint the reader that, as these

sermons were preached in his stated and ordinary course, so they were

preached in his early youth, and are younger than any of those that

have seen the light; which must be his apology to the world if any

expressions are found up and down less accurate and clear, or any thing

different from what was known to be his sense in some of his later

writings.

This account may be collected from the preface of his Exposition on

James:--

I have the rather chosen this scripture, that it may be an allay to

those comforts which in another exercise I have endeavoured to draw out

of Isaiah liii. I would at the same time carry on the doctrine of faith

and manners, and show you your duties together with your

encouragements, lest, with Ephraim, you should only love to tread out

the corn, and refuse to break the clods. We are all apt to divorce

comfort from duty, and content ourselves with a barren and unfruitful

knowledge of Jesus Christ; as if all he required of the world were only

a few naked, cold, inactive apprehensions of his merit, and all things

were so done for us that nothing remained to be done by us. This is the

wretched conceit of many in the present age; and therefore they either

abuse the sweetness of grace to looseness, or the power of it to

laziness. Christ's merit, and the Spirit's efficacy are the common

places from whence they draw all the defences and excuses of their own

wantonness and idleness.'

I have compared the transcript with the original notes, and find

reason, after all the care that has been taken, to beg the reader's

candour and excuse for any smaller errors that may have escaped, both

of the copy and of the press.

W. Harris.

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[6] Grotius de Relig. Chris., cap. v., sec. 19.

[7] De Satisfactione, cap. i.

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A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION.

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord

revealed?--Isa. LIII. 1.

I SHALL in the course of this exercise go over the several verses of

this chapter, which is an eminent portion of scripture, and calls for

most serious attention. It may rather be called the gospel than the

prophecy of Isaiah. It contains so ample and clear a discovery of Jesus

Christ, that one would rather account it historical than prophetical.

Other prophecies are explained by the history of Christ in the New

Testament, but this prophecy explains the history; there is no chapter

so often quoted and vouched by Christ and the apostles as this, viz.,

no less than seven or eight times in the New Testament. It is so full

and clear, that it rather needs meditation than a comment, faith more

than learning, to conceive of it. The coherence or connection of this

with the former chapter, take briefly thus:--

The evangelical prophet (for so he may justly be called) had in the end

of the former chapter spoken of the glory of Christ's kingdom, how

readily it should be entertained among the Gentiles, how he should

sprinkle many nations,' and make kings to shut their mouths,' that is,

with silence hearken to and consider his doctrine. Here, coming to the

Jews, he finds, on the contrary, nothing but contempt and scorn, and

therefore in an holy admiration cries out, Who hath believed our

report?' He saw it was not believed in his days, and that it would not

in after days. It was in vain to speak to them of the Messiah. In this

chapter there are three remarkable parts:--

1. A description of the Jews' horrid unbelief and contumacy against

Christ, ver. 1.

2. The occasion and ground of that unbelief, viz., Christ's meanness as

to outward show and appearance, from ver. 2 to 10.

3. The removal of this occasion, and taking off this scandal and

prejudice, by showing the fruit and glory that followed this meanness,

ver. 11 to the end of the chapter.

Our text is the first of these, containing a pathetical description of

the Jews' contempt and rejection of Christ. It is propounded by way of

query, in two questions.

1st. The one holds forth the thing or evil itself by way of admiration:

Who hath believed our report?'

2dly. The other, the cause of it: To whom is the arm of the Lord

revealed?'

1st. In the first there is considerable: the person, who; the act,

believed; the object, report.

That the words are a question is clear, but what kind of question is

not so clear. Some understand the words as a commiseration of the

prophet: q.d., I am to tell you such things of the sufferings of the

Messiah, that you will scarce believe men should be so barbarous toward

him. But this is so absurd that it needs no confutation. It is not a

question of commiseration, but of admiration, or rather of complaint,

in which Isaiah applies himself to God, as the Septuagint shows by

putting in the word Ku'rie, Lord, being herein followed by St Paul,

Rom. x. 16, For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?' So

John xii. 38, it is also said, Lord, who hath believed our report?'

But let us come to the parts of it. Who? Though the inquiry be general,

it is not to intimate that none, but only that very few did believe, or

think there was any truth in what was spoken. Then for the object, our

report, understand it concerning Christ; or, as the LXX. express it, te

ako?e emon, our hearing,' that is, what they hear from us. The Jews are

guilty here of a double lie in wresting this place; they say it means

the report concerning their own misery and succeeding glory, as if

Israel were spoken of here under the notion of one common person; and

they transfer the evil complained of from themselves to the Gentiles.

But the sense is this: There are very few that will hearken to those

things that we are to tell them concerning the Messiah; they will seem

riddles and contradictions to them, that there should be such glory in

things so vile and ignoble to outward appearance.

2dly. For the reason: To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' As if

the prophet had said, Therefore they do not believe, because the arm of

the Lord is not revealed. Here is some difficulty about what is meant

by the arm of the Lord,' which, without question, is metaphorical. Some

take it for the counsel and contrivance of God effected and brought to

pass; as Acts iv. 28, Whatsoever thy hand (or arm) and counsel

determined to be done.' It is more properly taken for the strength of

God: you know the arm is the chiefest receptacle of strength. But what

strength of God? Some understand it of the gospel, which is called the

power of God to salvation.' Rom. i. 16; the gospel is not revealed to

them. So 1 Cor. i. 18, The preaching of the cross is called the power

of God,' because of that admirable virtue and success which accompanied

the preaching of it. Some by the power of God understand the power of

God with Christ. He did miracles, and yet they would not see the arm of

the Lord. They thought he cast out devils by Beelzebub, as if it were

by the power of Satan, not of God. Some by arm' understand Christ

himself, who, 1 Cor. i. 24, is called the power and wisdom of God,' he

is the power, the arm, the right hand of the Father. There is no great

work of God but is done in and by Christ, as a man doth his work by his

arm; as in making the world, vanquishing his enemies, delivering his

church, it is everywhere spoken of as done by Christ. Others by arm'

understand the power of the Spirit in and by the ordinances. I rather

prefer that of the gospel, together with the Spirit.

Then for revealed, you will say the gospel was revealed to the Jews. I

answer--There is a double revelation. First, Common, which is nothing

else but the promulgation of the gospel; this must be to every

creature. Secondly, Proper and special, to the elect, by the Spirit.

There is the Spirit's revelation, and the prophet's revelation. The

meaning is: To whom hath the Spirit of God revealed that what I speak

is true? To whom is the power of God to salvation inwardly manifested

and made known by the Spirit? Implying they will not believe without

this manifestation.

Thus you have the meaning of the words. I shall offer to your thoughts

some occasional observations before I come to the main points.

From the Jews wresting this text, observe:--

1. That there is an evil disposition in men to turn off upon others

that which nearly concerns themselves. Men are good at making false

applications, and turn off that to others which the word and Spirit

intend to them. When Christ had spoken to Peter, it is said, Peter,

turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith to Jesus,

Lord, What shall this man do?'

2. Observe, that it is no new thing in persons to vouch that for

themselves which makes most against them. Thus the Jews do this chapter

against the Gentiles. So that which you find written, 1 Cor. xiv. 16,

How shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen?' the

papists vouch it for Latin service, though it is the drift of the

apostle to condemn it. Let not the like usage in our time amaze you,

when Antinomians and Socinians urge those texts for them that are

really against them.

3. Observe this too: When God, for the wickedness of a people,

hardeneth their hearts, they are apt to mistake in that which is most

plain. A man would think that this chapter should work upon a Jew if

anything could; so you wonder why men are not wrought upon by such

powerful persuasions which speak very home to them. The reason is, God

hath hardened them, Rom. xi. 7.

4. From the prophet's great admiration, observe, that when we can do no

good upon a people, the most effectual way is to complain of it to God.

He can help us and them too; this will stop murmuring. The mind is

eased of that burden that lies heavy on us, when we can go and report

the case to God, and pour out our complaints into his bosom. Other of

God's messengers besides Isaiah have great cause to say, Who hath

believed our report?'

5. Observe, that those that profess the name of God may be much

prejudiced against the entertainment of those truths and counsels that

he makes known to them for their good.

6. That it is a wonder they should not believe so plain a discovery of

Christ, though by the just judgment of God they did not.

7. That the first believing of Christ is a believing the report of him;

but afterwards there are experiences to confirm our belief. The soul

then knoweth that there is a Christ, and that there is mercy in him: 1

Peter ii. 3, If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious;'

John iv. 42, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have

heard him ourselves, and know indeed that he is the Christ, the Saviour

of the world.'

I come now to the main points which I shall prosecute.

First, That there may be a glorious report of Jesus Christ, and yet few

believe it. Or--

That Jesus Christ may be clearly represented to a people, and yet but

few won to believe in him.

Secondly, That the gospel is the arm and power of God, or word of

righteousness. Though it is an uncredited report to the world, yet it

is the arm and power of God to them that believe.

Thirdly, Therefore so few believe, because God's arm is not revealed to

them: the power of the word is not manifested by the Spirit.

I. As to the first of these points, other truths may be delivered and

not closed with, but it is a wonder that so sweet a truth as this

should not be received. The wonder is so much the greater if we look

upon:--

1. The persons making this report: The prophets of old time, the

apostles in Christ's time, the ministers of the gospel now-a-days--men

that, if you look upon them singly, did deserve some reverence and

esteem men--that gave forth abundant declarations that God was with

them, and spoke by them, who were as polished shafts in God's quiver.

Then consider them speaking the same thing, all proclaiming the same

Christ; that is more. For I conceive there is an emphasis in this our

report--not my, but our; or, as Zachariah, John's father, said, Luke i.

70, As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been

since the world began.' Though there were many holy prophets, yet they

had but one mouth, they spake as if with one mouth: Who hath believed

our report?'

2. The persons to whom the report is made: A professing people, a

people that were nurtured and taught this from their infancy and youth,

by all the ceremonies of their religion, leading them to that Christ

whom the prophets did more distinctly reveal to them. They had been

tutored and taught this lesson for many hundred years by the pedagogy

of the law; for so that place is to be expounded, Gal. iii. 24, The law

was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified

by faith.' The ceremonial law may properly be called paida'gogos eis

Chri'ston, or the dispensation of Moses. Yet who hath believed our

report?'

3. The manner how it is reported: Distinctly, plainly, though in

prophetical expressions, by Isaiah and Jeremiah, God gave some

praeludia; some clear expressions were then used by all the prophets.

Though they had not noonshine, they had the dawning of the day, light

enough to see the day approaching. Had it been such a dark intimation

as that of the seed of the woman breaking the serpent's head, it had

been the less wonder if they had not weighed it, because they could not

so distinctly have conceived it. But when all is made so clear, the

wonder is the greater that they should not consider it.

I shall prove the point by distinguishing the several times in which

there have been any glorious discovery of Jesus Christ, and show you

that in all these times the company of believers have been few.

Distinque tempora, et exis bonus theologus The way to understand the

reason of it, is to find out what have been the main prejudices against

Christ in the several times of his revelation. I shall name four

times:--(1.) The prophets' time; (2.) John Baptist's time; (3.) That of

Christ's life; (4.) Our time, or the time of the first promulgation of

the gospel.

1. The prophets' time, when the number of believers was few. They had

all some loose and general expectation of a Messiah, but few believed,

at least not in such a Messiah as the prophet prophesied of.

[1.] Because of the grossness of their hearts, which rested in the

outward ceremonies, as if they were ordained for themselves, and not to

signify any other thing. They were observant of the ceremonies, but did

not observe the end and purpose of them. Therefore doth God so often

protest against sacrifices. A sacrifice was not acceptable to God but

according as they did eye Christ in it. Now they used no farther reach

or recollection, but rested in the sacrifices; as Isa. lxvi. 3, He that

killeth an ox is as if he slew a man.' And therefore did God so often

tell them that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to him.'

[2.] Because of their want of due observation how God did fulfil his

promise concerning the Messiah, few troubled themselves about it. Only

the pious Jews lived in a continual expectation of it, and their hearts

were always upon the wing of strong and earnest desires after it. It is

said, Luke ii. 25, Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel.' He was

a man whose thoughts ran that way. So Daniel, chap. ix. 2, sought by

books;' then, ver. 21, an angel tells him the time of the Messiah. But

others were negligent.

[3.] Their obstinate hatred against the prophets that revealed these

things concerning Christ. They reproved their other sins, and therefore

they believed them not in this: Jer. v. 13, The prophets shall become

wind, and the word of the Lord is not in them.' Disaffection is the

great prejudice against anything. They judged it false or to no purpose

before it was spoken. The Jews, though they honoured the prophets when

dead, could not endure them whilst living: Mat. xxiii. 29, 30, Woe unto

you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of

the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If

we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been

partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' But that was a

deceit, as I shall show you by and by. These three I conceive to be the

causes why, in the prophets' time, they did not believe; they are to be

marked by us, because there is somewhat in them suitable to the case of

gospel unbelievers, viz., a circle and track of cold duties; a

non-attendance on God in his ordinances; and a wicked spirit of

contradiction against his word.

2. John Baptist's time. I distinguish this from the former, because

Christ doth so, Mat. xi. 11, Among them that are born of women there

hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; and yet he that is

least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.' And Christ saith

that he is more than a prophet.' He made a more glorious report of

Jesus Christ, as being immediately to come; and then a common rumour

was given forth that the Messiah's time was come. Now what were the

prejudices then?

[1.] The levity and rashness of the people. If any man were more

eminent than other, they presently cried him up for the Messiah, and

therefore, being disappointed in some, they were prejudiced against

all: Luke iii. 15, And as the people were in expectation, and all men

mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or no; John

answered them, There cometh one after me who is mightier than I.' He

plainly directeth them to another. Multitudes flocked to him indeed,

but it was out of a nice and vain curiosity. Few believed his report.

[2.] The evil influence of the scribes and pharisees, who thought all

the water lost that went beside their own mill. They would fain keep

the people under their beck and pleasure, and therefore had a vigilant

eye upon every new way, or anything that might seem to take off from

that respect and devotion wherewith the people were engaged to them.

By-ends in some that should have been teachers, have been always a

hindrance to the entertainment of Christ. Those that preached Christ

for their own ends were enemies to the cross of Christ, Phil. iii. 19.

[3.] Offence at John's boldness. His office was to humble and change

proud hearts, and he goeth about his work vigorously, therefore they

forsook him. I shall speak no more of this, because it will fall in

with the next head.

3. As to the time of Christ's being in the flesh. There were divers

prejudices concerning him, both in the Jews and in the Gentiles.

First, In the Jews. I will name the chief.

[1.] An erroneous opinion of the Messiah. The people thought he would

set up an earthly kingdom; they were weary of the Roman yoke, and

expected that he would free them from it. See an excellent place for

this, John vi. 14, 15, When the men had seen his miracles, they said,

This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. And

when Jesus saw that by force they would come and make him king, he

departed into a mountain alone.' They conceived he was able to gratify

their malice on their enemies, out of a hope, conceived from his

miracles, that he could maintain an army with very little cost. But

Christ would not hold by that tenure. He would be king of their hearts,

not of their lands. And therefore, being disappointed, they rejected

him. There is nothing prejudiceth a man more against a thing than a

false conceit of it. When we expect what we do not find in it, we

loathe it. The apostle calleth this knowing Christ after the flesh,' in

a pompous carnal way. This is to be noted, because we have such gross

conceits in our hearts, We expect Christ should serve us in our own

ends, as St Austin speaketh of those conceits he had of God when he was

a child--Sentiebam te esse magnum aliquem qui potes exaudire et

subvenire nos; et rogabam te parvus, non parvo affectu, ne in schola

vapularem. Such childish conceits have some entertained of Christ, they

could close with him to serve their covetousness, revenge, or

vain-glory. They look upon him as some great thing that should help

them.

[2.] A fond reverence of Moses and the prophets, as if it were

derogatory to them to close with Christ: John ix. 29, We are Moses'

disciples; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.' This

Christ confutes, John v. 46, If ye had believed Moses, ye would have

believed me.'

[3.] Offence at his outward meanness (that is the scope of this chap

ter), and the persecution he met with; the just judgment of God upon

them to fit them for destruction. Thus much for the Jews.

Secondly, As to the Gentiles, there were divers prejudices why they

would not believe the gospel when tendered to them.

[1.] Pride in the understanding. They were loth to captivate their

knowledge to the obedience of Christ, and to make their principles of

reason strike sail to the truth represented. Therefore, 1 Cor. i. 23,

it is said, Christ crucified' was to the Greeks foolishness.' It was a

foolish doctrine, because contrary to their forestalled principles.

This is to be noted by us also, because we are very unwilling to

receive anything but what cometh dyed in the colour of our own

conceits, and is suitable to our carnal minds.

[2.] The meanness of the reporters, poor fishermen; though sufficient

enough for the matter they took in hand by the Spirit's mighty

assistance, yet of no great repute and value in the world. God would

have the gospel commend itself to have a respect without the addition

of any outward excellency, and therefore he useth the ministry of mean

and weak men: Ps. viii. 6, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou

hast ordained strength.' God knoweth how prone the world is to close

with a truth upon a preposterous ground, not for its own sake; we

cannot endure to stoop to a mean man. That of Salvian is very true:

Omnia dicta tanti existimantur quantus est ipse qui dixit, nec tam

dictionis vim respiciunt quam dictatoris dignitatem. Men look to the

worth of the speaker. Any attempt at innovation or alteration must

needs be ill taken from them who are in the eye of the world very mean

and low, especially against such practices as have been authorised by

men of gravity and great judgment, countenanced by antiquity and long

custom, confirmed by the joint consent of all; for men to quit such

practices upon the intimation of persons of mean presence and estates,

it must needs be a great prejudice. As it is said, Paul's bodily

presence was base and contemptible among them, 2 Cor. x. 10. Therefore,

having so many lets in the way, well might the prophet cry out Who hath

believed our report?' It is good to observe this, because this is a

great prejudice against the entertaining of many of the truths of

Christ in our days: we have men's persons in disesteem and contempt.

[3.] The hard conditions upon which they were to entertain Christ. He

was not, as other of their gods, to be worshipped in company; he was to

be worshipped alone: they were to forsake all their old ways and

worship, and to abridge themselves of their unlawful gains and trades;

and this was a prejudice they could not brook: Acts xix. 27, If this

doctrine go on, our craft is in danger to be set at nought.' They were

to expose themselves to all the obloquy and scorn that could be. It was

crime enough to say they were Christians--Vir bonus nisi quod

Christianus. They were to be cast upon the disadvantage of the hatred

of near friends, upon all manner of persecution and cruelty, to be led

about the cities and amphitheatres as the objects of public scorn and

malice,--nay, and these things were not to be hidden from them, and

only the lighter and better part revealed to them,--if they would be

Christ's disciples. This is a prejudice enough, you will say, against a

new way,--enough to make the world look upon it as some odd, humorous

conceit of a few brain-sick persons, who had no other bait to allure to

their way but fire and faggot, whips and scourges; for the present they

would promise you nothing but these things. Well might they cry out,

Who will believe our report? God would have no outward blandishment at

first, that the truths of religion might not be suspected; and indeed

hence did so few believe, insomuch that the cause of Christianity never

came to an indifferent hearing; they hated the name, and would not let

it plead for itself. Thus for the Gentiles.

4. I come now to prove it in our times, or the time of the first

promulgation of the gospel. I might divide my discourse into these two

heads: Few believe the report of Christ, and few believe in Christ. I

prove the latter. We all profess ourselves Christians, disciples of

Christ, those that have entertained him,--but few do really believe.

The lets and hindrances now are these:--

[1.] Ignorance. Men hear of Christ, but are not acquainted with him;

many come to the ordinances, but only to sit out the hour, not to grow

in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. There is much in a man's ends why he

cometh to the ordinances: God seldom meets with a man in his word that

cometh to it with a vain end; if they do not seek after knowledge they

shall not find it. Many of the reports of Jesus Christ are lost upon an

ignorant people; they hear the name, and do not weigh the thing in

their thoughts; they look upon him as aliquem magnum--as some great

person that the preachers talk of, and go no further. Thousands are

damned this way through their ignorance they do not trouble their

thoughts about getting the knowledge of Christ in his word, they come

to the church and rest in that. There must be distinct apprehensions of

the report of Christ before faith, not only to hear the sound, but

weigh the sense: Rom. x. 14, How shall they believe in him of whom they

have not heard?' that is, not only the sound of his name, but heard so

as to weigh the doctrine that was delivered concerning him. This

affected ignorance is a great hindrance when men do not apply

themselves to knowledge; as it is, Prov. ii. 2, 3, Incline thine ear to

wisdom, and apply thy heart to understanding: yea, if thou criest for

knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding.' Many incline

their ears, but they do not apply their hearts to knowledge, weigh and

ponder what they hear; if they attend to it while it is spoken, they do

not consider it afterwards in their more serious thoughts, and ponder

it in their minds; and therefore no wonder they do not close with

Christ: Rom. iii. 11, There is none that understandeth, none that

seeketh after God.' That will necessarily follow, if they do not

understand Christ, they will not seek after him; a man will not value

an unknown good. This is one hindrance, gross and affected ignorance.

[2.] An easy slightness; men do not labour after faith. It is true our

diligence alone can never attain it, but yet we should use the means.

Men marry to beget children, yet it is impossible they should generate

a rational soul without the concourse of God. So we should do those

things that are likely, and leave the success to God: we should seek

after it. God will not violently withhold faith from those that are

diligent, that are much in meditation, much in earnest supplication,

much in observation, much in a continual and holy expectation, when

Jesus Christ will be begotten in their souls. God will not fail such a

waiting soul: Ps. cxxx. 6, My soul waiteth for God more than they that

watch for the morning; yea, more than they that watch for the morning.'

Such souls as are thus eager in the pursuit, and earnest in their

expectation, that would fain have Christ come and appear in their

hearts, may well expect God's blessing. But there is a great deal of

idle and easy tightness in men's hearts; they complain for want of

faith, yet they will not pray, meditate, hear, read; as if God should

infuse it into them in their sleep. It were an easy cut to heaven if

God should do all. What need had Christ to tell you, Strait is the

way'? And faith is called a work, not in regard of the toil of it, but

in regard of our diligence and intention of spirit. This is the work of

God, that ye should believe in him whom he hath sent.' It is a sign

people do not prize a thing when they do not labour after it. If men

thought Christ worthy of respect, they would not sit still, but take

pains in the seeking of him. The idle and evil servant are joined

together: Mat. xxv. 26, Thou wicked and slothful servant!' The wicked

will be slothful; and as idleness and sin are joined together, so

idleness and destruction: Prov. i. 32, Ease slayeth the fool,' so it is

in the margin, or, The turning away of the simple shall slay them.' Men

perish by resting in their slight wishes; they would have Christ, but

they would not take the pains to get him. Certainly a man valueth the

report of Christ at a low rate when he doth not think it worthy of a

few thoughts, and a little time to consider it. You know what Christ

saith, Mat. xi. 12, From the days of John the Baptist until now, the

kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by

force.' They close with the gospel, which is called the kingdom of God

there, that pursue it with a great deal of earnestness and fervour of

spirit. This is the next hindrance, an easy slightness.

[3.] A careless security. They are not won to believe in Christ,

because they think themselves well enough without him. Most cannot

endure to look beyond their present condition. A false heart is so far

from knowing the worst of its own condition, that it will not so much

as suppose a time will come in which it may be miserable. Oh! think

upon changes; rouse up your souls with the sense of your danger! If you

lull your souls asleep, you may awake in flames; even the gospel is

peremptory in this kind: Mark xvi. 16, He that believeth not shall be

damned.' It will not be always with you as now. Oh! cry out, then, Do I

believe? If men would not put away all thoughts of their eternal

condition, they would see a greater need of Christ than now they do.

What a strange thing is it to keep the thoughts of that from our heart,

which we cannot possibly deliver our souls from hereafter, to wit,

endless eternity!--to be witty to deceive our own souls, to invent

shifts that we may put far away the evil day! A man doth not care for

things till he wanteth them, no, not for the best things, the comforts

of Christ, the joys of the Spirit. While we have outward comforts we

care not for inward, because we have a false conceit that our comforts

will still continue with us: Luke xii. 19, Soul, thou hast much goods

laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' He

would not so much as suppose they might be taken from him that night. A

man's peace may be tried by this. Secure hearts cannot endure to think

of danger. Though believers think of danger, yet they think more of

Christ. They consider their misery, and so are directed to a remedy

against it. Others, though they cannot put away the evil day, they put

it out of their thoughts, and labour to make the most of the world they

can. Briefly, that security is a hindrance is plain, because the number

of believers is increased by those that have least to trust to in the

world, and so are necessarily engaged to a consideration of their

misery, and a want of something that may stand them in stead at the end

of their days: James ii. 5, Hath God not chosen the poor of this world

to be rich in faith?' And yet the poor may be secure; they have their

pleasures and vain thoughts to make them forget their sorrows.

[4.] A light esteem of Christ. As we do not see our own needs, so not

his worth. As the heart is, so it judgeth. A carnal heart valueth all

things by outward pomp and splendour. Such objects take as are most

excellent in the eyes of the world: Ps. cxliv. 15, Happy is the people

that is in such a case; yea, happy is the people whose God is the

Lord.' A man's temper may be discerned by his valuation of things;

carnal hearts cannot prize spiritual mercies. We prize those things

that are most suitable to our desires: 1 Peter ii. 7, To them that

believe Christ is precious.' He is an honour to them; they look upon

him as a most attractive object, and therefore their hearts move after

this loadstone. Everything is loved according to the suitableness and

proportion it bears to our desires. Therefore see how Christ is spoken

of by the faithful: Cant. v. 10, As the chiefest among ten thousand;'

He beareth the banner from ten thousand,' as Ainsworth rendereth it.

And in the 16th verse, He is altogether lovely.' But see what the world

judgeth of him: Isa. lii. 14, His visage was marred more than any man,

and his form more than the sons of men.' Look then to the value you

have for a thing, for from thence will arise your endeavours after it.

They that will be rich, are drowned and sunk in the cares of this

world, they are all for moiling and business. They that love pleasures,

their thoughts and the strength and vigour of their souls will run that

way. So for honourable preferment, they that seek after it will spend

all their thoughts about it. What a man valueth, it will be his work to

gain. Therefore this high esteem of Christ taketh off men from these

things, Acts xviii. 15, 16. He that thought the promulgation of the

gospel to be but a strife about words and names, cared for none of

these things.' This is the next hindrance; men that profess themselves

Christians, make the getting of Christ the least of their care.

[5.] A presumptuous conceit that we have entertained Christ already.

Many think every slight wish, every trivial hope, will serve the turn.

Many would be scholars, if they did not think themselves so too soon. I

would not weaken any man's confidence; I know it is our office to

establish it: The fruit of our lips is peace.' Isa. lvii. 19. But there

are those to whom our God will not speak peace. No peace, saith my God,

to the wicked.' Many wicked persons think it enough to be named

Christians. It is an advantage, I confess, to be born a Christian, but

to rest in it maketh it the greatest judgment that can be. People will

reason thus, Do not all believe in Christ? Oh, no. Thou mayest profess

Christ, and yet not believe in him. Many depend upon this that they are

Christians, as the Jews did that they were the seed of Abraham. I shall

touch upon this afterwards.

[6.] Hardness of heart. The mind will not stoop to Christ till it be

tamed. John Baptist, that was to prepare the way for Christ, was to

bring the mountains and hills low, Luke iii. 5. The heart must not only

be serious, but humbled, if it would entertain this doctrine. A man

must see his error before he will be willing to be governed by Christ,

and guided into a better way: Acts ii. 37, They were pricked at their

hearts before the apostle bid them repent, and be baptized in the name

of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.' The heart never yields

till it bleedeth with the sense of sin. We have been wrong, oh, what

course shall we take? There must be a conviction of sin before that of

righteousness. It is happy when both go together, John xvi. 9; so Acts

xvi. 30, 31. First, What shall I do to be saved?' Then comes, Believe

in the Lord Jesus Christ.' A man hath no reason to begin a new way till

he is convinced of the vanity of the old one. There must be at least so

much of humiliation as to make a man anxious and solicitous about a

better course. Well, then, here is another hindrance: a proud and

unmortified spirit, a hard heart; a man must get humbled, That you may

do so, examine your state by the law, and aggravate it by love. There

is some apprehension of love, some general consideration that precedeth

faith. You have done all this, and you have done it against a merciful

God, and indeed that is a keen argument to wound the spirit: Joel ii.

14, Rend your hearts, for God is merciful.' See your sins, and

aggravate them with unkindness. There is something in nature to make us

relent, when we have done wrong to a kind person, that, for aught we

know, meant better to us. But of this more by and by.

[7.] Self-confidence. When men's consciences are troubled, they would

fain get them eased. Those that are so greedy after quiet and peace,

rather than holiness and grace, usually ease themselves in a wrong way;

they fly to a few outward duties, or to some slight resolutions for

God, and there rest. It is better to keep the conscience raw a while

than to skin it over too soon; that will make the wound fester and

rankle. Most desire ease too soon, they consult and contrive suddenly

how they may ease themselves of that pain and horror that is upon them,

and so vainly rest in the way of their own thoughts. A man should not

look to be eased of grief till he find himself fitted for holiness,

that he may not be engaged to the like grief again; otherwise we shall

but stop the grief rather than cure it. We must be directed to a better

course, and that must be only by Jesus Christ. It is a sign we are

guilty of this self-confidence when we resolve upon a better life, and

do not think how unable we are for it. Great resolutions are always

vain, unless joined with the consideration of our own weakness. The

people of God have promised much, but always it is with the concurrence

of Christ. The apostle saith, Phil. iv. 12, I can,' or will do all

things,' but it is through Christ.' David promiseth, Ps. cxix. 32, I

will run the ways of thy commandments;' but he addeth, when thou shalt

enlarge my heart.' There are divers such places in scripture. We walk

in the strength of our resolutions when we do not see a need that

Christ should help us, that we may not walk in the same ways of error

and maze of misery again.

[8.] Carnal fears. These hinder the soul from closing with that mercy

that is reported to be in Christ. They are of divers sorts.

(1.) Fear of God's anger, as if he were so displeased with us that

certainly he did not intend Christ for us. Why, consider, the more

angry God is, the more need there is to fly to his mercy. His mercy is

as infinite as his wrath, nay, I may say more infinite: Ps. cxxxviii.

2, Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;' that is, God's

promise in Christ is greater than all other things by which he hath

made himself known. Christ was an instance of infinite wrath and

infinite mercy at the same time, but rather of infinite mercy. Nay; to

clear all, God expressly saith, Anger is not in me.'

(2.) Fear of being too bold with the promises. Take heed of

complimenting with God. A man cannot be too bold where he is so freely

invited: Mat. xi. 28, Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy

laden.' You are unworthy to believe, but God is worthy to be obeyed.

And this is his commandment,' 1 John iii. 3, That we should believe in

the name of Jesus Christ.'

(3.) Fear of the sin of presumption. Oh! they shall presume too much. A

man doth not presume if he knoweth his own danger; if he be lost to

himself and his own apprehension, it is pity he should be lost to God

too. Presumers are seldom troubled about their estate; it is enough to

disturb a false peace so much as to suspect it. There can be no

presumption where there are no slight thoughts of sin and mercy. The

mind cannot presume when it is serious.

[9.] Carnal reasonings from our sins. They are arguments of confidence,

but not of dejection: Ps. xxv. 11, Pardon my sin, for it is great.' If

so, it is the better for God to pardon. Sins should not hinder a man

from duty. It is your duty to believe. The sense of sickness will cause

us to make use of the physician. You cannot see anything in sin, but

you may see more in Christ. Not greatness: Ps. lvii. 10, Thy mercy is

great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.' Not number:

Rom. v. 16, The free gift is of many offences unto justification.'

[10.] And lastly, carnal apprehensions of Christ. We will believe no

more to be in God than we find in ourselves: 1 Sam. xxiv. 19, Who

findeth his enemy, and slayeth him not? will he let him go well away?'

The soul in all her conclusions is only directed by premises

experimental and of sensible apprehension. We think God is but as man;

we are used to the dispositions of men, and therefore cannot believe

there is anything more in God: Ps. l. 22, Thou thoughtest I was

altogether such an one as thyself.' But remember, God is not a man,

that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent,'

Num. xxiii. 19; and Hosea xi. 9, I will spare Ephraim, for I am God,

and not man;' so Isa. lv. 8-10, My thoughts are not your thoughts,

neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: For as the heavens are

higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my

thoughts than your thoughts:' Jer. iii. 1, If a man put away his wife,

and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return to her

again? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return

unto me again, saith the Lord.'

Use 1. Is by way of information. It informeth us of divers truths; as--

1. That the paucity or fewness of followers is no disgrace to a thing

or doctrine. The world followeth the multitude, as if the way to

religion were like that to a town, where there is the greatest track:

Luke xii. 32, Fear not, little flock,' mikro`n poi'mnion. Christ's

flock is a little flock. The world usually casteth that prejudice.

There may be but one Micaiah against four hundred false prophets.

2. It informeth us that the number of believers is not as large as the

number of professors: 2 Thes. iii. 2, All men have not faith.'

3. That it is a very difficult thing to believe, and therefore so few

attain it.

Use 2. Is by way of examination. If but few are won to believe this

report, examine yourselves--Are you of the number? Are you of the

number of those that are won by the preaching of the word to believe in

Christ? I will name a few effects:--

1. If so, you will find this persuasion melting you: Zech. xii. 10, I

will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of

Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication: and they shall look

upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one

mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one

that is in bitterness for his first-born.' God and the soul come

together just as Saul and David: 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, Saul lift up his

voice and wept; Is this thy voice, my son David?' Thus the soul, Oh!

didst thou love me so, O Lord my God?

2. You will find it teaching you a way to resist sin. You could not

tell how to prevail against it before, now you have a cutting argument

against it: Titus ii. 11, 12, The grace of God, that bringeth

salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying all

ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and

godly in this present world.' Now you are taught to gainsay sin.

3. You will find it quickening you to good: 2 Cor. v. 14, The love of

Christ constraineth us.' Such melting commands and commanding

entreaties have a powerful influence to that effect: I am crucified

with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:

and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the

Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.'

I shall now come to the second point, namely--

II. That the gospel, or the report concerning Jesus Christ, is the arm

and power of God. Though it be our report, yet it is the arm of the

Lord. There is some controversy, as I hinted before, about what is

meant by the arm of the Lord; some applying it to Christ, some to the

word. I rather incline to the latter; but it is good to observe, that

what is spoken of Christ, the same is spoken also of the word. Christ

is called the power of God,' 1 Cor. i. 24; and the gospel is called the

power of God,' 1 Cor. i. 18; Rom. i. 16; because in the word Christ is

made known, and his excellencies are displayed. And what is spoken of

the word is spoken of faith. Christ is revealed to the heart by the

word, and so he is likewise by faith.

But in what respect is the gospel the arm and power of God?

I answer:--

1. In respect of the sense and meaning of it, which is to be regarded

above the bare sound of the letters and syllables. Many make a charm of

the word of God, by applying some sentences of it to drive away

diseases in a way of exorcism and conjuration, or by coming to it in a

customary way, as if the mere hearing or reading of it were sufficient;

as if salvation were to be had by the bare hearing of it: John v. 39,

Search the scriptures,' saith our Saviour, for in them ye think ye have

eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.' Dokeite en autais

zoen aionion, ye think ye have;' this is not barely a command, but a

reproof, otherwise Christ would have said ye shall.' He speaketh it to

the pharisees and hypocrites that had rejected him.

2. In regard it manifests the power of God. There are instances of

God's eternal power in the creatures, Rom. i. 20, but the great and

mighty instances of his power are discovered in the word. God showeth

his strength every day, but in the gospel he holdeth forth the man whom

he hath made strong for himself,' Ps. lxxx. 15, the branch or Son,

meaning Christ--though he is there speaking of the church's

afflictions: The vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the

branch that thou makest strong for thyself.'

3. It is said to be the arm and power of God, chiefly as it is a

glorious instrument in his hands, as a weapon that is managed by the

Spirit, which will work mightily indeed. It is observable that when

Isaiah speaketh of the word as pronounced by the prophets, he saith our

report; but as revealed by the Spirit, the arm of the Lord. You must

understand it as accompanied with the Spirit's efficacy: 2 Cor. x. 4,

The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God;' there lies its

force. So 2 Cor. iii. 6, Who hath made us able ministers of the new

testament: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.' He

calleth the law the letter, as it showeth what is to be done, but

ministereth no abilities. The letter killeth, leaveth us miserable, but

the gospel, accompanied with the Spirit, is an efficacious instrument

to beget life in us; because all the efficacy thereof depends upon the

Spirit, therefore, in opposition to the law, it is called spirit.

4. It is called the arm and power of God, because in one sense it

worketh much even upon those on whom it has the least effect. It is

powerful to their destruction, if not to their salvation: Heb. iv. 12,

The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged

sword.' It is the savour of death unto death,' if not of life unto

life.' It is not a dead letter even there where it cannot obtain the

least entrance into the heart; it bindeth them over to judgment, if it

cannot force them over to obedience. It is a heavy arm of God to the

wicked; if they be not converted, they are judged, by the word. An arm,

you know, is used in scripture in both senses, to protect friends, and

to destroy enemies; and to that purpose it is said of God by the

Psalmist: Ps. lxxxix. 13, Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thy hand,

and high is thy right hand.' This mighty power of the word appears

divers ways.

[1.] It troubleth sinners. The power of the gospel awakeneth their

consciences, for fear of which they cannot so freely run into such

excess and outrage as otherwise they would, Acts xxiv. 25. When Paul

reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix

trembled.' When a guilty conscience is touched, it is enraged: Acts

vii. 54, When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and

gnashed on him with their teeth.' It causeth a tumult in the soul of a

guilty creature; if nothing else, the word worketh such a trouble in

them, that they cannot be at rest in their minds.

[2.] It worketh some faint resolutions in sinners to look after Christ:

Acts xxvi. 28, Thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian.' They have

much ado to put off the force of the word, and therefore are even won

by it. It argueth a mighty power in the gospel, that it can put a

wicked man on acting, though weakly, against the bent and inclination

of his evil heart. And it is some argument of the divine power in the

gospel, that men are brought thereby to wish and resolve against their

evil practices, though they will not leave them.

[3.] It judgeth them, it bindeth them over to eternal punishment; as it

is said, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, of the unbeliever, He is convinced of all, he

is judged of all;' that is, his sentence is passed upon him in the

word: John iii. 18, He that believeth not is condemned already;' that

is, the power of the word is passed upon him: Mark xvi. 16, Go preach

the gospel to every creature; he that believeth not shall be damned.'

That is the peremptory sentence of the gospel.

[4.] It punisheth them, the arm of God is upon them. It is said to the

stubborn Jews, Zech. i. 6, But my words and my statutes, which I

commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your

fathers?' Mark, not so much the wrath and vengeance of God, as the

prophet's words. So it is said, 1 Kings xix. 17, It shall come to pass,

that he that escapeth the sword of Hazael, shall Jehu slay: and he that

escapeth from the sword of Jehu, shall Elisha slay.' So Hosea vi. 5, I

have hewed them by my prophets: I have slain them by the words of my

mouth.' So much for the determination of this point.

To prove it now, it will appear by two things:--

1. By the uses for which God did appoint it.

2. By the glorious effects of it, suitable to those ends of God. I

shall handle both together.

Let us consider the uses for which God did appoint the publication of

the gospel, and certainly you will then say it is the arm of the Lord.

God's designs by the preaching of the gospel are either public or

private.

First, Public, which are--

1. To purchase and gain the world for a kingdom and an inheritance for

Jesus Christ.

2. To conquer all the enemies of Christ.

Secondly, Private, so it is to convert souls. The appointment of the

gospel for these ends showeth there is the arm of God in it.

First, Public, which are--

1. To purchase the whole world for a kingdom and an inheritance for

Jesus Christ. This is the main end of the gospel, and therefore it is

called, Ps. cx. 2, The sceptre and rod of Christ's strength.' The

gospel is the sceptre of Christ; it was by the word that he was to sway

the nations; and so Mat. xiii. 19, it is called the word of the

kingdom.' Now, how should a man purchase a kingdom but by his arm?

Great enterprises require proportionable strength, and therefore such a

glorious design as this necessarily calleth for the arm and power of

God. That this reason may have its due force on you, do but consider

what it is to purchase the world for Christ, and what prejudices and

difficulties there are against it that must be overcome.

[1.] The report of Jesus Christ was a despised truth. If a man would

win others to his conceits and opinions, policy requireth that he

should make them as plausible as he can. It is difficult to win a

people from their old religion, though a new one that is proposed be

never so agreeable to reason. But now, when this is utterly

inconsistent with our former apprehensions and notions about religion,

the mind riseth against it; it stoppeth all further inquiry after the

truth of it. Now such was the report of Jesus Christ to all the world:

you may divide them into Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were to be brought

off from their fond esteem of Moses and the prophets; the Gentiles were

to be won from their old vain religions, received by traditions from

their fathers: and we well know by experience how ill changes in

religion are brooked in the world. But that was not all; they were to

leave their religion that they had so long professed, and to expect

(what they thought very absurd) eternal life and happiness by him whom

they looked on as an object of misery, and who suffered such a shameful

death himself: 1 Cor. i. 18, The preaching of the cross was to them

that perished foolishness.' It might well be so among them that

perished; the prejudice was as great among them that professed: Mat.

xxvii. 42, He saved others; himself he cannot save: if he be the king

of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in

him.'

[2.] It was given forth by despised persons. If a man would be

prevailed with by any, he would be by men of some repute and renown in

the world. But now, Ps. viii. 6, Out of the mouth of babes and

sucklings thou hast ordained strength.' If babes and sucklings could

prevail so much by the use of their mouths, certainly there is some

secret and invisible force in such doctrines, or else it would not

prevail for babes and sucklings to speak so prevailingly as Christ

promised: Luke xxi. 15, I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all

your adversaries shall never be able to gainsay nor resist.' So much

power in so much appearing weakness argueth a divine arm.

2. The next end was to conquer the enemies of Christ. To conquer their

minds, or destroy their bodies, the best weapon is the gospel,

especially to do the former. This is the ark that beats all the Dagons

in pieces. It is said, Isa. xi. 4, He shall smite the earth with the

rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the

wicked.' Mark, it is with the rod of his mouth; the gospel slayeth the

outward enemies, and the mists of error do inwardly vanish before this

sun. As--

[1.] The paganish rites and worship were forced to give place to it, as

the oracle of Delphos, which had voice enough left to proclaim its own

silence, and also that among the rocks of Sicily. But then--

[2.] As to antichristianism, God hath appointed the word to be a weapon

against it: 2 Thes. ii. 8, it is said, God shall consume them with the

spirit of his mouth, and with the brightness of his coming.' God

bloweth in the mouth of his ministers the force of their words against

Antichrist; it is the spirit or breath of his mouth. When the gospel

was a little revived by Luther, how many of his kingdom did Antichrist

lose? The goose-quill gave him a deadly wound, saith Beza; Rev. xi. 13:

when the witnesses had finished their testimony, the tenth part of the

city fell.' This is a most powerful engine to shake the strongholds of

that city, these blasts of the gospel. The great policy of that party

is to withhold people from the knowledge of the gospel. When Dr Day

discoursed with Stephen Gardiner concerning free justification by

Christ, saith he, O Mr Doctor, open that gap to the people, and we are

undone!' The more gospel there is discovered, the more Antichrist is

discovered. Free grace puts the foundation of that way out of course.

[3.] All lesser errors, like the little foxes, are slain by this sword.

Those that went greedily after Balaam and the doctrine of the

Nicolaitans, what doth God say to them? Repent, or I will come and

fight against thee with the sword of my mouth,' Rev. ii. 16; that is,

with his word. That is punishment enough, to detect their errors by the

gospel. The sword is put for a powerful weapon; the sword in the mouth

showeth it was the word; God's appointing it to these great uses

argueth there is a divine power in it.

Secondly, Private; and that is to convert souls: Ps. xix. 7, The law of

the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' This is such a difficult

work that it must needs require a divine power. That this may be of use

to you, I shall show you what a difficult thing it is to convert a

soul, there being so many obstacles and hindrances against it, and yet

the word is the only fit instrument to overcome them.

1. There is Satan, who is strong. The devil hath great power to possess

the hearts of wicked men; he is said to work in the children of

disobedience.' Eph. ii. 2. Those frequent possessions in Christ's time

were a discovery of that spiritual thraldom in which the heart of man

is engaged whilst in the service of the devil: 2 Tim. ii. 26, That they

may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken

captive by him at his will.' As violent tempests whirl things at their

pleasure, so doth he our blinded understandings and crooked wills. We

are taken of the devil in his snare, to be led about at his will and

pleasure. Well, then, no power but that of God can set us free; it must

be by the mighty ministry of his arm. The strong man will hold fast

till he be cast out by a stronger than he, Luke xi. 22. It is not so

easy dispossessing the old man, and to turn from the power of Satan to

the power of God.

2. The perverseness of man's heart. The chief hindrances there are

these:--

[1.] Subtle evasions, crafty pretences, whereby to evade and escape the

power of the word: Heb. iv. 12, Piercing even to the dividing asunder

of soul and spirit.' The soul is that faculty wherein the affections do

reside; the spirit is the reasoning power; it discovereth the closest

affections of the heart, and the most secret plots and devices of the

spirit; it telleth the heart how it cleaveth to sin, and the mind how

it plotteth pretences to hide it. The mind and spirit conspire

together.

[2.] Crafty disputes and reasonings. There are great and many perverse

debates in our hearts against the things of God; therefore the apostle

expresses the power of the word thus: 2 Cor. x. 5, 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.' It demolisheth all carnal reasonings, and

convinceth of truth. Then--

[3.] Swelling lusts. To tame these, nay, to set up the work of grace

instead of these, must needs argue a divine hand. It is a hard matter

to break the course of any inclination, much more of a rooted

affection; to break the very course of nature; to turn lions into

lambs, as it is said, The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the

leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion

and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.' There

shall be such a wonderful change, that the violence and turbulency of

the affections shall be done away. To make the filthy and intemperate

to become chaste and sober, and to make the proud to become humble,

argueth the great power of God. Thus you see how it overcometh

difficulties.

But now observe how powerfully and wonderfully the word worketh this.

It is not by a fond conceit and opinion of it in the minds of men: The

simple believeth every word,' as it is said in the Proverbs; and some

weak persons may be easily awed into a scrupulous fear. But, on the

contrary--

(1.) It hath wrought upon them that have been cast upon it unawares,

that looked for no such thing. The apostle saith of unbelievers: 1 Cor.

xiv. 24, And there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned; he

is convinced of all, he is judged of all,' if he be by chance put upon

the ordinances. Thus we read in the story of Austin and of Firmus, who,

though they looked for nothing less, yet were wrought upon, and

converted to God.

(2.) Those that came with a mind to despise the word have been won by

it. The unbeliever that cometh in falleth down on his face, 1 Cor. xiv.

25. It may bring men that have wrong conceits of the ways of God on

their faces, and to say, God is in them of a truth.'

Use 1. Is exhortation. And that--

1. To ministers. Is the gospel the arm and power of God? Then--

[1.] Be not ashamed of it, but preach it boldly. St Paul saith, Rom. i.

16, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.' Many are ashamed of the

naked simplicity of the gospel, and therefore hanker the more after

profound parts and human learning. You must imitate Christ; preach

boldly, as having authority from him.

[2.] Wait for the success of it. Doubt of success is a great

discouragement, and taketh off the wheels of a man's ministry. Refer it

to God; it is his own arm, if it cannot be mighty through us, it will

be mighty through God: Jer. i. 9, I have put my words in thy mouth.' It

is a great lesson of holy wisdom, if we could learn it, to mind duty,

and refer the success to God.

[3.] To dispense it faithfully; not to use God's arm for our own ends.

There is a preaching the gospel out of envy, Phil. i. 16. This is a put

ting God in a servility to our designs, a prostituting of the greatest

power to the vilest uses, an embasing a thing beneath its office.

[4.] To dispense it so as to look to the Spirit to make it effectual;

not to think to make it work by our own fancies: 1 Cor. ii. 4, My

preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in

demonstration of the Spirit and of power.' A minister may be apt to be

too full of self. The old Adam may be too hard for young Melancthon. It

is said of Christ, Luke xxiv. 32, that he opened the scriptures;' and

ver. 45, Then he opened their understandings, that they might

understand the scriptures,'

2. To the people.

[1.] To all in general.

[2.] To those to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed and made known.

[1.] To all in general: to press them to see God in his word. Many see

no more than what is of man, and therefore are not wrought upon by it.

The power of God is veiled under our weakness: 1 Thes. ii. 13, Ye

received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of

God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' But what is

it to receive it as the word of God?

I answer--It is to receive it:--

(1.) With reverence. It is a description of God's people that they

tremble at his word,' Isa. lxvi. 2, 5. Do not slight it as if it were

but a little sound poured out into the air.

(2.) Look up unto God, and wait upon him for this power to be let into

your hearts. See that, besides the report, you have a discovery of

God's power and arm. Do not rest contented with enjoying the word till

you feel the power of God making it effectual on your hearts. Oh, be

careful lest it should work upon you the wrong way, and prove the

savour of death unto death! As the people waited^for the angel's

stirring of the waters, so do you for the Spirit's motion. Man's voice

can but pierce the ear: Cathedram habet in coelis qui corda docet, God

only can reach the heart.

(3.) Receive it into your hearts, open your souls for it with such a

resolution as is expressed, Acts x. 33, We are all here present before

thee, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' Then it is a

sign we are willing to take home the message to ourselves.

(4.) Let not your thoughts rest in the abilities of the minister, if

your hearts be touched: Acts iii. 12, Peter answered unto the people,

Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly

upon us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to

walk?' It is not our report, but God's arm; we are but the instruments,

his arm must do the work.

[2.] To those to whom the arm of the Lord is made known, two duties I

shall exhort them unto:--

(1.) To behold and admire the power of God working in them for their

salvation: Eph. i. 19, That ye may know the exceeding greatness of his

power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty

power.' A man doth not know the excellency of this power till he takes

a review of it. Man can better observe such experiences when past, when

he seeth and feeleth such a power of God upon his soul.

(2.) To walk worthy of it in their conversation;--to walk so as a man

may perceive the power of God hath passed upon him: 1 Peter ii. 9, That

you should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of

darkness into his marvellous light.' Inward holiness is expressed by

the power of godliness. Take heed of having a form of godliness but

denying the power thereof. Oh, do not carry it as if there were no

power passed upon you!

Use 2. Is of examination. See whether any of this power hath passed

upon your hearts. Have you ever felt the power of the Spirit in the

ordinances, that will convince of sin, of righteousness, and of

judgment?

1. Hath it powerfully humbled you for sin? There is the power of the

word seen to bring men upon their faces, and to make them lay their

mouths in the dust, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. The first work is to humble the

heart and to subdue the pride of it.

2. Is it powerful to comfort and refresh the soul? Every man hath not

comfort, but every man that hath it can tell which way it cometh: Ps.

xciv. 19, In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts

delight my soul.' What is the refreshment of your hearts? Is it not the

power of God's Spirit? When a man is in distress, it is known what he

maketh his trust in: then we shall see what our heart fetcheth comfort

from. Do you look upon gospel comforts as powerful? John xvi. 33, In

the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have rest; be

of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'

3. Is it powerful to enable to holiness? You will then be able to gain

upon your lusts more, they will not be so pleasing to you: Ps. cx. 3,

Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power.' You will

be made ready to duty, and be more cheerful in God's service, when the

power of the word hath passed upon you.

I now proceed to the last point observable in this verse, which is:--

III. That none believe the report that is made of Jesus Christ, but

those to whom it is revealed by the Spirit.

It is meant of an inward revelation; though it were outwardly

proclaimed in their ears, yet the power of the report was not secretly

conveyed into their hearts. The arm of the Lord was not revealed to

them. Or thus:--

The cause why so few are won to believe in Jesus Christ is because they

have not the Spirit's revelation.

This I shall prove to you by these reasons:--

1. Because without the Spirit's revelation all the outward tenders and

reports^of Jesus Christ will be to no purpose. The efficacy of the word

lieth in the Spirit's assistance. I told you in the former point how

powerful the word of God is, but withal I told you it was when the

Spirit sets it home upon the heart. God may knock at the door and yet

no man open to him; and, therefore, he speaketh by way of supposition,

if he doth but barely knock: Rev. iii. 20, Behold, I stand at the door

and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in

to him and sup with him, and he with me.' It is put upon an if: it is a

great peradventure whether any man will open the door or no, when it is

but a bare knock of the word. The spouse pleadeth excuses when Christ

stood and knocked, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my

undefiled,' Cant. v. 2; but in the 4th verse it is said, My beloved put

in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for

him;'--that signifieth the working of his Spirit, and then she opened.

Men would fain take one nap more in sin when they are roused by the

ministry; but when God puts his fingers upon the handles of the lock,

Christ hath an admittance and the door then flieth open: Acts xi.

19-21, The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed

and turned to the Lord.' God's hand was upon the lock. If the word be

anywhere spoken of as powerful, it is in reference to the Spirit, as 1

Thes. i. 5, Our word came unto you not in word only, but also in power

and in the Holy Ghost;' therefore in power, because in the Holy Ghost.

2. Because the Spirit's revelation is the token of God's special love;

and that is not given to every one: God has appointed his special love

but for a few. The outward revelation is to leave men without excuse;

it is but a token of God's common love: 2 Cor. iv. 3, If our gospel be

hid, it is hid to them that are lost--hidden from their hearts, though

it be revealed to their ears. Those that are lost have not the inward

discoveries--that is, the effectual discovery and special effect of

God's peculiar love: Acts xiii. 48, As many as were ordained to eternal

life believed;' such have God's special love. Those that have least

have many times an outward revelation: Acts xiv. 17, God left not

himself without a witness, in that he did good;' yet, ver. 16, he

suffered them to walk in their own ways.' They had a revelation, but

they had not an efficacious revelation. And in this sense it is said,

that many are called but few are chosen,--many are invited and few

wrought upon. They have the doctrine of life propounded to them, but

they have not the Spirit of life setting it home upon their hearts; few

taste of God's special love.

3. Because the least of Christ that is made known to the soul is made

known by the Spirit; even common illumination, any slight taste of the

doctrine of life, it cometh from the Spirit. Those that apostatised

afterwards are said, Heb. vi. 4, to be made partakers of the Holy

Ghost.' A historical persuasion of the truth of the articles of

religion flows hence. There are some things like this inward effectual

revelation in the hearts of wicked men, namely, some notional

irradiations and illuminations in many profound mysteries of the

scripture. In this sense is that place to be understood: 1 Cor. xii. 3,

No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed;' and that,

No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.' Even

their common illumination and profession that Jesus is the Lord was

from the Holy Ghost. And so that, Mat. xvi. 16, 17, Thou art Christ,

the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered, Flesh and blood hath not

revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' He did not

learn this from nature, but from a revelation. Even, I say, a notional

apprehension of these truths, without any fiducial assent given to

them, is from the manifestation of the Spirit, and, therefore, much

more is this the cause of believing.

4. Because there is so much corruption in a man that hindereth the soul

from believing in Jesus Christ, that it cannot be done away without the

Spirit's manifestation. There is a double seat of this corruption--the

mind and the heart. First, In the mind there is ignorance and

unteachableness. Secondly, In the heart there is obstinacy and

carelessness; which things cannot be conquered any otherwise than by

the Spirit of God. Let us look upon these things severally. Consider a

man naturally as he is:--

[1.] In his mind; and so--

(1.) There is ignorance; he hath no savoury apprehension of the truths

of God: 1 Cor. ii. 14, The natural man receiveth [not the things of the

Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know

them, because they are spiritually discerned.' There is no suitableness

between the heart and the things of Christ; and, therefore, though they

understand the words, they have confused apprehension of the thing, and

cannot tell what to make of them for their comfort and peace. These

sottish conceits in the minds of men prepossess them against the

receiving of Jesus Christ. They are like leaky vessels that cannot hold

this precious liquor; the cockleshell of their brains cannot empty this

ocean. A natural man hath abundance of confused, indistinct, indefinite

conceits of Jesus Christ. Festus said, Acts xxv. 19, That the Jews and

Paul had a controversy about their own superstitions, and of one Jesus,

that was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive;' as if it were no more.

And the like conceits are to be found not only in him but in all

natural men. They do but look upon him as Austin in his infancy said he

did upon God, Tanquam aliquem magnum--as some great remedy against all

evils. Now these conceits, though they be a little rectified in some by

pregnancy of wit, ripeness of experience, and industrious meditation,

yet no savoury knowledge, nor wisdom to salvation, can be fetched out

of these divine truths but by the Spirit. We cannot learn Christ, as

the apostle speaketh. A man may know Christ, but he hath not learned

Christ, Eph. iv. 20. That supposeth a teacher, which is the Spirit of

God: John vi. 45, They shall all be taught of God.' The Spirit teacheth

us Christ, so as to have communion and fellowship with him--to fetch

comfort out of him; and this helpeth our natural light, and doth indeed

set off Christ to us: Job xxxii. 8, There is a spirit in man, and the

inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.' Then we begin

to look upon Jesus Christ with a true and distinct eye. A man may have

eyes, but if he have not light he cannot see well, nor discern the

distinct shape of things. Light must come to light;--first the light of

the sun or candle to the light of the eye. Thus our reason must be

helped to fasten upon divine truths so as to fetch comfort out of them.

Thus ignorant men cannot tell what to make of the promises of the

gospel or the commandments of the gospel, what to think of Christ or

what to believe. Therefore, it is said, 1 Cor. ii. 10, The deep things

of God' are revealed to us by his Spirit;' that giveth us the knowledge

of the truth and worth of them.

(2.) Unteachableness. We are not only in the dark, but blind; we have

not only lost the use, but the faculty: 1 Cor. ii. 14, The natural man

receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness

unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually

discerned.' We have no spiritual eyes, and therefore we cannot see

spiritual things. Things are apprehended by us according as they carry

a proportion and suitableness to our hearts. Now our hearts are so

gross that we cannot measure truths by them. This unteachableness

remaineth in the soul till the Spirit disposes it to knowledge; and

therefore St Paul prayeth, Eph. i. 17, 18, That God would give them the

Spirit of wisdom and revelation r and open the eyes of their

understanding'--take away the scales, And so you read, Luke xxiv. 29,

That Christ opened their understanding;' i.e., made it teachable. The

word is not only proposed to them to rectify their apprehensions of

Christ, but their minds are opened; which implieth, that as they had no

light, so they had closed eyes, a wicked mind as well as a weak mind, a

mind disaffected, prejudiced, full of corrupt principles and reasonings

that are advanced the truth. [8]

[2.] In the heart there is carelessness and stubbornness. And

therefore, as God must teach their minds, so he must draw their hearts;

as it is said, John vi. 44, No man cometh unto me, except the Father

draw him.' The power of the Spirit must be put forth into the soul to

bend it to Christ.

Let us take notice of these two evils.

(1.) Carelessness. Men slight Christ, and then they are not won to

believe in him. This carelessness cometh from two things:--

(1st.) A love of ease. Men cannot think of Christ without reluctancy,

and they are loth to put themselves to the trouble. When the spouse is

lodged in the bed of security, see how she pleadeth: I have put off my

coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile

them?' A carnal, careless heart, that loveth ease, sticketh at every

little hesitancy and vain excuse. In hot countries, where they went

barefoot, they were wont to wash their feet after travel. They are loth

to arise to entertain Christ for fear of trouble and loss to

themselves: Prov. xx. 4, The sluggard will not plough because of the

cold.' Many do not care for Christ, because it will cost them some

pains and care to pursue after him. They must follow him through so

many prayers, meditation, and observation, that they had rather sit

still. There is need of a great deal of revelation to make the soul

seriously to attend. The spouse fainted, Cant. v. 6, when Christ put

his finger into the key-hole of the lock: Then I rose up and opened to

my beloved, and my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone; my soul

failed when he spake.' When he beginneth to touch the wards of the

heart, all idle excuses vanish, then nothing but Christ will satisfy

the heart. So Acts ii. 37, When they were pricked in their hearts, then

they cried out, Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Men that are not

converted indulge their vain thoughts and excuses still; but when that

is once past, they cannot dally with salvation any more: Acts xvi. 30,

the jailer saith Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' Oh, tell me

quickly, it can brook no delay!

(2dly.) Doting upon other excellencies. One love, like a nail, driveth

out another, A man slighteth a thing when the stream of his affections

are carried another way. Some had a farm, some a yoke of oxen, some had

married a wife, some one excuse, some another; but. they all said, I

cannot come.' Men are severally taken up, either with honours, or

profits, or pleasures; but all keep from Christ. Therefore there is

need of the Spirit's revelation, to display the beauties of Christ

before the soul, that they may see that there is more in this beloved

than in other beloveds, Cant. v. 9; that so the force of our ill

affections may be broken, and the stream of the heart diverted another

way, and brought about to Christ. This is that which is desired in that

request, Draw me; we will run after thee,' Cant. i. 4; that the Spirit

would display the glory of Christ to the soul, that we may look upon

him as an attractive object, and so find our hearts and our desires

following after him. Thus for carelessness.

(2.) Stubbornness of heart, that is another thing. There is a

wilfulness in men; they will not believe, because they will not

believe. Men will not close with Jesus Christ; God showeth them the

way, and they contemptuously reject it: John v. 40, Ye will not come

unto me, that ye might have life.' Christ inviteth men by the gospel:

Come unto me, all you that are weary and heavy laden;' and they will

not come; there is no answer in the heart to God's call because of this

stubbornness of spirit. But now, when gospel invitations are seconded

with the Spirit's motions, they command their own entrance into the

soul, the heart submits to the way that God revealeth for its good. The

heart, like a quick, strong echo, returneth the full answer of gospel

demands: Ps. xxvii. 8, When thou saidst unto me, Seek ye my face, my

heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek;' Zech. xiii. 9,I will say, It

is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.' So much for the

proof of the point.

I shall answer a doubt or two before I go on to the application.

The doubts are these:--

1. If the want of the Spirit's revelation be the cause why so few

believe, how can God be just in punishing men for their unbelief, since

he doth not give them all a like revelation?

I answer--Two ways: First, From God's sovereignty: Exod. xxxiii. 19, I

will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have mercy on

whom I will have mercy;' so Rom. ix. 15, 16. God's will is the measure

of his actions, as the moral law is the measure of our actions. That is

a rule to us, not to God; he giveth no account of his matters, he

acteth out of infinite sovereignty, and so he may do what he pleaseth

Who shall set a task for him? Mat. xi. 25, 26, I thank thee, O Father,

Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise

and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so. Father,

because it seemed good in thy sight.' That is the upshot of all, and

the result of all disputes about it: Even so, Father, because it

pleaseth thee.' He doth not tell you for what cause it pleased the

Father; but even so it pleased him, as if that were reason enough: it

is just because it pleased the Father. You are not to be judges of

God's actions, but doers of his will. God made you not to censure him,

but to give him glory. The pattern of all justice is to be copied out

from God's will; it is just because God did it.

Secondly, The beauty of God's justice shineth in this, in that the

positive cause of unbelief--

[1.] Is in ourselves, it being through our own blindness and

stubbornness. We will not come to him that we may have life.' Hosea

xiii. 9, O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.'

God is the positive cause of faith, the privative cause of unbelief.

The Spirit's revelation worketh faith; but in case of the want of it,

our own perverse hearts are the cause of unbelief. If the earth be

light, it is from the sun; but if it be dark, it is through the want of

the sun, that is from itself: 2 Cor. iv. 3, If our gospel be hid, it is

hid to them that are lost.' It is to those that take a course to ruin

themselves.

[2.] Men do not their utmost, and therefore are justly punished,

because they did not what they were able to do to get faith. He is

justly condemned that complaineth of the length of the way, and

therefore doth not stir one foot to see whether he shall conquer it,

yea or no: Mat. xxv. 26, Thou wicked and slothful servant.' Many

complain, as if God required brick and gave no straw. They are wicked

and slothful; they do not what they should. Men had rather accuse God

than reflect upon their own idleness; they will not come to him.

[3.] They abuse their parts, and are so far from improving of them to

the utmost, that they employ them against God: Jude 10, What they know

naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.' So

2 Peter ii. 12, it is said, They utterly perish in their .own

corruptions.' There is wickedness enough in them to cause the wrath of

God to proceed against them. This is the first doubt.

2. The next is (which is somewhat answered out of this) if this

because--viz., the want of the Spirit's revelation--Why then should we

labour after faith? Our labour will not do without the revelation of

the Spirit..

Ans. [1.] We should labour after it, to see our own weakness, that we

may look up to God the more earnestly for it. Men think it is easy to

believe till they put themselves upon the trial. They do not see a need

of the Spirit till they perceive the fruitlessness of their own

endeavours: If thou appliest thy heart to understanding, and criest

after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou

seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hidden treasure; then

shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of

God,' Prov. ii: 3-5.

[2.] That we may manifest our obedience to God, and meet him in his own

way. He hath commanded us to believe; let us do what we can towards it.

Improve your natural abilities, and use the means that God hath

appointed, and refer the success to him: Luke v. 5, Master, we have

toiled all night, and catched nothing; nevertheless, at thy command I

will let down the net.' Consider God's prerogative over you, and make

the best of the power you have; and if for nothing else, yet at his

command perform thy duty. God hath enabled you to do somewhat, and he

may justly require you should do the utmost of it. Every man hath a

command over his locomotive faculty; he can choose whether he will come

hither or go thither. Every man can watch at the gates of wisdom,'

Prov. viii. 34, and wait at the posts of her door.' Therefore, let the

command of God enforce you to do what you can.

[3.] That you may manifest your desires after it. God doth not give

Christ to many, because they do not care for him. If a man did care for

a thing, he would endeavour after it. Excuses are always a sign of an

unwilling heart. Where the desires are vehement, they will not easily

be put by: Mat. xiii. 45, The merchant that found a pearl of great

price,' went and sold all that he might buy it.' Those that desire not

Christ, do not look upon him as a pearl of price; if they did, their

hearts would follow hard after him. Those that say they have no power,

it is to be feared they have no heart. It was the slothful person said,

There is a lion in the way,' Prov. xxvi. 13. Therefore strive after

faith, if for nothing else, yet to show that Christ is worth your most

earnest seeking and pursuit after him.

[4.] Because though by the using of means we do not get faith, yet

without the means we shall not have it. It is conditio sine qua non,

though not causa fidei: Rom. x. 14, How shall they believe in him of

whom they have not heard?' A man hath it not by hearing, nor for

hearing, yet he hath it not without hearing. There is not merit nor

efficacy in the means, and yet there must be the presence of them,

because it holdeth negatively, if ye do not use the means ye shall

never believe. The Spirit causeth faith, but it is by the word: see

that text, Acts xiii. 46, It was necessary that the word of God should

first have been spoken unto you; but seeing ye have put it from you,

and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the

Gentiles.' Men that refuse the means, pass the sentence of condemnation

upon themselves, they declare themselves to be those whom God will

judge to be unworthy of eternal life--unworthy, because they would not

seek after it. When the psalmist describeth desperate men, he

represents them to be such as reject the means: Ps. lviii.4, 5, They

are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken

to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.' The adder

stoppeth one ear with her tail, and the other lieth close upon the

ground. So wicked men, if they come to the ordinances, take care they

shall not prevail upon them; they are not diligent to attend to the

word.

[5.] It is very likely God will come in and meet with us if we seek him

in his own ways; and who would not venture upon a likelihood of safety

to come out of a certain danger? If you do not use the means, you are

sure to perish; if you do, you may be likely to obtain mercy; and

certainly it is the safest course to adventure upon these hopes. The

soul reasoneth in such a case just as the Aramites did: 2 Kings vii. 4,

If we enter into the city, there is the famine, we shall die there; if

we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come and let us fall into

the host of the Assyrians; if they save us alive, we shall live, and if

they kill us, we shall but die.' So if we continue in our sins, it is

death; if we neglect prayer, or hearing, or meditation, it is death;

though there be but an if of mercy, venture upon it, a little to keep

up the heart. Men near drowning will catch hold, though it be but of a

reed or a twig.

[6.] This is God's usual way, to meet those that seek him. The God of

Jacob would not have them seek his face in vain, Isa. xlv. 19, and Luke

xi. 9; though he would not arise and give as his friend, yet because of

his importunity, he will arise and give him. When the soul is

importunate with God thus, it is a sign of mercy, and it is through the

precedaneous efficacy of the Spirit. This earnestness after faith is

the first impression of the Spirit's efficacy. Thus I have answered the

doubts.

I shall now come to the application.

The first use is exhortation, to press you to divers duties; as--

1. To wait for the Spirit's motion and revelation. Do not look to the

words that are spoken, but how the Spirit giveth you the savoury sense

and meaning of them. They that were at the pool looked for the angel's

stirring of the waters; so do you look for the Spirit's revelation, to

see how the confusedness of your light and knowledge is done away. The

mind knoweth some things, but doth not know things as it should know

them. See how the Spirit giveth you satisfaction. If you would have

faith, your chief care is to attend the Spirit; and therefore, faith is

called by the Spirit's own name, the same Spirit of faith,' 2 Cor. iv.

13, because it is the faith of the Spirit.

2. Yield to it. Many are of an unteachable heart, they are not won by

the Spirit's allurements: Gen. ix. 27, God shall persuade (or enlarge)

Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem.' God shall allure the allurable.

Take heed you resist not the secret whispers and persuasions of God's

Spirit. There is a great deal of thwarting in the heart against it,

that God's Spirit, when it should allure, it is forced to dispute it;

and therefore God saith, Gen. vi. 3, My Spirit shall no longer strive

with men.' The Spirit convinceth us this is right, and then our

interests and vile affections set the heart a-disputing against it; and

we would fain put off these inward motions and checks of conscience.

Many of God's elected servants do very often resist those motions, so

that it were even just with God to cast them off, but that Christ's

word is passed: John vi. 37, All that my Father giveth me shall come to

me, and I will in no wise cast them out.' But as to reprobates, God

stayeth a great while with them too. No longer, implieth a long time,

even as long as he shall think fit, and then he leaveth them. Take heed

of these withdrawings.

3. Cherish it. Many have had strong resolutions, but they die away

without this. They have a great many previous workings of the Spirit,

as, much knowledge of the will of God, much sense of sin, fear of

punishment, many thoughts about their freedom and deliverance, some

hopes of pardon, some kind of care and desire; but then they drown

these things again by the cares and pleasures of this world, and so

they are to no purpose. This is called by the apostle quenching of the

Spirit,' 1 Thes. v. 19. Now, the Spirit is quenched two ways:--

[1.] When they do not blow up the coals, stir up the graces of God that

are in them, and labour to feed and cherish by prayer and meditation

these desires, which is the strengthening of the things which are ready

to die, Rev. iii. 2; when we do not labour to rouse up our selves, and

keep in the heat and warmth in our souls: Mat. xiii. 19, Then cometh

the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in their hearts.'

[2.] When they do as it were cast water on the Spirit's motion by the

return of their lusts. Men are apt to return to their old ways, after

these partial desires and partial care to get Christ; but 2 Peter ii.

21, It had been better for them not to have known the way of

righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy

commandment delivered to them.' Enraged lusts return the stronger, and

have the greater force upon the heart.

4. In case you have it, praise God for it. Oh, get largeness of heart

to conceive of this great privilege, to have Christ not only to be

revealed to you, but in you! There is a threefold ground of

thankfulness:--

[1.] In respect of yourselves, that God was not discouraged with your

often resistance of him, but that he should go on with his work: Isa.

lxvi. 9, Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth?' God

speaketh of the outward glory of his church, but it is also true of

grace in the hearts of his servants. Oh, how justly might God have

broken off and interrupted his design and purpose of grace and mercy,

and have given over such a stubborn heart as yours to the sway of its

lusts! As Elizabeth said, Luke i. 43, Whence is this, that the mother

of my Lord should come to me?' So whence is it that the Spirit of the

Lord should come to me, stubborn me? There should be such a reflection

upon our unkindness.

[2.] In respect of the freeness of the gift, that he should give his

Spirit to work faith in us so freely. Faith is expressed to be the gift

of God, Eph. ii. 8; Phil. i. 29, To you it is given to believe,' humin

echaristhe; you have it of the free grace of God. Flesh would fain

boast, and have these things in its own power, but you see, to you it

is given.'

J3.] In respect of others. That he should reveal himself unto you, not

unto others. What did he see in you more than in others, that he should

give you a token of his distinguishing love? Christ thanketh God for

the distinguishingness of it: Father, I thank thee, that thou hast

hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them

to babes,' Mat. xi. 26. And therefore we have the greater reason so to

do: John xiv. 22, How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us,

and not unto the world?' Thus you see what cause there is of

thankfulness on this threefold account.

Use 2. Is examination, to see whether you have closed with the report

of Jesus Christ or no. If you have closed with it aright, it is with

the Spirit's revelation, it is because you have been inwardly convinced

in your hearts of the truth of it. But how shall we know that we

believe in the report because of the Spirit's revelation, and that many

will say and every one crieth it up for a truth, that Jesus Christ came

to save sinners? I answer:--

1. The Spirit's revelations are distinct; it showeth the soul how

Christ will be received. Most men's knowledge of Christ is an in

definite knowledge; they know him in a confused, indistinct, indefinite

manner; they look upon him as a Saviour, but they do not look upon him

as commanding things contrary to their vile affections. Now the Spirit

revealeth him determinately, what he is, and upon what terms we must

take him.

2. It giveth men an experimental taste of Christ: 1 Peter ii. 3, If so

be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' They can speak of

what sweetness there is in Christ. Notional knowledge looketh upon him

as a man looketh upon a thing in the bulk. When a man hears a minister

talk of Christ, he taketh it up as a great and comfortable truth, but

he cannot speak out of experience. All Christians can speak out of

their desires, though not delights: Oh, come, taste and see how good

the Lord is!

3. The Spirit revealeth so as to influence us to obedience. Spiritual

li^ht is like that of the sun, it hath heat with it. But now it is

otherwise with notional irradiations, and common illuminations; the

heart is vain, and the conference conduceth to controversy, more than

to the conversion of others.

Use 3. The third and last use is to condemn all that false faith that

is in most people: they think they believe in Christ, whereas they

scarcely believe the report of him. True faith hath a true ground. Most

men have this in their thoughts, that there was such a person as

Christ; the preachers tell them so; the laws of the land and the

customs of the people are for it. Alas! most people are like wax, they

are fit to take the stamp and impression of any religion that is

bequeathed to them. They are not said so properly to believe, as to

have a superficial apprehension of the common report that is made

concerning such a thing. They have no more saving faith in Christ than

Turks and infidels, and have as little true love for him as the Jews

that crucified him. I cannot examine every false ground. I will give

you marks in general when you have it from any wrong ground; as--

1. When you take it up without weighing: Prov. xiv. 15, The simple

believeth every word, but the prudent man looketh well to his going.'

2. By your fickleness; when a man embraceth a thing upon wrong grounds,

he will leave it upon wrong grounds: Gal. i. 6, I marvel that you are

so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto

another gospel;' 2 Thes. ii. 2, I beseech you, brethren, be not soon

shaken in mind.'

3. By the dissonancy of our practice, and inconstant resolutions. This

is called, 2 Peter ii. 1, a denying Christ that bought us.' Though they

profess him in words, yet in deeds they deny him. It were better to

renounce the profession of Christ than to keep it with these

resolutions: Mat. vi. 31-33, Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what

ye shall drink, or wherewith ye shall be clothed; for after all these

things do the Gentiles seek; but seek ye first the kingdom of God, and

his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'

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[8] Qu. against the truth'?--ED.

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THE SECOND VERSE.

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of

a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see

him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

I AM now to make entrance upon the cause and ground of the Jews'

unbelief, namely, Christ's meanness and sufferings. His meanness is

described:--

1. In regard of his birth.

2. In regard of his manner of life, and outward appearance in the

world, which are the two things the prophet prosecutes in divers

expressions. I shall take notice of them in this and the following

verses.

My method shall be:--

1. To open the phrases to you as they lie in the order of the words.

2. To apply them to Jesus Christ, and to give you some helps for your

meditation.

3. Because Christ's life holdeth forth much matter of observation for

the guiding of our lives, I shall give some more general and practical

points, that so what is said of Christ may be useful for us.

First, For the phrases, and these respect:--

First, His birth and original; and here three expressions are to be

explained.

1. He shall grow up as a tender plant. What is meant by that? The

Septuagint (because the word for tender plant signifieth also a sucker)

have translated it os paidi'on. We have spoken of him as a sucking

child. But I conceive it is not put here to signify the infancy of

Christ, so much as the low and mean manner of the original that he

would take upon himself. He would be as a tender plant, not as a tall

tree full of limbs and branches. For it is usual in scripture to set

forth the several conditions of men by trees and plants: thus

Nebuchadnezzar's greatness and strength are represented, Dan. iv. 21,

22, by the tree whose leaves were fair, whose fruits were much, and the

branches thereof reaching to heaven and shading the earth. So the

Psalmist describes the wicked's prosperity, Ps. xxxvii. 35, I have seen

the wicked great in power, and spreading himself like a green

bay-tree.' And on the contrary, misery is expressed by the heath in the

desert, a low mean shrub, Jer. xvii. 6. So here, Christ's meanness and

poverty are held forth by a tender plant, newly sprouted forth, and

come up above the earth, which a man would tread upon rather than

cherish. And indeed it is observable that Christ is often represented

by the expression of a tender plant, or as a branch: thus Isa. xi. 1,

There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch

shall grow out of his roots.' I shall touch upon it again. So it is

said, Zech. iii. 8, I will bring forth my servant the branch.' So chap.

vi. 12, The man whose name is The Branch:' Jer. xxiii. 5, Behold the

days shall come that I will raise unto David the righteous branch;'

Jer. xxxiii. 15, Behold, I will cause the branch of righteousness to

grow up unto David.' And I conceive this expression holdeth forth two

things:--

[1.] Christ's present meanness, what he was in the world's eye, which

was no more than a branch or twig.

[2.] His future glory. He should be a tree: Ezek. xvii. 22-24, Thus

saith the Lord, I will also take of the highest branch of the high

cedar, and I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender

one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent; and it shall

bring forth boughs, and bear fair fruit, and become a goodly cedar; and

under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the

branches thereof shall they dwell.' Thus it was a tender plant, yet

such a one as might become a spacious and goodly tree.

2. A root out of a dry ground; that is, not only a tender branch, but a

branch that hath little verdure and freshness. But why a root? And why

out of a dry ground? The root does not come up, but the branches. I may

answer--Root is put figuratively, the cause for the effect, the root

for the sprigs; or else to denote the dryness of the branch; it was not

fresh and green: even like a root, or like heath in the wilderness,

which is a branch and root too. Or more properly it may be to show that

Christ is such a branch as that he is a root likewise. And I the rather

take notice of this, because the scripture doth so: Rev. v. 5, The Lion

of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the

book;' and chap. xxii. 16, I am the root and offspring of David.' Mark,

not the branch, but the root. Christ was David's son and David's Lord,

Mat. xxii. 45, yet a root out of a dry ground.' Some triflers

understand by this is meant the womb of the virgin; but it is rather

the dead and withered stock of David's house. For though that family

was obscure, and all the glorious branches cut off to the very stump,

yet even then shall sprout out the last and greatest ornament of it,

like a root out of a dry ground. Therefore it is observable it is said,

Isa. xi. 1, A rod shall come out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch out

of his roots.' He doth not say, out of the stem of David, who was the

first king and honour of that family, but Jesse, whose name was more

obscure, implying that at this time this house should be reduced to its

first meanness, or that it should not be the house of David so much as

the house of Jesse. Out of his decayed roots should spring up this

tender branch.

3. Before him. Whom? Some say himself, for so they say the Hebrew word

is to be understood. As if the sense were, if you look to the state and

presence of the person himself. But I shall pass by that, and take

notice but of two persons to whom this him may be referred; for the

scriptures have this privilege, to abound in senses.

[1.] Him, that is, the Lord, for so may it be referred. He was but

lately spoken of, ver. 1, The arm of the Lord;' and then it is added,

Before him shall grow up a tender plant.' Though he was so mean, yet

God saw it, and permitted it, because he had appointed it. It was not

by chance, and because it could be no better, but by God's special

decree and appointment. Before the Lord he shall rise up a tender

plant.

[2.] Before him; that is, before the party that believes not the

report: ver. 1, Who hath believed,' &c.--because before him Christ

riseth up in such a mean manner. By this him must be meant the

unbelieving Jews of whom he spake. Reason cannot expect that the

Messiah should lie hid under so mean a shape. They will be offended in

Christ's meanness, as I shall touch by and by. Thus for the phrases of

Christ's original.

Secondly, For the phrases now that belong to the outward state and

appearance of his life. Christ hath not in him proportion and beauty,

which are the objects allurable to men. We love things for the orderly

disposition of parts or colours; the one is called form or comeliness,

the other beauty. So that Christ's mean appearance is described two

ways:--

1. By the removal of excellency.

2. By the restraint of affection.

1. As to the removal of excellency. And therein--

[1.] No proportion, no form nor comeliness is found in him. Then--

[2.] As to beauty, there was no fitness of colour. These things are not

put here literally, to deny there was any individual or personal beauty

in Christ; for I believe that he was not of a monstrous and misshapen

body, but well compacted and well coloured,--though I doubt not but

there have been a great many fictions about the body of Christ,

particularly what Lentulus says in his letters concerning the

amiableness of Christ's countenance, that he was of so fair a face, and

yet of so majestic an eye, that all that beheld him were enforced to

love and fear him. Nicephorus likewise said that Mary Magdalen, who was

at first a common strumpet, was drawn to hear Christ upon a report of

the comeliness of his person, and afterwards won by the efficacy of his

doctrine. No doubt he had a comely, well-featured, healthy body. But

this is not spoken of so much as his outward port and presence to the

world. He did not come with such pomp and glory as they imagined was

suitable to the majesty of the Messiah. They thought he should have

come in a royal way, with a great deal of outward pomp and splendour,

that so all the world might have admired the great Redeemer of the

Jews.

But how can it be said of Christ that he had neither comeliness nor

beauty, since it is said, Ps. xlv. 2, that he is fairer than the

children of men,' or than the sons of Adam'? And in Cant. v. 10-16, he

is described by the spouse to be well-coloured, My beloved is white and

ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousand;' and likewise well-featured, as

she goeth on from part to part, from head to feet; and then concludeth,

He is altogether lovely.'

To this I answer:--

(1.) It is one thing what Christ is to the spouse, another what he is

to the unbelieving Jews. Christ's beauties are inward, seen of none but

those that are inwardly acquainted with him. The spouse speaketh of him

in a spiritual sense. Here he is spoken of in respect of his outward

habitude in the world.

(2.) We must distinguish between Christ's humiliation and exaltation,

his Godhead and his manhood. In his Godhead; so he is the brightness of

his Father's glory, and the express image of his person,' Heb. i. 3,

and consequently full of beauty. In his humiliation; so he is not only

a man, but a mean man: Phil. ii. 9, He made himself of no reputation.'

(3.) In Christ's humiliation we must distinguish as to what he is in

himself and as to what he is in the eye of the world. In Christ's

manhood he did not appear in the form of God. It is said, Phil. ii. 7,

He took upon him the form of a servant;' yet he did not lay aside his

Godhead: that appeared too sometimes in the power of his doctrine and

miracles; but the world saw no form in him, none of the form of the

Godhead in him. Then--

2. As to the phrase that implieth restraint of affection, why we should

desire him.' But you will say, How then is Christ said to be the desire

of all nations, as we read, Hag. ii. 7, I will shake all nations, and

the desire of all nations shall come'?

I answer--

[1.] Though he is not actually desired, yet he is nevertheless worthy

of esteem and affection. Pearls do not lose their worth though swine

trample upon them. It is the world only that is offended at his

meanness, and saith, There is no beauty in him wherefore we should

desire him.' But--

[2.] You judge by the eye and appearance. Now a carnal heart can see no

excellency in Christ; and when you see him, if you trust to your sight

merely, you will not desire him. Thus you have the meaning of the

words. Now--

Secondly, To accommodate this prophecy to Christ, and show you how it

agreeth to him, that so his love may be displayed and held forth to

your meditations, that he should submit himself to such meanness for

your sakes. Wherefore I desire that you would with me observe these few

things. And first from the causal particle: For he shall grow up as a

tender plant.' He gives a reason why so few believed the report.

The point therefore is this:--

Doct. 1. That Christ's meanness, and want of outward pomp and

splendour, is the great prejudice against the entertainment of him and

the things of his kingdom.

In handling this point I shall treat of his meanness both in his life

and doctrine.

First, As to his meanness in his manner of revealing himself to the

world. Because the beginnings of his kingdom were weak, the world

rejected it. I will prove this by a reason or two.

1. Because we have no light to see any excellency in other things but

what are outwardly glorious. Men being inured to such things, think

them the only things. Corrupt desires make a corrupt mind. Where there

is flesh, there will be a knowing of things after the flesh, 2 Cor. v.

16; and we will think such things only to be glorious. Men's judgments

are as their affections; for as these are, so are their conceits of

happiness: 1 Cor. ii. 12, We have not received the spirit of the

world.' There is a spirit of the world which maketh men think that the

greatest excellency is in the things of the world, as in outward

fineness, royalty, learning, eloquence, pomp, and splendour. Christ is

mean, and therefore rejected, because he cometh not with these things.

2. Because we judge altogether by likelihoods and outward appearances.

Samuel thought sure that Eliab was the man, because he looked upon his

countenance and the height of his stature, 1 Sam. xvi. 7; but it is

added, Man seeth not as God seeth; man looketh to the outward

appearance.' We judge of things according as they are to our senses.

Many would have thought that some great emperor should have been the

Messiah, rather than the poor child in the manger at Bethlehem. Most

people will have it that truth is rather on that side that is

accompanied and accommodated with outward authority, applause, and

other advantages of learning and eminency, than among a few despicable

men, such as the martyrs were.

3. Because we envy and despise any worth that is veiled under meanness,

as if it were a disgrace to us to take anything from those beneath us.

It was a great condescension in Job, chap. xxxi. 13, that he would not

despise the cause of his servants when they contended with him.'

Certain it is otherwise in the world; they consider the person and envy

the excellency; as you may read, Mat. xiii. 55, &c. Though they were

astonished at his doctrine, yet they said, Is not this the carpenter's

son?' and were offended at him. His mean original hindered them from

giving that due honour and respect that they should.

Use 1. The use of this may be to inform us:--

1. Whence it is that Christ is differently entertained in the world,

which is, because some see nothing but the outward meanness, others the

inward excellency: Luke ii. 34, This child is set for the fall and

rising of many in Israel.' Because this child, therefore for the fall

and rising of many. And therefore he is called a rock of offence and a

stumbling-stone, Rom. ix. 33. God would not satisfy every one. There

was inward power in Christ, and outward meanness, and many times he did

exert and put forth his inward power: 1 Peter ii. 7, To them that

believe he is precious; but to others a stone of stumbling, and a rock

of offence.' God will satisfy those that are desirous to learn the

things of his kingdom; as for others, there is so much outward meanness

and reproach laid upon his ways, as to harden them against them. If you

will know the reason why so many are prejudiced against the ways of

Christ, it is because they see nothing in them worthy of their choice.

Oh, it is a great mercy of God for any to see the beauty of religion

through the clouds of meanness, affliction, self-denial, and all those

troubles to which it engageth men.

2. Do not despise things for their meanness, for so thou mayest condemn

the ways of God. God will have his people love him for his own sake,

not for the outward accommodation and advantages we have by him. As it

is said, John vi. 26, Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I

say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracle, but because ye

did eat of the loaves and were filled,' Princes try the affections of

their subjects most when they come to them in a disguise, and veil

their majesty under the plainest garb; and so did Christ to the world,

and still does to this day. He suffereth this stumbling-block, to see

if we will look beyond it. As there was meanness in the outward

habitude of Christ's person, so there is now in the administration of

his kingdom; as appears by considering:--

[1.] That the ordinances are weak to appearance; there is nothing but

plain words, plain bread and wine, in one ordinance, and only water in

another. The simple plainness of the ordinances is an obstacle to men's

believing; they would fain bring in pomp, but that will mar all. When

there were wooden chalices, there were golden priests. God would have

his ordinances like himself, simple and full of virtue. The tabernacle

was all gold within, but covered with badgers' skins without. This

stumbleth the world at first dash; they will not look for gold where

they see nothing but badgers' skins: 2 Kings v. 12, Are not Abana and

Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?'

What! no greater thing to be done for my health? I might have done thus

at home. So some are apt to say, We had better read at home, than wait

upon such plain preaching; but remember, it is God's ordinance, and

that puts a value upon it.

[2.] These ordinances are administered by weak men. Many times God

singleth out the meanest. Our Saviour sent fishermen to conquer the

world, and made use of a goose-quill to wound Antichrist. Moses, the

stammering shepherd, was commissioned to deliver Israel; God makes use

of Amos, who was a herdsman, to declare his will, Amos i. 1. So Elisha

the great prophet was taken from the plough, 1 Kings xix. 19. And many

times God made use of young men, such as Paul, whose very person

causeth prejudice; young Samuel, young Timothy, men of mean, descent,

low parentage, and of no great appearance in the world.

[3.] The manner how it is by them managed, which is not in such a

politic, insinuating way as to beguile and deceive, and as if they were

to serve their own ends: 2 Cor. i. 12, the apostle saith, Our rejoicing

is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly

sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, we have our conversation among

you.' He calleth it carnal wisdom to use any underhand dealing to gain

esteem to their way, or to go in any by-path out of Christ's way. They

did nothing deceitfully and closely, but what they openly held forth.

And so now the less there is of worldly wisdom, the more God

prevaileth: Luke xvi. 8, The children of this world are wiser in their

generation than the children of light.'

[4.] The persons by whom it is entertained, the poor: James ii. 5, Hath

not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith?' Usually

God's true people are the meanest and most contemptible, not being so

noted for outward excellency as others, Mat. xi. God revealeth the

things of his kingdom to babes, men destitute of outward sufficiencies.

This hath been always a great prejudice against Christ's doctrine: John

vii. 48, Have any of the rulers or the pharisees believed on him?' Have

the great men, the great scholars, closed with that way?

[5.] The general drift of it is to make men deny their pleasures, to

overlook their concernments, to despise the world, to hinder unjust

gain, to walk contrary to the honorary customs and fashions of the

world. If men would be Christians indeed, they will find that the usual

customs of the world are most contrary to Christianity; as to for give

injuries, to seek reconciliation, to put up with disgrace, and to show

kindness to those that are not likely to repay us again: Luke xiv.

12-14, When thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends, nor

thy brethren, nor thy rich neighbours, lest they bid thee again, and a

recompense be made unto thee; but call the poor, the blind, and the

lame, and the maimed, for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt

be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' So to make a man

contented, though he and his family should be in a mean condition,

though he be not so great in the world as others; yet this is a great

prejudice against the ways of Christ. Therefore do not despise persons

or things for their meanness; do not count zeal folly, or religion

weakness; do not reckon them among fools that are conscientiously

scrupulous: Heb. xiii. 2, it is said, that some that entertained

strangers thereby entertained angels unawares; so some that refuse

things because of outward appearance, they refuse Christ unawares; they

may condemn and reproach the very saints and people of God. Luke xvi.

15: That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the eyes

of God.' There is no judging by the outward probability and face of

things. Still true, strict Christianity is disesteemed in the world;

men look upon it as some humorous, misshapen conceit, that looketh

enviously upon their pleasures, contrary to their natures, and

unbefitting their quality. That you may not thus despise the things

that any way concern the kingdom of Christ for their meanness, I shall

give you these four directions:--

(1.) Beg the Spirit of God that he would suggest to you his will and

counsel in all things. The spirit of the world or your own spirit will

make you judge amiss, and that nothing is God's but what is outwardly

glorious; and so even Christ may become a stone of stumbling and a rock

of offence to you, and you may despise the greatest truth. The things

of Christ's kingdom are carried in a secret way. The Spirit telleth us

what things are given us of God. Plain things must be set on by the

demonstration of the Spirit, or else we shall see no beauty in them: 1

Cor. ii. 4, A Christian sucketh marrow out of that which is dry bones

to a natural man. Do not trust to your own reason. Leave a man to his

reason, to the mere considerations of flesh and blood, and he can

perceive no beauty in the glorious ways of Christ. This is the cause

why great scholars are so much mistaken in the things of his kingdom

(2.) Walk in the ways of God, in his fear and love--keep communion with

him and he will direct you: Ps. xxv. 13, The secret of the Lord is with

them that fear him; he will show them his covenant.' God discovereth

himself particularly to his own people. They are his friends, and you

know friends reveal themselves mutually to one another in the greatest

secrets; as Christ giveth the reason: John xv. 15, I have called you

friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have revealed

to you.' Those that keep up a continual acquaintance with God, by

manifesting their love and fear of him, shall have divine mysteries

manifested to them: Col. i. 26, The mystery that was hid from ages is

made manifest to the saints.' Truths that have long lain hid through

many successions and revolutions of ages, are at length made known to

holy persons. Where there is purity, there is revelation: The pure in

heart shall see God,' Mat. v. 8. They shall see more of his truth and

mind in those things which if they should judge of by their own reason,

they would contemn. So also it is said, Prov. iii. 32, His secret is

with the righteous.' They have not only other kinds of knowledge, but

knowledge of the secret of such a way as is veiled with contempt,

reproach, and unlikelihood to the world. Blind and carnal men sometimes

stumble upon the despised ways of Christ; but they do but plough with

the saints' heifer, and light their torch at the altar. Their self-ends

and by-interests make them borrow from truth; but it is with them as it

is with parrots, they speak the words of men not of reason but custom;

they learn a truth when it is delivered, they have been used to such

notions.

(3.) Exercise faith; that is, the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi.

1; that is, not seen by natural sense or reason. It is o'phthalmos tes

psuches,--the eye, the discovering part of the soul. As reason is to a

natural man, so is faith to a godly man. It carrieth a man within the

veil: what cannot be made out to sense and reason is made out to faith.

Ideo credo quia est impossibile, therefore I believe, because it is

impossible. Though, in your own thoughts, you would fain have things

otherwise, yet, if there be revelation to the contrary, believe it; as

that there is happiness in sufferings,--that the reproach of Christ is

better than all the treasures of the world, that there is life in

death. Faith seeth that easy and plain which is the greatest

contradiction to reason and sense. See what a riddle St Paul telleth

you by faith: 2 Cor. vi. 9, 10, As unknown, yet well known; as dying,

and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet

always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and

yet possessing all things.' Faith maketh us see that in a thing which

reason would tell us were the greatest absurdity and inconsistency in

the world to believe; as that Abraham should see Christ before he was

extant. The Jews were ready to stone Christ for saying so: Your father

Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.' Faith

captivates reason to scripture, and maketh a man close with the

revelation against his own conceits and prejudices. Only take this

caution,--though faith seeth things impossible and improbable, yet they

are only such things as are revealed by God.

(4.) Deny carnal reason and sense; do not judge of divine things by

outward appearance. Hear what the apostle saith: Eye hath not seen, ear

hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive,

what God hath prepared for them that love him'--that is, carnal eyes,

carnal sense, and carnal thoughts; weighing that place with the

context, that seemeth to be the meaning. To an ordinary reason, or eye,

or ear, things would not appear so. Now, because this rule is general,

I shall a little restrain it by these particulars.

1. Do not cast away anything of Christ because it is despised or

discountenanced. Take heed, a saint may suffer under a reproachful

name. Christ was a despised branch, a root out of a dry ground; and

Christianity was contemned because of the ill name and common cry

against it. Most Christians offend in blind zeal; they condemn things

before they have tried them. Though the censure be right, it is ill in

thee. Nicodemus suggested good advice: Doth our law judge any man

before it hear him, and know what he doth?' It was a pharisaical spirit

to take up a prejudice, and not to be willing to hear what might be

said for it. It was the misery of the primitive Christians that they

could not be heard to speak out. Nolentes audire quod auditum damnare

non possunt--men are unwilling to hear that which they are resolved to

condemn as soon as heard. It would be confutation enough if men did but

know the beauty of the ways of religion. It is always this hasty zeal

which rejecteth things upon public scorn without due trial: examine

first and then speak. Though it be a despised and unlikely way, it is

like thou mayest find somewhat of God in it.

2. Because it is an afflicted way. Afflicted godliness is a great

prejudice. But remember God never intended that truth should be known

by pomp, nor condemned or disallowed for the troubles that accompany

it. The drift of Christianity is to take us off from the hopes and

fears of the present world; therefore he that liketh Christ and Ms

promises is not likely to be separated from him by persecution.

3. Because poor men are of that way, those that have the meanest parts,

and no outward excellencies: Mat. xi. 26, At that time Jesus answered

and said, 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.' The Jesuits have charged it upon the ministers of

France, that they were poor. So in Salvian's time; Coguntur esse mali,

ne viles habeantur--men would not be religious, because they would not

be ranked among poor men. So the Albigenses were called the poor men of

Lyons. Usually the priests' lips preserve knowledge, but sometimes God

worketh extra ordinem. A simple laick nonplussed a bishop at the

council of Nice, and many that were very mean in the world were

martyrs.

4. Because thou mayest seem to hazard thy wisdom by closing with it. If

any man seem to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise.'

Thus I have despatched the first observation, namely, that Christ's

meanness in his person and kingdom is the great hindrance against the

entertainment of him; few or none believed. For he shall grow up as a

tender plant.'

I come now to insist upon the second point, which is this:--

Doct. 2, That though Christ's meanness be a great hindrance against the

entertainment of him, yet, it is by the special appointment of God. He

shall grow up before him. God orders it that the Messiah should come in

such a manner. I shall be brief in handling this point. There is

nothing about Christ but fell under God's decree, and the special care

of his providence. All the circumstances of his birth, the time, place,

manner of every action, you have some instance of it. The counsel of

God brought it to pass, and the scripture was frequently quoted, that

that might be fulfilled which was spoken concerning him;' yea, the most

malicious actions of the enemies are spoken of as appointed by God, as

particularly their spite to him in his death: Him, being delivered by

the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by

wicked hands have crucified and slain.' Judas delivered him, Pilate

delivered him, and God delivered him. For of a truth against thy holy

child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the Gentiles, were

gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined

before to be done.' Acts iv. 27, 28. Whom being delivered by the

counsel of God.' This was God's grand contrivance; here was his

polupoi?kilos sophi'a, the manifold wisdom of God.' Eph. iii. 10. So St

Paul calleth the wise disposition of our salvation by Christ: Without

controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the

flesh.' This was the great mystery. When a man is to make some rare

engine, he will look to every screw and wheel, that all is set and

ordered right. Here was God's great masterpiece, in which he would show

himself, and the great copy of his eternal thoughts. That is the

reason.

This point affordeth us many useful considerations, as this decree of

God may be referred--

1. To Christ.

2. To the wicked.

3. To the godly.

1. To Christ. God decreed this, and Christ fulfilled it. It is a wonder

to see how all things did conspire to make Christ conform in every

thing to God's counsel concerning him. As, for instance, in Augustus

his decree, which caused Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem, where she

was delivered. It would be too long to give you the history of the

gospel. Many providences did meet, that all things whatever God had

decreed might come to pass. Admire therefore the manifold wisdom of God

in contriving these things.

2. In respect of the wicked. God appointed this meanness of Christ

before them. Before them he shall rise up. God punisheth sin by

occasions of sin. God may be said to harden sinners three ways:--(1.)

By leaving them to themselves, as it is said, he left the Gentiles to

their own ways, Acts xiv. 16; (2.) By permitting them to enter into

them; (3.) By presenting to them such objects from whence their

corruption taketh occasion to sin, though they were things good in

themselves; as Jer. vi. 21, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this

people.' The Jews argue that Christ is not the Messiah, because he did

not come in such a way as to satisfy all his countrymen. God would have

Christ mean that all might not believe in him, though not to cause sin,

but to promote his just judgments. So God's cause and Christ's ways

have difficulty enough in them to harden them. God pursueth his secret

judgments upon them. Admire, therefore, and fear God's judgments on the

wicked. It was by the special appointment of God that it was so mean.

3. For the godly. God appointed all the meanness of Christ for their

sakes, for whom it is a double comfort.

[1.] From the eternity of God's thoughts towards them. Christ from

before all worlds was appointed to be a captain of salvation through

many sufferings, and to undergo many hardships for your sakes. This

length of love is a great refreshment to the spirit; and when the soul

reflects upon the meanness of Christ as the effect of God's eternal

thoughts of mercy to it, it is the more encouragement to believe.

Christ verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but

manifested in these last times for you.' He would have them established

in that as a sure truth.

[2.] It is a comfort to them in their meanness; it is that which is

appointed. They shall be conformable to their Head in this respect.

They shall undergo no condition but what God from all eternity had

decreed for them: Col. i. 24; Paul and all the godly are said to fill

up what is behind of the sufferings of Christ in their flesh. The

church and Christ make but one body; that which they suffer, he

suffers; that which he suffereth, they suffer. The sufferings of the

godly are appointed as well as Christ's meanness.

I now proceed to the third observation, namely:--

Doct. 3. That this meanness of Christ was willingly taken up by him

both in his birth and life and manner of appearing among men.

1. In his birth.

[1.] For the time of it. It was when the royal stock of David was quite

extinct, and even come so low that Joseph was but a carpenter by

profession. Is not this the carpenter's son?' And therefore is the

genealogy of Joseph and Mary so carefully sought out by the evangelist,

because it was not commonly and publicly known that they were of that

lineage. The throne of David was occupied by Herod, who was an

Ascalonite; he was Epi` pho'rois tetagme'nos, rather an observer of the

tribute than a king.

[2.] The place, Bethlehem, a small place, not able to make up one

division in Israel, the least of the thousands of Judah. A man would

have thought he should have been born in some great city, as Rome or

Jerusalem. No; but he chose to be born in Bethlehem, and suffered at

Jerusalem: he had the least place to be born, but the greatest to

suffer in. And then again, he was not born in any stately room at

Bethlehem, but in a stable, nay, in a manger in the stable. Christ

would have all mean at his birth.

[3.] Consider how in everything he was found in shape like another

child, being circumcised the eighth day. He submitted to the law as

soon as he was born into the world, to teach his followers obedience.

[4.] Consider the oblation that was made for him, such as was made for

poor people--a pair of turtle-doves and two young pigeons, the poor's

offering. Those that were not able to bring a lamb were to bring two

turtles and two young pigeons, and that was accepted for an atonement.

Thus much for his birth: yet we may observe there was something divine

still mingled with Christ's outward meanness, as the appearing of the

star, the trouble of the Jews, the wise men's report and offerings. By

these things God would leave them without excuse, and under this

poverty discover some glimpses of the deity.

2. Now for his life and manner of appearance in the world. He was

altogether found in fashion as a man, as the apostle saith; that is, to

outward appearance just as other men, for his growth was as other

men's, by degrees: And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in

favour with God and man.' Though he had a most perfect divine soul

given him at first, yet as he grew in stature he exercised and

discovered the vigour of his faculties, which is there called

increasing in knowledge, showing forth in his several ages more degrees

of knowledge, that in all things he might conform to us. It would be

too large for me to insist upon everything, therefore briefly take it

thus:--His life was spent in much toil and labour, going to and fro;

nay, and probably too, in mean labour, in his father's trade: Mark vi.

3, Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?' Not only the

carpenter's son, but the carpenter. In his younger time he exercised

that trade, as Justin Martyr, a most ancient historian, whites: he made

yokes and ploughs. And when he put himself upon the way and duty of his

ministry, he was in much want and penury; he was an hungry, Mat. iv. 2;

thirsty, John iv. 6; without house and home: Mat. viii. 20, Foxes have

holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not

where to lay his head.' Yea, so poor was he, that he had not wherewith

to pay his poll-money for his head to the Romans, Mat. xvii. 27;

therefore Peter is fain to go to the sea and catch a fish. I will not

touch upon those that especially take in his suffering, that will fall

in the next verse; only take notice how he was hunted up and down by

the pharisees, how he was scorned and derided by them, so far as it

reflects upon his weakness, as Luke xvi. 14, exemukte'rizon,--they blew

their nose at him in great scorn, as the word may be rendered. Nay,

when he would show any royalty, and come as a king to Sion, he came

riding upon the foal of an ass, Mat. xxi. 5.

Use 1. Oh, then be exhorted--

1. To admire the love of God, that he should stoop to such a low

condition for your sakes. Here is a large field for meditation;

expatiate your thoughts, then, and trace Christ in all the history of

his life, from the cradle to the grave, from the stable to Golgotha,

and see what a mean and contemptible life he led.

2. Faithfully apply it, and say, All this was done for my good. The

scriptures do not only take notice of Christ's humiliation, but of the

very end of it. Most read the history of Christ as a man would do a

romance, to be a little affected with it for a time; they take notice

what is done, but not why; there is not that faithful appropriation:

Gal. iv. 4, 5, When the fulness of time was come, God sent his Son,

made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem us that were under the

law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Mark the end, and

say, This was done for me; for us is too general. Why was Christ so

mean? It was that I might be rich: 2 Cor. viii. 9, For ye 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;' rich

in grace, and rich in comfort, Ptocho`s, the word signifieth he became

a beggar, not that he did beg, but he lived in continual need of a

supply, and would sometimes put forth some glimpses of his divinity to

command his welcome: Luke xix. 5, Zaccheus, make haste and come down,

for to-day I must abide at thy house.' Yet I say, Christ put himself

upon this meanness for our sakes. Speciosus prae filiis hominum,

obscuratur pro filiis hominum, saith Bernard. It is for our sakes that

he who is altogether lovely in himself had no form, that we might be

made lovely and beautiful; he was without comeliness, that his church

might be comely, without spot or wrinkle, as the apostle speaketh, Eph.

v. 27. He was besmeared with blood, that the church might be without

spot. It is good to observe that Christ's meanness was not only in

judgment, for a stumbling-block to the wicked, but in mercy to the

godly. If he had discovered his deity at first, he had never suffered,

and then the work of our redemption had stood still. It is a good

observation of St Austin, quoted by Aquinas, Dum omnia mirabiliter

fecit, auferret quod misericorditer fecit--if he had done all things

wonderfully, he had done nothing mercifully. Christ's meanness, as it

is a great mercy to mankind, see that it be so to you.

Use 2. Is information. It informeth us, then:--

1. That poverty and meanness is not disgraceful. Christ himself was a

carpenter, Paul a tent-maker, and the apostles fishermen. Christ, you

see, scorned that glory, pomp, and greatness which the world doteth

upon. Men look upon the outside as if the horse were the better for the

trappings, or anything without a man could ennoble him: Prov. xix. 1,

Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is

perverse in his lips.' A man is rightly esteemed by his internal

qualifications. One holy saint is to be preferred above all the rich

men that abound in the greatest affluence of estate and pomp. It should

be so with all, much more with the godly. It is a reproach to Christ to

contemn any man for his poverty, because he is meaner in the world than

we: Prov. xiv. 31, He that despiseth the poor reproacheth his Maker.'

Can I believe that ever you would honour Christ, who despise the poor?

Would you not him too? He that despiseth the poor reproacheth his

Saviour. It is the most contrary affection to the Christian religion.

2. It informs us that poverty should not be irksome to us. Christ

underwent it before you; his apostles were base in the world's eye: 1

Cor. iv. 13, We are made as the filth of the world, and are the

offscouring of all things;' counted the scurf of the earth. Christ

chose this kind of life, a holy meanness, and therefore be not

troubled. Poverty is a great burden, I confess, and layeth a man open

to many a disadvantage,--scorn, contempt, and refusal. But consider,

Christ hath honoured it in his own person, and he honoureth it to this

very day. If there be any respect of persons with God, he respecteth

the poor, and reveals most of himself to them: The poor receive the

gospel.' Mat. xi. 5; I will also leave in the midst of thee an

afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the

Lord,' Zeph. iii. 12. God hath provided for the esteem of all his

servants. What is wanting one way is more plentifully supplied in

another; so that those that have the least outward esteem, are justly

accounted the most excellent. Every condition, I confess, hath its

snares, but poverty hath least. This disposeth the soul to hearken to

divine things, that their outward defects may be made up in some inward

excellency. Everything naturally seeketh after a supply of its wants;

and therefore, as it is in outward things, persons that are themselves

deformed are most deeply stricken with the love of beauty in others,

that they may cover their own wants by linking themselves with that

abundance of perfection that they spy in them; so the godly poor are

more disposed to hearken to religion, because more sensible of their

defects, that the meanness of their outward estate may be covered and

satisfied for by the riches of those graces that are in their souls.

And indeed, as these are fitter to receive a manifestation, so God doth

most manifest himself to them: the first report that was made of Christ

was made to shepherds and poor swains. Therefore on these accounts

poverty is not so irksome.

Use 3. Is instruction. It teacheth us divers lessons:--Was Christ both

in birth and manner of appearance in the world mean? Then--

1. It teacheth us humility, that he should empty himself of all his

glory, and live in a mean estate. The apostle sets out this pattern

excellently: Phil. ii. 6-8, Who, being in the form of God, thought it

no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and

took upon him the form, of a servant, and was made in the likeness of

men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and

became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' He divested

himself of all his royalty, that he might teach us this pattern of

humility. Most men love to live to the utmost,--in a proud, pompous

way, and disdaining of others. You see Christ, when he might have

discovered majesty, held forth nought but poverty. And, indeed, it was

principally to teach us this lesson: Mat. xi. 29, Learn of me, for I am

meek, and lowly of heart.' He doth not say, Learn of me, quia potens;

but, Learn of me, quia humilis sum--not, Learn of me, for I am

powerful; but, Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly. Christ is not to

be imitated in his power, but he is to be imitated in his graces. Not,

Learn of me to do miracles, to create the world; but, to be lowly and

humble-minded. This is the great pattern and copy that God hath set us,

to wit, humility.

2. To be mean and low for Christ, as he was for you. Christ was poor

that you might be rich--rich in peace, joy, comfort, salvation. Can you

find such a rare instance as would be poor for Christ that he may be

rich in his glory, in his ordinances, in the safety of his servants? We

have read of many that have been poor for their lusts, they have

prodigally lavished away their estates upon their pleasures; but very

few have been poor for Christ: Phil. ii. 5; Let the same mind be in you

that was in Jesus.' The apostle applieth it to humility, and we may

also to the same purpose. Do you have as bountiful a disposition to God

as Christ had for you? Can anything be too much for him? If a man truly

serveth God, he would come as near him as possibly he could. Well,

Christ cast away his glory for you; do you cast away your riches for

Christ, not by a vowed poverty, but by a voluntary laying out

yourselves for his word, his cause, and gospel? It is not waste where

all is due; and indeed nothing is lost that is laid out upon God: Mat.

x. 39, He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his

life for my sake shall find it.' Therefore, if you do, as Ahaz's dial,

go back ten degrees in your estate or outward pomp, the nearer will you

come to the pattern. There is one who has quitted more for you than you

can possibly quit for him. But I shall proceed to the next doctrine.

Doct. 4. That Christ is so outwardly mean, that the men of the world do

not any way desire him, or that carnal men do see nothing in Christ

wherefore they should desire him. To his spouse he is all beauty,

altogether lovely;' but to them there was no beauty why they should

desire him.

The reasons of the point are these:--

1. Because carnal men neglect the study of Christ; their hearts are so

taken with the things of sense, and the beauty of the creatures, that

they do not look any further. We are riot much affected with an unknown

beauty; things that we know only by a general hearsay do not work upon

us. Christ must be in our thoughts before, he can be in our desires.

The Jews looked upon Christ's outside, and therefore minded him no

further. So men hear of Christ in a slight way; so far as they know him

by the common noise and report, so far they close with him. But they do

not see why they should desire him, and slight apprehensions stir up

but weak affections. The spouse displayeth every part of Christ, to

work upon her bowels: Cant. v. 10-16, My beloved is white and ruddy,

the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold; his

locks are bushy, and as black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of

doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and finely set. His

cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies,

dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings, set with

the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory, overlaid with sapphires; his

legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold. His

countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth, is most

sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my

friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.' The apostle wondereth that the

Galatians should not obey the truth, when Jesus Christ was evidently

set forth and crucified among them before their eyes, Gal. iii. 1. It

was so in the word, but not in their thoughts. Men's hearts are wedded

to the creatures, and so the breasts of their own roe satisfy them, and

therefore they do not gaze upon other beauties.

2. Because they reject Christ; he is not for their turn; nay, he is

quite contrary to their ends. Carnal men have not all the same ends,

but they all agree in this, their ends are carnal. Those that would not

come to the wedding-supper, some had their farm, some their merchandise

to mind, another had married a wife, and therefore could not come; all

said, they could not come: Mat. xxii. 5, They all made light of it, and

went their ways.' So they all despised Jesus Christ. Some wicked men

make riches their end. Now see what Christ saith: Mat. xix. 24, It is

easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich

man to enter into the kingdom of God.' It is by the great power of God

that a rich man is saved, as it followeth, All things are possible with

God.' Now Christ is not for a rich man's turn. Christianity furnisheth

men with precepts, not only against unjust gain, but mere desires of

gain, or delight in gain. It contains precepts, that the kingdom of God

is to be sought first, and his righteousness. And we are to look to

these things from God for an additional supply: Mat. vi. 32, After

these things do the Gentiles seek.' It is not a Christian but a

paganish spirit that maketh men so inordinate in the pursuit of gain.

Then for honour, preferment, or applause, the scripture is peremptory

against it: John v. 44, How can ye believe, who seek honour one of

another, and not the honour that cometh from God only?' This pursuing

of glory, honour, and renown is incompatible with a Christian

affection. The force of the argument lieth thus: How can those that

seek honour believe in him that contemneth honour? Only he is fit to

believe in God that maketh eternal life the end of his desires and

endeavours, which is called the glory that cometh from God. The like

argument is used by the apostle: Gal. i. 10, For if I yet pleased men,

I should not be the servant of Christ.' He did not labour to frame his

doctrine and life so as might be pleasing and suitable to the

affections of men. Pride and ambition are the most unsuitable

affections to religion that can be. There is such an antipathy between

what God liketh and men like, that it is impossible they should be in

the same soul. Then for pleasures; there are men that have quit human

nature, and are so far from desiring Christ, that they do not desire a

free use of their reason. Reason is not for their turn, and therefore

certainly religion is not. This is the very affection that is in the

brute beasts. They have some general object, a sensual good, only they

differ in the particular modification of the object. Beasts are for

grass and water, these for meats and drinks. All the use they make of

their reason is to be more curious than the beasts in their choice; and

therefore Christ is not for their ends: Strait is the gate and narrow

is the way that leadeth unto life,' Mat. vii. 13. It is spoken

specially in opposition to the voluptuous. The ways of God are fenced

up with thorns to them: Prov. xv. 19, The way of a slothful man is an

hedge of thorns.' Everything is grievous and troublesome that requireth

care and diligence. Thus they reject Christ because he is not suitable

to them. To apply it now.

Use 1. It serveth for information, to teach us the difference between

God's people and carnal men. To God's people he is all their desire; to

carnal persons there is nothing desirable in him. It is good to observe

their several verdicts of him: 1 Peter ii. 7, To you that believe he is

precious, but to them that be disobedient, the stone which the builders

disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of

stumbling and a rock of offence.' To the world he is base and

ignominious: Ps. xxii. 6, A worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and

despised of the people.' To the spouse, glorious and full of

allurements: Ps. xlv. 2, Thou art fairer than the children of men:

grace is poured into thy lips.' To the world he appeared deformed and

contemptible: Isa. lii. 14, Many were astonied at thee; his visage was

so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men;'

but quite contrary to the spouse: Cant. v. 10, My beloved is the

fairest of ten thousand.' The Hebrew word signifieth an ensign-bearer.

In the world's view there is no form nor comeliness in him; he is

without beauty. To the spouse he is altogether lovely.' Cant. v. 16.

Well, then, you see here is the true differencing note between us and

the men of the world, whether we see anything in Christ why we should

desire him. And it is both an inclusive and an exclusive mark. Some

marks are inclusive; that is, if a man find them in him, he may be sure

he is in Christ; but if not, he is not to determine he is out of

Christ. As the eminent and vigorous workings of holy graces, they do

not take in every state of Christianity, they do not take in the

infancy of grace. Other marks are exclusive; that is thus, they knock

off the fingers of pretenders, and serve to show a man out of grace,

but not in. As frequenting of the ordinances, a care of duty; if a man

doth not these things, he may be sure he is none of God's, though he

cannot be sure he is of God because he doth them. But now this is a

mark that is inclusive and exclusive too. It is inclusive, for if your

desires be to Christ, no doubt he is yours. It is a true mark, and a

mark that is compatible to the weakness of grace. It is a true mark,

for God looketh to the heart more than to the duty: Prov. xxiii. 26, My

son, give me thy heart.' And desires are the chiefest part of that. De

sires are most genuine and suitable to the judgment and determination

of the soul. They are a mark in which God's weakest servants may

comfort themselves. Those that fail in other things are not wanting in

desires. However they may have many defects in their carnage and in

their duties, yet they are sure their desires are towards him. If they

cannot be much in duty, they will be much in their desires and

valuations of him. Peter, that durst not appeal to his own conscience

for other things, dareth appeal to God's omnisciency for this: John

xxi. 17, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.'

And the people of God often vouch this: Isa. xxvi. 8, The desire of our

soul is to thy name;' Neh. i. 11, Thy servants who desire to fear thy

name.' Therefore it is comfortable, and it is convincing too, and

exclusive. Wicked men feel no desires; they have some slight wishes,

carnal and weak velleities, but they have no serious desires, nor true

volitions. Balaam may wish to die the death of the righteous, Num.

xxiii. 10. So they may desire Christ out of some general conceit of

happiness; but they do not desire Christ for holiness. So there is no

beauty in him why we should desire him. They do not desire him as

seeing any beauty in his ways: John vi. 34, Lord, evermore give us this

bread.' When Christ said he was the bread of life, those that would not

come to Christ would fain have the bread of life. Nay, heaven itself is

not really desired by wicked men; it is true, they may desire it in a

carnal way, as a Turkish paradise, and such a place of ease and delight

as the Alcoran sets forth; but not as it is in itself, to enjoy God,

and Christ, and more grace, and to be more free and undisturbed in

respect of the prevailing of sin and corruptions. Those that desire

Christ truly, desire him not for ease (the spirit of the world may do

that), but from the beauty and excellency they find in him, and in his

ways. His service is of a high and honourable nature, and therefore

they desire it. So that you see here is the note of trial, and the main

difference, viz., a desiring of Christ for the rare beauty and

perfections that are found in him. Do you, then, try yourselves by this

note. But that you may not deceive yourselves in this matter, I will

give you a few notes. I will not speak anything of the cause of

desires. A high value and price set upon Christ, and a seeing rich

beauties in him, of that I shall speak in the next verse. I shall only

treat now of the effects of this desire. If it be earnest and strong

after him, it will be manifested by these things.

1. A holy impatiency in the want of Christ. When we strongly desire a

thing, the heart fainteth under the want of it. Amnon was sick for

Tamar, 2 Sam. xiii. 1-4. And the spouse was sick of love for Christ,

Cant. v. 8. The soul languishes with a holy desire of the sense of his

mercy, with a longing after pardon, and grace, and quickening, and

life, and what is to be found in Christ. They can find no rest in

themselves till they do enjoy it: Ps. xlii. 1, As the hart panteth

after the water brooks, so doth my soul pant after thee, O God.' Thirst

is the most implacable impression that can be upon the body; the

creature cannot be quiet till it be quenched. Now, of all creatures the

hart is most thirsty by nature, and the thirst is mightily increased

when it is hunted. And mark, it is the she-hart, for so the Seventy

read it, e e'laphos, The she-hart panteth after the water brooks.'

Passions in females are stronger than in the males. As the she-hart

panteth when chased, such a rage of thirst was there in his soul till

it were satisfied with. God, and refreshed with the comforts of Jesus

Christ. Search then for such a restless and strong desire; try if there

be such an ardency and earnestness upon your affections, that nothing

can satisfy but Christ, that you cannot be quiet till you have him. Was

your heart never chased into a panting for the water brooks? Some tire

haunted so by the ghastly apprehensions of God's wrath, that they have

no ease, no rest. But certainly all that love Christ are chased into a

panting; they have such a sense of their sins and miseries, that their

souls are put into an earnest expectation of the mercies of Christ.

2. A holy indignation. Passions usually serve and accompany one

another. If there be a holy desire, there will be a holy anger. And

this is at two things:--

[1.] At anything that would rival the affection.

[2.] At what would hinder the enjoyment of the object.

[1.] At anything that would rival Christ in the affection. There is a

scorn that anything should come in competition with him, that we should

have so much as a thought that anything were worthy but Christ: Phil.

iii. 8, I count all things but loss and dung, that I may win Christ.'

Any outward excellency in comparison of him is but sku'bala, dog's

meat. It thinketh the worst name good enough for anything that shall

come in competition with him. And in such a case gold is not gold, but

dog's meat--honour is not honour--pleasure is not pleasure--but all is

dung and dog's meat. You know in a natural way things have their due

respect from us, till they be compared with what we dearly love and

prize; then no term is bad enough for them. So here, the soul doth even

abhor the thought that Christ and other things should be spoken of the

same day, which otherwise might have fairer respects and valuations

from the soul. It is worth your observation to see how the saints do

abominate the thought that anything should be supposed to satisfy them

without or besides Christ: Ps. iv. 6, There be many that say, Who will

show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us.'

O Lord, do not think we are of that strain. It is the many, the men of

the multitude, that think so; they speak as if they would not own such

an unworthy thought, nor entertain any resolution to prostitute their

desires to any sensual good. God shall not turn them away so. If they

should have all things else, it is irksome to them to think they should

be contented. Te ipsum, Domine, da, quod peto, Domine, da te ipsum; as

Austin crieth out: Thyself, Lord--thyself, Lord.' They are angry with

themselves if any pleasing thought should arise any other way, any vain

conceit, that they should be happy apart from God and Christ. It is an

excellent saying of one, Taedet gaudere sine te, delectat contristari

pro te--They had rather mourn for God than delight without him. All

their comforts are irksome to them if they have not Christ with them.

Try, then, is there such a zealous indignation against false thoughts

in your comforts? In what case do you think yourselves? Happy is the

people that is in such a case.' If that be a thought that is pleasing

to your minds, it is a good sign.

[2] Indignation against what hindereth the enjoyment of the object. A

man is angry with what cometh between him and his desires. If your

desires be to Christ, you will be angry with your perverse hearts, that

keep you from him. When a man desireth to sin, he is angry with God

because he cometh in with his law, and steppeth between us and our

desires: Rom. viii. 7, The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is

not subject to the law, neither indeed can be.' So when the desires are

set and bent upon Christ, a man is angry with himself that he is so

clogged and weighed down with the flesh that he cannot enjoy such full

communion with him as he desires: 2 Cor. v. 4, For we that are in this

tabernacle do groan, being burdened.' And David crieth out, Ps. cxx 5,

Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of

Kedar!' e paroiki'a, my pilgrimage, is prolonged. They are angry with

their own base hearts, that still there is such a strangeness between

them and Christ.

3. It will cause a holy waiting. Those that desired the coming of the

Messiah, waited for him; as Simeon: Luke ii. 25, Waiting for the

consolation of Israel.' Earnest expectation is the formal and most

proper effect of the desire of anything. Look, as it is said of

Sisera's mother, Judges v. 28, She looked out at a window and cried

through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming?' She would

fain meet with it as far as she could with her eyes. And so it is said,

Rom. viii. 19, The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the

manifestation of the sons of God,' Apekde'chetai, the creature lifts up

the head--would fain see the general restoration of all things in the

world; so the soul lifteth up the heart, it would fain see Christ

coming to it in this or that ordinance,--with a great deal of longing

they expect when he will draw their hearts to himself: Ps. cxxx. 6, My

soul waiteth for thee more than they that watch for the morning; yea,

more than they that watch for the morning.'

4. Another effect is a powerful command over the whole man. De sires

are the most vigorous faculties, they carry the whole soul along with

them. They will take up your thoughts, time, care, endeavours,

speeches. Look and you shall observe that a man is so affected in

earthly things, and, therefore, why not so in heavenly? It is a bad

sign when there cannot be found the same proportion and care for

heavenly things as men have for the things of the world. Let us see

these things a little severally.

[1.] It will take up your thoughts. Our thoughts will be conversant

about what we desire. We love to feed upon the sweet of those things

that we long for,--to enjoy them in our meditations before we really

and actually enjoy them. Thoughts are the pulses of the heart, you may

know by them how it beats. When desires are at a high pitch, we shall

not be able to put off those pleasing imaginations that concern the

object of these desires. Nay, they will haunt the mind in the time of

our usual repose and rest: Isa. xxvi. 9, With my soul have I desired

thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee

early.' Night and morning, all their mind was upon this, how they

should get God.

[2.] It will challenge more of your time and care. When men will make

bold with God rather than their own occasions, it is a sign they are

but coldly affected to him. If your desires be to Christ, your care and

time will be more laid out upon him; you will rather borrow from

yourselves, your own pleasures and business, than borrow from God. I

confess a man that is in a particular calling, and is to provide for a

wife and family, must necessarily spend more time in the world than he

can in religion; but when he begrudgeth all time to God, or thinketh

all lost that is spent in duty, it is a sign there is little desire

after Christ. When we are where we would be, time goeth too fast for

us; therefore, try how it is with thee in point of religion: Is all too

much that is spent in duty? If the heart goeth out that way, all will

be too little. As men's desires are so their time goeth away. Job xxi.

13, It is said of the wicked, They spend their days in wealth.'

Voluptuous men do so,--so worldly men, they spend their time in

business and worldly cares, and are cumbered about much serving. You

may try your bent by that, how you spend your days.

J3.] It will put you upon endeavours. Those are true desires that in

action. Slight wishes after Christ never put us upon a pursuit of him.

If a man be earnest in a thing, he will try all ways he can to compass

it; it shall be his earnest business. Men that are slight would fain

have Christ, but they will not seek him--Vellent, sed nolunt: Prov.

xxi. 25, The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse

to labour.' The slothful are most full of desires; they would fain have

things, but they do not labour after them. Now, it is otherwise with

the children of God. The spouse, that was sick for want of Christ,

sought him through the streets, though it cost her many a wandering,

Cant. v. 7. God hath fenced up every excel lent thing with difficulty,

to see if we think it worth our endeavours.

Use 2. In the next place it serveth for exhortation, to press you to do

otherwise than the men of the world do, and to beware of their spirit.

Men see nothing in Christ why they should desire him, because they

judge with a carnal spirit. Let not any such black note be found upon

you: Do you make him the desire of your souls who is deservedly styled

the desire of all nations.' This exhortation hinteth at three duties:--

1. Long to get him into your hearts. As all things are to him, let your

desires be to him: Rom. xi. 36, Of him, and through him, and to him are

all things;' therefore, all creatures, for it is the law of their

creation to move towards God, especially for reasonable creatures so to

do. But particularly by your desires look upon him as summum

necessarium, as the only chief thing for your souls.

2. Be careful to keep communion with him. If you have got him, take

heed you do not lose him again. Remember the fate of the spouse for

parting with her beloved, and how dearly she paid for it, Cant. v. 6,

7. Whatever carnal men judge of it, the favour of Christ is worth the

keeping.

3. Labour to get more interest in him. Worldly blessings have all this

lot and fate, that they cloy in the enjoyment. Christ is a mercy of a

nobler nature; the more you see of his excellency, the more you will

thirst after him. When a man hath a taste of Christ, he will labour for

more of him. The great prejudice against him is, that men have never

had experience of him, Austin saith of himself, in the ninth book of

his Confessions, chap. i.: That the reason why he was loth to close

with Christ was, because he was to forego all pleasures, and to deny

himself in whatever was delightful, and that was very irksome to him.

But since,' saith he, when once I had tasted Christ, quam suave mihi

subito factum est carere suavitatibus nugarum! It was the greatest

delight in the world to abstain from worldly delights.' Christ made

abundant recompense for them. Oh, how sweet is Christ to those that

have tried him, and made experience of him! They will not want their

old delights again. I shall prescribe a few means how you shall bring

your hearts to desire Christ, to keep him, and to get further interest

in him:--

[1.] Consider nothing is a fit object for your desires without Jesus

Christ. The creatures are beneath you. The desire of the soul is like a

member of the body out of joint when it is fixed upon a wrong object.

All things without Christ are either sin or the creatures. To desire

sin was the cause of the first misery; that is, forbidden fruits. We

know what that is by sad experience. As to the creatures, to desire

them for themselves is beneath us: it is, as it were, to sit upon the

threshold and the door of the gate when we might sit upon the

throne,--to make that our crown which should be our footstool: Ps.

viii. 6, it is said, Thou hast put all things under his feet.' God made

these things to be under our feet; and, therefore, the church is

described, Rev. xii. 1, to have the moon under her feet. All sublunary

things are beneath the people of God. I should a little digress from

the matter in hand, at least vary from my purpose, if I should at large

discourse of the uncertainty and frailty of the creatures, and show how

the desires may be lost and wasted upon them, which they cannot be upon

God; or should I descant upon the unsuitableness of the creatures,

which cannot give true satisfaction to the soul; but I will only

conclude this first rule with this: That sin is not to be desired at

all, and the creatures only in reference to God and Christ, otherwise,

we sin in the desire or enjoyment of them.

[2.] Look upon Jesus Christ alone as the only object upon which thy

affections should be exercised. He hath all the properties in him that

a lawful desire looketh to, though the world cannot see it. He is an

excellent good, a necessary good, and one that deserveth the best of

our desires.

(1.) Consider he is an excellent good. Whatsoever is an attractive of

love is to be found in Christ. Oh, display his glorious beauties before

the soul! There is in him greatness, goodness, glory, mercy, peace,

comfort, satisfaction: these are the beauties of Christ. Look over all

the world and see if there be any that can do you so much good as he is

able or willing to do. Cant. v. 10-16, The spouse describeth her

beloved as a comely young man, as one of the greatest perfections. It

would be too large to go over every particular of that description;

only, in the general, observe that the Spirit of God useth such

expressions as serve to discover outward beauty, to show us that

whatever we admire in the creatures is, in a far more eminent degree,

to be found in God and Christ. I know not how to be particular in this

large field; only I shall a little single out the name of God to you,

as it is said, Thy name is as an ointment poured forth; therefore do

the virgins love thee.' Cant. i. 3. And the desires of God's people are

always expressed to be towards his name in the scriptures. I shall

mention two attributes, and pour out the savour of them, and display

the beauty of them, which shine most gloriously in Jesus Christ;

namely, his power and his mercy,

(1st.) His power and might. Christ is spoken of to be the desire of the

nations, when he gave forth the greatest experiences of his power: Hag.

ii. 7, I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall

come.' Who would not desire him that is able to secure him against all

fears, to keep him in the midst of all dangers, and to comfort him in

all conditions? If a man would long after any person, he would after

him that is able to shake the nations and to secure him against the

common visible fears of mankind. Men run after things for a little

satisfaction and security, but still this troubleth them; they must

die, and then all their shifts will not serve the turn: Prov. xi. 7,

When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish.' Then all his

desires--wife, children, friends--will not serve the turn, when his

cold corpse must be laid in the grave. But now Christ is so powerful,

that he is able to secure us against this fear, to comfort us in death,

and to raise us when dead.

(2dly.) His mercy is very great. A man's desire is restrained to things

many times, which though otherwise allurable, yet he hath no hopes to

obtain. Now here you may desire and be welcome, for your suit will be

entertained: Ps. cxi. 8, He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth

the hungry soul with goodness.' When the soul openeth itself to God, he

filleth it; the longing soul is satisfied: Rev. xxi. 6, I will give to

him that is athirst of the water of life freely.' You need not stand

off upon terms or punctilios; Christ will satisfy your longing freely;

he hath passed his word: John vi. 37, He that cometh to me, I will in

no wise cast out.' They may have their comfort hindered and interrupted

in their own thoughts, but he will in no wise cast them out.

(2.) Christ is a necessary good. Things may be excellent, yet if they

be not needful to us, the affections move but faintly after them. Now

Christ is unum necessarium, the one thing needful. It is not enough to

choose that which is good, but that which is needful: Luke x. 42, But

one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen the better part.' Many

follow after riches, pleasures, and honours, and outward comforts;

these may be good in their kind, but they are not needful. What good

will those things do us to all eternity? There the love of God will

only stand us in stead. The things of this world, according to that

usual saying among divines, are temporal in their use, but the

punishment for the abuse of them is eternal. The most necessary and

serviceable good to us is Jesus Christ; therefore get the judge to be

your friend against the assizes.

(3.) Consider, he hath deserved that our strongest desires should be

after him, not only as he is the being of beings, and the fountain of

our lives and mercies, but as he laid down his life for us: John xii.

32, And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to

me;' that is, I will do that which shall draw all men's desires to me;

he will leave such a debt of thankfulness upon them. Though we could

expect nothing from Christ, yet, by the law of thankfulness, our

desires are due to him.

Thirdly, I come now to the third thing propounded, which was to give

you some practical points and observations that concern man in the

ordering of his life and conversation. I shall handle but three, and so

quit this verse.

1. That God prosecuteth and accomplished his greatest designs by the

most unlikely and despised means. Jesus Christ, the great Saviour of

the world, was but a tender plant, which a man would be more apt to

tread upon and crush, than to cherish.

2. God cometh in for the deliverance of his people in times of greatest

despair and unlikelihood. For when the branches of Jesse were dried up,

and had no verdure, even then sprung up the greatest ornament of that

stock, although a root out of a dry ground.

3. Mean beginnings may grow up to great matters and glorious successes.

Christ, the tender plant, was to be a tall tree, under the shadow of

whose boughs all the fowls of heaven should lodge.

I begin with the first:--

Doct. 1. That God accomplished his greatest designs by the most

unlikely and despised means. I might trace the way of God's prosecution

throughout all succession of ages, and show you how this truth is

verified. He made us out of the dust, and that is contemptible matter.

And as hath been our creation, so hath been our preservation, even by

dust, that which we would trample upon rather than admire. But I shall

rather come to the reasons of it, which are as follow:--

1. That his glory may more appear. The weakness of the instrument

directs our thoughts to the power of the supreme worker. {Should things

work according to the constant tenor of nature, and the order of second

causes, God might have no glory. We should look upon successes and

deliverances as coming to us by chance, and not mind the great sway and

poise by which all things in the world are moved, and carried to their

proper ends. Therefore God doth some times more eminently put forth his

hand this way. The weakness of the instrument holdeth forth the glory

of the first mover and agent. The spirit of providence is discovered by

it: Zech. iv. 6, Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the

Lord.' My Spirit; that is, the invisible sway that directeth and

ordereth all things to their proper uses and effects. God worketh

sometimes the most eminent glorious things by these weak means, that

you may not rest on second causes.

2. That we may not see to the end of his counsels. A man doth not know

what God will do with despised branches; God worketh in such a way as

doth not suit with our usual expectations: Isa. xlviii. 7, They are

created now, and not from the beginning, even before the day when thou

heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.' The

things of God's providence are said to be new things, not created of

old, lest we should say we understood them; deliverance cometh that way

that we least looked for it. Certainly this is a new thing, it is not

according to the course of this world. God hath created some things of

higher value and greater efficacy than others, but they are the old

things. Notwithstanding, weak things are often made use of by God.

Should we see a man of a stately presence and comely lineaments and

proportion, we should straightway cry, This is the anointed of the

Lord, he is now before him, as Samuel did: 1 Sam. xvi. 7, Here is now

the person that God will work by;' but it is added there, God seeth not

as man seeth;' that is, God will not work according to the usual way of

your expectation. David, the least and the youngest, God chooseth him.

So again, man thinketh that the eldest son shall advance the family, as

being the flower of the parents' strength; and by the constant course

and tenor of nature, the elder proveth the most successful; yet many

times God appointeth otherwise: Gen. xxv. 23, The elder shall serve the

younger.' God will not have us look to the end of his counsels, and

therefore the younger is the most eminent.

3. That he may declare his displeasure against the pomp of the world.

God maketh least use of that which we so much adore, outward glory and

splendour. Most of his glorious instruments have been taken from the

plough and sheepfold. Christ himself, as I told you, honoured meanness

in his own person. You may see by Isa. ii. 11-22, that God's great

design in the latter days is to destroy the pomp of the world, the oaks

and the cedars, and whatever is lifted up: The day of the Lord of hosts

shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and every one that is

lifted up, and he shall be brought low.' God's choice is of the meanest

and most unlikely things, hereby showing certainly that there is not so

much as the world thinketh in outward glory, which hath always proved

unhappy to the church, who, when she enjoyed golden cups, had but

wooden priests. Though Constantine was a worthy instrument, yet

Seminatum est venenum in ecclesia--in his time poison was sowed in the

church.

4. That he may shame his enemies in their security. When they have to

deal with those that are unlikely to prevail, they think they shall

carry all before them, 1 Sam. xvii. 42. The ruddy youth was despised by

Goliath, and threatened terribly too, that his flesh should be given to

the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field; but yet he over

came the giant. The more shame doth God pour upon his enemies by far,

when they meet with their destruction where they least think of it.

Abimelech, after he had overcome Shechem, the hold of the god Berith,

and divers other strongholds, and there was but one fort stood out, had

his skull broke by a woman with a piece of a millstone, Judges ix. 53.

God ruineth them most ignominiously. Thus the Almighty goeth to war

against Pharaoh with flies, and frogs, and lice, Exod. viii., the most

putrid of all living creatures. The Moabites were put to flight before

the Israelites by a fancy, to wit, the sun shining upon the water,

which they thought to be blood. Pope Adrian was choked with a gnat. So

Judges v. 20, it is said, The stars in their courses (or paths) fought

against Sisera.' And what was that? Nothing but a little rain and hail,

as Josephus witnesseth; for as they drew to battle there fell suddenly

a storm of rain and hail just in their faces, that they could not see;

and it being on the backs of the Israelites, it drove them on with the

more fierceness against their enemies. Now by this way God poureth a

great deal of contempt upon his adversaries.

5. That he may take off all cause of boasting from the creature, that

the flesh may not glory in itself. Thus this very reason is urged by

the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 27-29, God hath chosen the foolish things of the

world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the

world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things in the

world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things

which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should

glory in his presence.' The things that are nothing in our respect and

valuation, God honoureth, and uses them as instruments, that we may

have no cause to boast of our strength or merit. The creatures are apt

to vaunt when they see there is anything of theirs concurring towards a

work, though they do in part see God's hand in it: Judges vii. 2, And

the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many

for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt

themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.' It is

observable that David called twice upon the mighty: Ps. xxix. 1, Give

unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength.'

When a people are mighty they are very loth to give the glory and

strength to God. Therefore God worketh by those that cannot any way

ascribe it to themselves.

6. Another reason may be, that God may provide for the esteem of the

meanest. God hath so tempered his providence, that he will leave no

cause of contempt and disrespect among us. He casteth honour upon the

meanest, and those that are not so high in the valuations of men. This

is the reason of God's various distribution, why he hath made some

mean, and some glorious, that he might upon times single out some of

those mean ones to show his power by. Look, as Christ saith of the

blind man, that he was made blind to fit him for a miracle--John ix. 3,

That the works of God should be manifest in him'--so some are poor,

some are unlikely, that the work of God might be made manifest, that he

might show his power and might and wisdom in working by them. He will

leave none to scorn and contempt. Despised persons shall be honoured by

him, when other more glorious persons are laid aside as useless.

To apply it now. It affordeth divers inferences of duty, suitable to

our divers cases and conditions.

1. To keep up the heart in case the means be weak. Take heed, do not

sink to any base despondency of mind or spirit. Usually when means are

weak men fly to wicked means, to a base desertion of the cause of God

that they have undertaken, and yield to every unworthy fear: Isa. viii.

6, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go

softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son.' Shiloah was a little

stream in Jerusalem. Now rivers are often put for the refreshments and

accommodations of a place. So that the sense is, they had rather basely

yield up to Rezin and Remaliah's son than wait upon God, to see what he

will do with the small forces in Jerusalem. Do not despise the waters

of Shiloah. It is the greatest honour that can be done to God, if we

keep up endeavours for him, though we have but weak means and

encouragements; but then faith is tried, how you can east yourselves

upon a bare promise.

2. In ease you have great means, fear them; God usually worketh by the

most unlikely. The prophet David in the Psalms often expresseth himself

as full of fears when his armies had been successful and victorious,

not doubting of God, but himself; doubting lest he provoke him by being

lifted up with his mercies, as you know in that place, 2 Chron. xxxii.

25, His heart was lifted up, therefore there was wrath upon him.'

David, when he had great strength, must needs fall to numbering of the

people, 2 Sam. xxiv. 11. It is a sad sign of speedy ruin when a people

reckon and rely upon their strength. The more it is, the less it should

be in your value and estimation. Asa had an army of six hundred

thousand, and yet, 2 Chron. xiv. 11, he saith, We have no power.' Get

it out of your hearts; it is no strength to you unless God go with it.

3. la case weak means have been successful, give God the glory, and do

not boast. This is visibly one of God's ends in such providences, that

we may take notice of his strength. In other instances it is from God,

but in this most remarkably: as Pharaoh's magicians said, Exod. viii.

19, This is the finger of God.' There God remarkably discovereth

himself in such deliverances. We ascribe it to his power, but not to

his mercy. Therefore our care, as I told you, should be especially that

we do not ascribe the merit of it to ourselves, as we do ascribe the

working of it to God: Deut. ix. 4, Speak not thou in thine heart, after

that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For

my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land.'

Give the Lord the praise. This is our case; our praise should live

beyond the day of its public solemnisation.

I proceed to the second point, viz.:--

Doct. 2. That God cometh in for the deliverance of his people in times

of greatest despair and unlikelihood. I will give you a few places.

Zech. xiv. 7, At evening time it shall be light;' that is, sepulcrum

lucis, it shall break forth when a man would think that all things

should be enveloped and wrapped up in darkness. So Mat. xxv. 6, At

midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh,' when all

slumbered and slept; all expectation was given over. So Luke xviii. 8,

When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' All

things will be at such a desperate pass, that nobody will believe that

ever he will come. Faith there is taken for a confident expectation of

good success, not in its whole latitude, as it is falsely

mis-expounded.

The reasons are:--

1. That he may seize upon his enemies suddenly, even steal upon them,

as Christ did upon the world, when the sixth vial was poured out.

Christ saith, Rev. xvi. 15, Behold, I come as a thief;' that is, as one

not expected. So 1 Thes. v. 2, For yourselves know perfectly that the

day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night;' that is, with

respect to the suddenness of it. To wicked men it is unexpected.

2. That he may sufficiently try and exercise the patience and other

suffering graces of his people: James i. 4, Let patience have its

perfect work.' It is but a partial patience in a partial calamity. Then

it is perfect patience when it is thoroughly exercised. So also that he

may try their faith, whether they will believe in him or no, whether

they can fetch one contrary out of another: Hosea ii. 15, He hath given

the valley of Achor for a door of hope.' And so for prayer, and to stir

up delight in him.

Use. Do not then give over your dependence upon God in the worst of

times: Gen. xviii. 14, Is anything too hard for the Lord?' Unbelief

stumbleth most at God's power; when we cannot see which way we shall be

helped, then we are apt to doubt. But at such times consider:--

1. You have no cause to distrust God; though he doth not find means, he

can create them. The root of Jesse, though there be no branches, it can

bear a sprig. God, that could make the world out^ of nothing, can

preserve the church by nothing; you do not know his in visible way of

working. Believe beyond what you can see. Luther was wont to comfort

himself, when all supplies failed, with this, that God was alive: Dan.

ii. 34, A stone cut out without hands, smote the image upon his feet,

that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.' In the mount of

the Lord it shall be seen.' It is a spiritual proverb, Gen. xxii. 14:

in the greatest extremities the Lord will appear, and provide for those

that commit themselves to him.

2. You have much ground of confidence: Ps. cii. 13, 14, Thou shalt

arise and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea, the

set time, is come: for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and

favour the dust thereof.' Now you are in a condition fit for

deliverance: Deut. xxxii. 36, For the Lord shall judge his people, and

repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is

gone, and there is none shut up or left.' God puts his people into such

a condition in which deliverance will be most welcome, and then he

bestoweth it upon them. Wait upon him now you are in a condition for

God to help. When Caligula was angry with Philo, saith he, Now God will

help, for the emperor is angry.'

I come now to the last point.

Doct. 3. That mean beginnings may grow up to great matters and glorious

successes. This is admirably set forth by the prophet Ezekiel, chap.

xvii. 22-24, Thus saith the Lord God, I will also take of the highest

branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top

of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high

mountain, and eminent: in the mountain of the height of Israel will I

plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a

goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all fowls of every wing; in the

shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell And all the trees of

the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree,

have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made

the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken, and have done it.' As

it was with Christ, so it is many times with his followers; as in many

instances. Jacob from himself and his staff was multiplied into two

bands, Gen. xxxii. 10, meaning his company of children and cattle, so

divided to meet Esau. David was taken from feeding of sheep to feed

Israel: Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71, He chose David also his servant, and took

him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young, he

brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.'

Saul, when seeking his father's asses, found a kingdom. Christ's

kingdom sprang from a small beginning. This might also be shown from

the great spreading of Satan's kingdom, many times from little matters:

it is well known that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.' Arius,

a private priest in Alexandria, drew the whole world after him; as

Montanus and other heretics might be said to do. We should not

therefore lay too much on success. So Rev. xii. 3, The dragon drew the

third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth.'

The reasons of this in short are these:--

1. God's sovereignty over us, as we are his creatures; he that hath

made us, can do what he will with his own.

2. Because he will keep the world in a continual vicissitude and

change, some up, some down.

Use 1. To teach us to look to beginnings: Ps. cxxix. 1, 2, Many a time

have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: many a time

have they afflicted me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed

against me;' Cant. ii. 15, Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that

spoil the vines.' This is added for abundant caution, to teach the

church to prevent errors and heresies in the beginnings of them, before

they spread, and grow strong and incurable; to crush things in the

beginnings.

2. To support the hearts of Christians when they first put forth into

the world: Eccles. iv. 14, For out of prison he cometh to reign.' One

seed multiplieth into many. Broad rivers come from a small fountain:

Job viii. 7, Though thy beginning was but small, yet thy latter end

shall greatly increase.' Men rise like hop-stalks out of the dunghill,

by the pole of Providence.

3. To keep men from despairing of public mercies. When the child of

deliverance hath put forth the hand, it will come to the birth: Zech.

iv. 10, Who hath despised the day of small things?' Christ was but a

branch at first.

4. To encourage those that are weak in grace, Mat. xii. 20. God will

not despise smoking flax, though it cannot flame: Phil. i. 6, Being

confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you

will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' Be humble and thankful

in admiring God's goodness towards you, saying, as David, Who am I, O

Lord, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me

hitherto?'

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THE THIRD VERSE.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted

with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him: he was despised,

and we esteemed him not.

THE prophet proceedeth now to the second scandal and offence that the

Jews took against Christ, who therefore would not believe the report

that was made of him. The first was Christ's meanness in his birth and

life, which we have handled in the second verse. The next is his

sufferings, and those are either of his life or of his death, which are

set forth in divers verses following. In this verse the prophet's

expressions do chiefly hint the sufferings of his life. Here are divers

phrases which discover the several degrees of Christ's sufferings,

though I shall not give them to you in the order of the words, because

the expressions lie scattered here and there. The degrees are these:--

1. He was not esteemed.

2. He was actually despised, and became an object of scorn and

contempt.

3. He was liable to great miseries; and--

4. He was continually pestered with them. This is the sum of this

verse. I will make it out unto you from the phrases, opened as the text

presenteth them.

1. He is despised and rejected of men. That which we read rejected of

men, the Hebrew chadal ishim, signifieth the leaving off of men.' It

may bear a double interpretation:--

[1.] That Christ was so extremely mean and miserable that it was

impossible to be lower as a man. He was the minimum quod sic of a man;

if he had gone any lower, we must have had some other name for him. In

this sense it is said, Ps. xxii. 6, I am a worm and no man, a reproach

of men, and despised of the people.' You must seek for some name for

him among the worms.

[2.] The leaving off of men; that is, there men left him, they would

converse with any other, but not with him. Nobody would deign him

speech and company; he was least of all. Our interpretation seemeth to

favour this exposition. There is not much matter which you prefer.

2. A man of sorrows. A Hebraism to express the height of misery. They

use the genitive case of the substantive to express the superlative

degree of anything, as a man of Belial' for a very wicked man; so a

psalm of degrees,' an excellent psalm. This expression compelleth some

of the wiser Jews to feign two Messiahs, one that is already come, that

walketh up and down on the earth under the shape of a beggar, that he

may satisfy for the sins of the Jews, and is in a great deal of misery.

The other a glorious king, whom they do as yet expect; that is the

second expression.

3. Acquainted with grief. Familiaris morbo, so Tremellius renders

it--knowing diseases; that is, by his own experience. Disease is put

for any kind of trouble and molestation, because they are the things

that are most irksome. For otherwise Christ, though he had many griefs,

yet he had no diseases, these usually arising out of some intemperance

or badness of constitution, neither of which agree to Christ. He took

our personal, not individual infirmities; hunger and thirst he was

acquainted with, not stone or gout or fever.

4. And we hid as it were our faces from him, or, as it is in the

margin, He hid as it were his face from us; the Hebrew will bear both.

It is either a hiding faces from him or from us. Since the text doth so

indifferently allow of both these renderings, I shall show you the

sense of both. He hid his face from us, which the Septuagint follows,

to` pro'sopon autou. His face was turned away as it were; in modesty

say some, as if he were ashamed of the meanness of his condition; but

that is unworthy of Christ. The Chaldee paraphrase seemeth to hint

another sense, subtraxit vultum majestatis suae--he hid the countenance

of his divine majesty; that is probable, but doth not thoroughly reach

the force of the expression. Others thus--he hid his face as a person

doomed to die, as sentenced persons had their faces covered, or when

much discountenanced. Thus Haman, when in displeasure with the king,

Esther vii. 8, it is said his face was covered.' So in great sorrow and

mourning, Thou shalt cover thy face,' Ezek. xii. 6; or it is more

properly in shame, or as a token of being unworthy the society of men.

So it was with the lepers, who by the law were to put a covering upon

the upper lip, Lev. xiii. 45. It is not difficult to reconcile any of

these senses with the matter in hand. But let us consider the other

reading, We hid our faces from him.' This is a natural gesture, and at

all times signifieth some abomination and withdrawing of the mind from

a thing; but sometimes it is in one affection, and sometimes in

another; as--

[1.] Sometimes in anger; to hate them so as we will not give them a

look. Thus God is said to hide his face from his church to express his

anger against their sins.

[2.] Sometimes in shame. We turn away from them, as rich men do from

their poor friends; they scorn to give them a look.

[3.] Sometimes in pity. It is such a sad sight that we dare not look on

it. I rather prefer that of a scornful shame, being ashamed to follow

such a poor, mean, miserable man. Thus many now hide their faces from

Christ, when it is disgraceful to close with him. There is nothing now

remaineth that is difficult; only it followeth, he was despised and

looked upon as a man leprous, whose face should be hid; and therefore

we did not esteem him worthy of our company. The sum of the verse

amounts to thus much, that Jesus Christ was so miserable in regard of

his outward face and appearance, that he was looked upon as an abject,

as a man not fit to be kept company with. I shall only note these two

things more for explication, because upon them I shall build two

points, which shall be all I will handle out of this verse.

1. Some of these expressions set out Christ as indeed he was;

2. Some, only as he was in the apprehension of men. He was in himself a

man of sorrows,' but in the eye of man he was a despised and an abject

person: the one is the cause or the occasion of the other; and the

prophet so intermingleth these two things in this verse, that the

phrases may be taken both ways--how Christ was in himself, and how he

was to men.

1. As he was in himself: from thence I observe this point:--

Doct. I. That Christ's appearance in the world, and state of life among

men, was not only very mean, but very miserable.

2. From men's judgment of him: upon this account I observe:--

Doct. 2. That carnal men do not look upon Jesus Christ as worthy of any

esteem from them.

I shall begin with the first, viz.:--

Doct. 1. That Christ's appearance in the world, and state of life among

men, was not only very mean, but very miserable.

I shall take the several degrees in the text to make it out unto you.

1. The lowest step is negative; he was not esteemed.' He had not that

due respect and value in the world that he might justly look for; and

it is a misery to be slighted by those to whom we intend the greatest

good. It was much that they should not own him as some eminent man; it

was more that they would not give him the respect due to any man, to an

ordinary prophet: John i. 11, He came to his own, and his own received

him not.' There is an emphasis in the words his own, those over whom he

had a special care, and to whom he meant the greatest good. Mark,

everything else acknowledged Christ, but man would not. The angels

ushered in his birth, Luke ii. 14. The wind and seas obeyed him, Mat.

viii. 27. The fish paid his tribute to him, Mat. xvii. 27. The wild

beasts, when he was in the wilderness, would not touch him, Mark i. 13.

The Holy Ghost would have us to note it as a special circumstance, that

he was in the wilderness forty days, and he was with the wild beasts.'

Nay, the very devils confessed him, Luke viii. 28. The man that had

many devils fell down before him. and cried out, and with a loud voice

said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high?'

Yet man would not own him. They thought any one was more like to be the

Messiah than he. John, though he never did miracles, nor taught with

such authority as Christ did, yet they sent an honourable message to

him, John i. 19. The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to

ask him whether he were the Christ or no. Bat now they never sent an

honourable embassy to Christ, never put him to the question, but only

in a scoff asked him whether he were the Christ or no. Yet John gave

them as much ground of distaste as Christ did, freely taxing their

sins. John was sent to in an honourable way, because he was a priest's

son, but Christ only a carpenter's son, therefore Christ was not

esteemed. Anything is enough to prejudice them that are not affected to

a thing or way. Nay; they not only preferred John before him, though

famous for no miracles, but even Barabbas before him: John xviii. 40,

When Pilate said, Will ye that I release unto you the king of the Jews?

Then cried they all, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas

was a robber.' Any rather than Christ. They had very little esteem of

Christ, you see. And this fault is objected to them; indeed, it was a

great aggravation of their guilt: Acts iii. 14, Ye have denied the Holy

One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you,' even

a cruel highwayman before Christ. Esteeming is a relative word, and it

implieth every one, even the worst of men, to be higher in their

thoughts than Christ.

2. As he was not esteemed, so actually he was despised, and became an

object of scorn and contempt.

[1.] He was despised and contemned in their thoughts. They looked upon

him as an abject, the leaving-off or off-scouring of men; they thought

it was a disgrace for them to converse with him; and therefore

Nicodemus went to Christ by night, John iii. 2, as being ashamed to be

seen in his company by day. So John ix. 22, the blind man's parents,

that had received a great benefit, by him, would make a lie rather than

own him. It is said, These words spake his parents, because they feared

the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess

that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.' They

thought him unworthy of their company, and therefore every one hid his

face from him, and would not seem to look that way.

[2.] In their words they used all kinds of reproaches, they thought no

name bad enough for him: John viii. 48, Say we not well, that thou art

a Samaritan, and hast a devil?' There was such a deadly feud between

the Jews and the Samaritans, that to call a man a Samaritan was the

greatest disgrace that could be, and the ready way to beget him public

hatred. Here are two scandals fixed on Christ--a Samaritan, and one

that hath a devil; the one reflecteth upon his person, the other on his

doctrine. And that which is worthy of your notice is, that to that of

his doctrine Christ answereth, but doth not care how they vilified his

person. In Mat. xi. 19, they call him a glutton, a wine-bibber, and a

friend of publicans and sinners.' They looked upon him as an object of

common scorn and hatred. So they accounted him as an enemy to Caesar;

anything that would make him obnoxious to danger and scorn. They

likewise called him a deceiver: Mat. xxvii. 63, Sir, we remember that

that deceiver said, while he was yet alive.' Proud, insulting malice!

They would not call him by his own name, but as if he had been so

notoriously guilty, that it was a sufficient description of him to say

that deceiver.

[3.] In their general carriage towards him. To any that seemed to own

him, they showed a great deal of contempt and scorn. Because the blind

man acknowledged him, they cast him out, or excommunicated him, John

ix. 34. So John vii. 52, by way of taunt they said, Art thou also of

Galilee?' But chiefly their behaviour to his person was intolerable,

and that in the last scene of his life: Mat. xxvi. 68. The rude

soldiers make him their game, and blinding him, say, Prophesy unto us,

thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?' So it is prophesied, Mat. xx.

19, They shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and

to crucify him.' There is a special emphasis in these words--that he,

being a Jew, should be delivered over to the Gentiles to be mocked,

scourged, and crucified. Nothing was more vile and abominable, insomuch

that they would not come into the place where Pilate sat judging, for

fear of being contaminated: John xviii. 28, And they themselves went

not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled.' Therefore it

was that Pilate went forth to them, for they would not come in. Look,

as it was an aggravation of David's fault that he made Uriah to be

slain with the sword of the children of Ammon, 2 Sam. xii. 9, so it was

of the Jews' contempt, that they should deliver him to the Gentiles to

be mocked and scourged. Thus you see how he was despised, and looked

upon as an abject.

3. A man of sorrows. This noteth the multitude of his afflictions, and

the greatness of them. He was a man assaulted with all kinds of

sorrows, and grievously afflicted with them. A man of sorrows, that is.

a man of miseries; the affection is put for the condition, because they

left a great impression upon him. All kinds of sorrows he endured for

our sakes, as scoffs, persecution, contempt, unkindness, miseries,

hunger, thirst, faintness, and weariness. I might tire you with a woful

variety of this nature; the scriptures everywhere testify it. Let me

briefly tell you, that they were as much as might fit him to be a

mediator; his sufferings are to be measured by his mediatorship; and

then, they were such as might stand with the holiness of his person.

Now, these sufferings were the more grievous to him, because his senses

were most quick and smart; and, therefore, he must needs, above other

men, have a sensible apprehension of what was done to him. The best

constitutions have the most vigorous affections; and therefore, it

could not be but that all these sufferings should leave very dolorous

impressions upon the spirit of Christ. And, indeed, it is more than

probable that he was so wasted with them, and they had so dried up the

moisture and freshness of his countenance, that when he was little

above thirty they thought him near fifty years of age: John viii. 57,

Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?' He was

little above thirty; but griefs blasting his beauty, he might appear

more aged than he was. Thus you see he was a man of sorrows. I do not

touch, upon the last scene of his death, the sorrows of his life justly

give him that character.

4. Acquainted with grief. It was not only now and then, but it was

always miserable with him. Acquaintance with a thing or person implieth

the usualness of it. Now, Christ was acquainted with grief, that is,

accustomed to it, never freed from it. As soon as he began to live he

began to suffer. He was exiled, and forced to fly into Egypt as soon as

he was a month old, and ever afterward hunted up and down by the

pharisees. Trace him through all the scenes of his life, from the

cradle to the cross, from the stable to Golgotha, and you shall see

that grief was his familiar--he had no other companion. It is an

observation in that letter that Lentulus sent concerning him (if that

letter be not forged), Visus est flere saepe, ridere nunquam--he was

often seen to weep, never to laugh, being always acquainted with grief.

And in regard of those cruel persecutions that did constantly attend

him, he is called in the title of that psalm that sets out the misery

of his life, Ps. xxii., The hind of the morning;' see the title, A

psalm concerning Aijeleth Shahar,' that is, Christ, who was always from

the very morning hunted and worried by the dogs. He complaineth of it

in that psalm, ver. 16, The dogs have compassed me.' The dogs hunted

him in the morning early and betimes. Herod, one of the dogs, as soon

as he was born, endeavours to murder him. So at the time of Christ's

death the Holy Ghost giveth us this circumstance: John xviii. 28, That

they led Christ from Caiaphas unto the judgment-hall, and it was early

in the morning.' The bloodhounds were up to worry him betimes in the

morning. Well, you see Christ was acquainted with grief, even early,

from his first breath to his last gasp, from his lying in the cradle to

his consummatum est on the cross. Nay, it is very observable, that in

the short glory of his transfiguration he was not without sorrow, for

even then he remembered his death to come, as you shall see, Luke ix.

31; when Moses and Elias appeared to him in glory, They spake of his

decease, which should be accomplished at Jerusalem.' In the midst of

his glory he would remember his death. And therefore, you see, well

might the prophet use the expression acquainted with grief. So much for

the determination of the point, to prove to you that Christ's state of

life was so miserable in the world.

I shall now show you why he was so miserable. Why did he under go all

these sorrows? It is a profitable question; as the former for our

meditation, so this for our faith. The causes either respect God or the

creature.

First, In respect of God; and so it was:--

1. That his promises might be fulfilled. God had foretold it so by the

prophets: Mark ix. 12, It is written of the Son of man, that he must

suffer many things, and be set at nought.' Now this sentence is nowhere

in one prophet, but the meaning is. It is the constant drift and result

of all that is written concerning the Messiah, that he must suffer many

things, and be counted as nothing; though he alludeth specially to this

chapter and the 22d Psalm. This was so far from being a scandal against

Christ, that it rather confirmed him to be the Messiah, for he was just

such a one as was promised and prophesied of.

2. That he might declare his obedience to God's decrees and

appointment. It is said, Heb. v. 8, that He learned obedience by the

things that he suffered.' He did by experience find what it was to have

a Father whom he must obey, though otherwise he were every way equal to

him. But the excellency of his person exempted him not from Buffering;

for, having taken our debt upon him, his holy life was a part of his

obedience to his Father, but his sufferings showed a higher degree of

it, which made him a full and complete mediator. To obey God in the

ordinary way of our actions is a common lesson to every holy person;

but Christ's obedience was chiefly tried by his sufferings, because,

being without sin, he never deserved it. Thus much in respect of God.

Secondly, In respect of men; and so--

1. That he might set off his love to us. Usually they are dearer to us

that have suffered anything for our sakes, than they that have

otherwise done us good. And therefore Christ, to set off his love,

spent a miserable thirty-two years and upwards in the world, and

afterwards died a terrible death; and that not for himself, but for us.

Some say it was to merit his own glory; but it is not good to divert

the stream, or any part of it, from that channel in which Christ

intended it should run: Dan. ix. 26, The Messiah shall be cut off, but

not for himself.' Christians, all his sufferings were for you.

2. That he might be a perfect mediator for us. Christ was perfect in

himself, but he wanted somewhat to make up his office: Heb. ii. 10, It

behoved the captain of our salvation to be made perfect through

sufferings;' Heb. v. 8, 9, By the things which he suffered he was made

perfect.' Christ was perfect in himself, but not perfect in his office;

he was made perfect as a captain of our salvation when he went through

those things in which others were to follow him.

3. That he might be able to comfort his people in the like distresses:

Heb. ii. 18, For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is

able to succour them that are tempted.' A man can the better comfort

others, when he hath had the experience of their miseries in himself.

Christ knew how sad it was with his own soul when he was acquainted

with these griefs, and therefore no doubt he is willing and able to

help you. Experienced men are pitiful; those that have suffered pity

others when they are in the like case. It is God's charge often to

Israel, that having been strangers in the land of Egypt, they should

learn to pity strangers. And certainly whatever is good in the

creature, is eminently so in Christ. He hath stronger impressions of

affection and pity than we have. Mark what the apostle saith: Heb. iv.

15, For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the

feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted as we are,

yet without sin.' Christ knew how it was with himself. In the like

experiences and afflictions, therefore, it cannot but work upon his

bowels, though men's hearts are shut up.

To apply it now. Out of all that I have spoken to you, you may infer

much for your instruction.

1. The matter, what he suffered.

2. The manner, how he came to suffer.

3. The reasons and ends why, for our good; so that here are three chief

lessons for a Christian to learn:--

Patience and comfort.

Humility.

In the end, love.

It teacheth you patience and comfort. There is a double ground for

that. Christ went before you, and he did it that he might have

experience and a fellow-feeling of your case and sufferings. Here is

the comfort of God's people; they have a high priest that is touched

with the feeling of their infirmities. Christ's bowels melt over them

whilst God's hand striketh them. A man may have moral grounds of

comfort, but here is the true ground, Christ sympathises with us: John

xviii. 10, The cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink

it?' Though it is a bitter cup, yet it is my heavenly Father that hath

put it into my hands. There is a difference between the strokes of God

upon the wicked and his own people; strokes upon the wicked come from

God's hand, but those upon the godly from God's heart. Bear up, then,

against the greatest crosses. Art thou looked upon as an abject, the

leaving-off of men? So was Christ, and so are many of God's people: 1

Cor. iv. 13, We are made as the filth of the world, and are as the

off-scouring of all things.' The world's filth, worms, not men. Worms

are bred out of the world's filth.--worms, not men. Worms are bred out

of the world's filth. Art thou compassed about with losses, affliction

upon affliction, like waves one in the neck of the other? do men hide

their faces from thee, or art thou in no repute, no respect with them?

so was Christ, and Christ knoweth what it is for thee to be in such a

case. Job heareth of loss upon loss from the Chaldeans, Sabeans, Job i.

14. It is often repeated, While he was yet speaking, came another and

said.' So Jer. xxx. 17, Zion, whom no man looketh after.' God's people

have often become the wagging of the head, but Christ' sufferings teach

us patience.

[2.] Humility. Christ taught us this in his meanness, and he teacheth

it in his sufferings. See the difference between Christ and Adam;

Christ would be most abject, Adam would be higher than man. The highest

is become the humblest; our first parents would be as gods, and Christ

would scarce be as man, even be man's leavings. It is good to learn

humility from this pattern showed us in the mount, even in Mount

Calvary; to deny ourselves to set up Christ, as Christ denied himself

to set up us. Of all things, men cannot endure to cast their crowns at

the Lamb's feet--I mean, to sacrifice their glory and esteem to Christ,

or to be nothing that he may be all in all. Pride is like the heart,

first living and last dying in a man: 3 John 9, Diotrephes loved to

have the pre-eminence.' Some are all for precedency, they would be

preferred before others. You see Christ is otherwise. He freely

submitted himself to the most abject condition. Thus it teacheth us

humility.

[3.] Considering the end,--his love. All this was for you. Oh., what

will you do for God again? Christians should blow up the fire of love

by these thoughts. How are we wrought upon by every petty kindness that

passeth between man and man! How much more, then, should the

consideration of what Christ hath done and suffered endear him to us?

And this was done for our sakes. Let it melt our hearts, and draw them

out in love to God again.

I proceed now to the second point.

Doct. 2. That carnal men do not look upon Jesus Christ as worthy of any

esteem from them. Christ was mean and miserable, and therefore the

world esteemed him not, but despised him rather, and looked upon him as

an abject, unfit for their converse and society.

I shall give you a few reasons for it.

1. Because they look altogether upon the dark part (as I may speak) of

Jesus Christ; they do not consider the light and the more glorious

part. In sins they look altogether upon the light part, and not upon

the dark--the pleasures of sin, and not the cross and shame that

attends them. Now, taking into their thoughts Christ's worst, and sin's

best part, no wonder if they miscarry in their judgments. They look

upon the world's pomp, but not the world's vanity; upon the pleasures

of sin, but not upon the shame and horror that accompany them.

Therefore it is said, Prov. v. 3, 4, The lips of a strange woman drop

as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but her end is

bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword.' Men think to

swallow the honey, but do not think of the wormwood. Things are to be

esteemed as they prove in the end. Heathens had some light into this

truth, that no man is happy till the end, till they try how things

prove with them. Things are better known in their departure than in

their coming; the sting is in the tail, and therefore you shall see it

is said, Deut. xxxii. 29, Oh, that they were wise, that they would

understand this, that they would consider their latter end.' That is

wisdom, not to look upon things as they are at present, but what they

will prove at the latter end--how we shall find them upon trial. But

with Christ they deal otherwise; they look upon Christianity as a hard,

laborious thing. Many sad fears they have; a great deal of duty to be

performed; much care, much toil, and much grief attends it; with many

other inconveniences. But they do not look upon the sweet of all this:

Rom. vi. 22, But now being made free from sin, and become the servants

of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting

life.' There is a good end. Carnal men tiling it a hard saying to part

with pleasures, profits, honour, esteem, to part with all for Christ,

and to expect nothing in this world but grief, and sorrow, and care.

This is sad. Christ is not esteemed, because they look upon him with

such an unequal, unfaithful eye. We are willing to stumble at his

meanness, but will not reflect upon his excellency.

2. Because carnal men want that which should set off Christ to them as

an object fit to be esteemed; and that is two things--the Spirit's

discovery, and faith's eye; the one to reveal the object, the other to

apprehend it.

[1.] They want the Spirit's discovery. A man cannot see the sun without

its own light; no more can you see Jesus Christ in his beauty without

the Spirit of Christ. Reports and education may do much, but it is the

Spirit that sets forth Jesus Christ as a worthy object. What is the

reason that many that know Christ and profess him, yet cannot esteem

him? The Spirit hath not convinced them of the worth that is in him. A

man may be convinced of the truth of a thing, but not practically

convinced of the worth of it. And flesh and blood doth not reveal that

to us,' as Christ said to Peter. The reason why Christ is valued by his

own people is because he hath discovered much of himself to them.

[2.] They want the eye of faith, and that is the discovering part of

the soul, that showeth much of Christ to it. Till we have faith we

judge by sense and carnal reason, and then no wonder if we turn away

from him. Faith is the evidence of things not seen.' Heb. xi. 1. It

carrieth the soul within the veil, and showeth unto us better things,

and maketh them present in the heart through hope and the promises.

Faith and the Spirit discover a world of satisfaction, sweetness,

glory, excellency, and beauty in Christ. There are large discoveries of

God's love and purposes, and what he will do for his people.

3. There are perverse inclinations in the heart that carry the soul

another way. Men look upon everything as it cometh dyed in the colour

of their own affections. Here is the great depravation of nature since

the fall, that those things which should follow guide and sit at the

stern; vile affections besot the judgment: Rom. i. 26, with 28, God

gave them up to vile affections;' and presently afterwards, He gave

them over to a reprobate mind.' Men are so injudicious, because they

consult with their affections. Now they cannot make a right judgment.

It is true, things should be desired and loved as the judgment

propounds them to be good and true; but now, in the disorder of nature,

it is otherwise. We let our desires get the start of us, and therefore

men do not esteem Christ, because he is so opposite to the chief object

of their desires. A worthy thought of Christ would exasperate our base

affections that are carried to other things. Hear what the apostle

saith: Rom. viii. 5, They that are after the flesh do mind the things

of the flesh.' They mind only those things, they only savour and relish

them.

4. Because they do not know what it is to want Christ. Men make other

things serve instead of him, and therefore they do not care for Christ.

Now when the soul looks upon the insufficiency of all things else to

give rest and quiet to it, then it will prize him. When a man extremely

wants a thing, nothing will satisfy him until he obtain it. As Abraham,

for want of a child, though he had much, yet he crieth out, What wilt

thou give me, since I go childless?' Such is the language of the

soul--What is all this, since I have not Christ? Sampson his victory

could do him no good when he had no water to quench his thirst: Judges

xv. 19, Thou hast given me a deliverance, and now I shall die for

thirst.' Thus carnal men have other things, but they shall die and be

damned for want of Christ. If men were brought to this, to see that

there were satisfaction nowhere else for them, they would value him.

5. They do not know what it is to have an interest in Christ; they

never had experience of him. Here is the difference between Christ and

other comforts: The more experience we have had of them, the less

satisfaction we perceive to be in them; but the more experience we have

of Christ, the more we desire to have. Taste Christ once, and there

will be no room left for any other desire. Though you Want other

things, this maketh amends for all. As Austin crieth out, Quam suave

mihi subito factum est carere suavitatibus nugarum! A man may be weary

of other comforts, of the greatest comfort of life, but you never heard

of any that complained they had too much love for Christ. Men are

easily prejudiced against Christ that never tried him. They that

familiarly conversed with him among the Jews, they saw his miracles,

the others saw only his meanness.

Object. But you will say, Do not carnal persons think Jesus Christ

worthy of any esteem from them? How is it, then, that they think and

speak so honourably of him, and count it a dishonour to them not to

profess him? A Turk, or a Jew, or a pagan, they are terms of reproach

among us.

Ans. To solve this doubt I shall show you--

1. Affirmatively, in what manner they do esteem him.

2. Negatively, how they do not esteem him.

1. Affirmatively, how they may esteem him.

[1.] Hypocritically in their words: Titus i. 16, They profess they know

Christ, but in works they deny him.' It is not what a man speaketh out

of a little traditional knowledge. A man's carriage is the best measure

of his esteem. When the judgment determineth aright, the conversation

is proportionable in some measure; that followeth ultimum dictamen, the

last determination of the heart. Men may thus profess they know Christ,

and value him, who live in a habitual neglect of what he commands, and

indulge and allow themselves in a continual practice of what he hath

forbidden.

[2.] Indefinitely they may esteem him, that is, in some nice and bare

speculations, when they do not look upon him as commanding what is

contrary to their carnal desires; they consider Christ in an indefinite

way, not such a person as he is set forth in the word. Speculative

truths and general apprehensions do not thwart our corrupt desires. A

man may love Christ in general, but not in a particular way.

[3.] They may have some partial esteem for him, as conceiving him to be

able to bring them to happiness: John vi. 34, Lord, evermore give us

this bread.' And with Balaam they may wish, Oh that I might die the

death of the righteous, and that my last end may be like his.' They

would esteem Christ were it not for his hard terms of duty and

obedience.

[4.] Customarily, in a traditional way. They esteem Christ so far as he

is commonly esteemed of in the world. If anything recede from the

general form and usual rate of duties, it is base in their eyes, not

being honoured with the common custom and practice of men. Carnal

professors will despise others that do more than they. Singing of

psalms, repeating of sermons, Christian conference, these meet with a

scoff from them. Men of Michal's spirit will scoff at what is more than

ordinary, as she did at David when he danced before the ark: 2 Sam. vi.

20, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day!' But David replieth, If

this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile.'

2. Negatively, how they do not esteem Christ.

[1.] They do not esteem all of Christ.

[2.] Nor always. These two will somewhat clear it.

[1.] They do not esteem all of Christ. If Christ be truly precious to

the soul, then all of Christ must be precious; not only his name, and

offices, and sufferings, but also his ordinances, ministers, members,

and government. You must esteem every one of these. Many esteem Christ

in one thing, but not in another; they may delight in his mercy, but

not in his holiness; they may love him as a priest to die tor them, but

not as a king to rule over them; they will not submit to the laws of

his kingdom; they find no sweetness in his ordinances; they despise his

servants, they do not love a whole Christ. It is a fancy of their own

making; they think they esteem Christ, but they esteem him not as he

hath set forth himself in his word.

[2.] They do not esteem him always, nor at all times. It appeareth

plainly that Christ is set at nought by them in times of outward or

inward opposition. Our esteem is shown when it cometh to these cases.

(1st.) In time of outward opposition; when the profession of Christ is

oppugned, they lay it down, they do not think him worthy the suffering

for. Most men esteem Christ because of the common countenance that is

given to his ways in a state or kingdom, and therefore do they so often

vary. The same men that were Protestants in King Edward's days were

Papists in Queen Mary's, and Protest ants again in Queen Elizabeth's.

England hath been often used to these changes. Men look to the public

favour that is given to the ways of Christ, and so join with them; but

in times of disgrace and opposition they hide their faces from him,

they will not own him.

(2dly.) In time of inward opposition; they assent to the goodness of

Christ in the general, till it conies to a particular trial between him

and their lusts. When Christ cometh in competition with their sensual

pleasure, and honour, and estimation, then is he set at nought by them.

They did not esteem him upon these terms, to part with their lusts for

him. So much for the doctrinal part.

Use is for information, to give us the difference between carnal men

and the people of God. Christ is an abject to the one, and a jewel to

the other. It is good to observe this difference of esteem and

valuation, and therefore I shall discover it on both sides.

1. I shall show you how the wicked show themselves to disesteem Christ.

2. How the godly manifest their esteem to him.

1. How the wicked show themselves to disesteem Christ.

[1.] They prefer every base lust, the satisfaction of every sinful

motion, before him. What care they for obeying Christ, so they may

satisfy their present corrupt desires? It is said, Heb. xii. 16, that

Esau' (that profane person, as the Spirit of God brandeth him) for one

morsel of meat sold his birthright.' The birthright among the

patriarchs was a pawn of the blessing of being heir of the promise. Now

he esteemed the satisfaction of his sensual desires more than his

spiritual prerogative; like another profane person that said he would

not lose his portion in Paris for his portion in paradise. The Jews

would rather have Barabbas delivered to them than Christ. They chose

the vile pleasures of sin, or the vain things of the world, rather than

the sure mercies of David. These the apostle describes to be, 2 Tim.

in. 4, Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.' They prefer a

little contemptible pleasure before Christ. They venture their souls

for a minute's pleasure, for one dram or taste of it.

[2.] They prefer the pleasing of carnal men before him. They can rather

deny the motions of Christ's Spirit than the importunate solicitations

of a wicked friend. Many that are not allured into the tents of Shem

are easily drawn into sin. The most easy facile natures and

dispositions are hard enough to be wrought upon to any good, but they

are easily drawn to sin, and to continue wilful and stubborn to Christ.

It is said, Prov. vii. 22, He goeth after her straightway, as an ox

goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.'

Whereas a godly man saith as Joseph, How can I do this great

wickedness, and sin against God?' They cannot so readily comply;

others,--they will rather lose their souls than leave their wicked

company; they cannot say nay to a solicitation that pleaseth the lust.

[3.] They are so far from esteeming Christ, that they think he will be

a disgrace to them, and therefore they are ashamed to be joined to him

in a more strict and holy way, especially if they be great in the

world. They think to be religious is beneath them. Nicodemus, being a

rabbi, was ashamed to come to Christ before he was converted; but

afterwards this Nicodemus spake boldly for him: John vii. 51,

Nicodemus, that came to Jesus by night, spake boldly, Doth our law

judge any man before it hear him?' There is a base disposition in men;

they think religion a disgrace, and that it is an abasement to them to

stand publicly for the ways of God, to vary from the customs of the

world, to begin holy conference, to do something beyond the general

tenor and frame of profession in the world.

2. For the godly; they manifest their esteem of Christ divers ways.

[1.] By labouring after communion with him with all care and diligence,

and earnestness of desire. Oh, how they prize communion with him! Thy

loves are better than wine.' Cant. i. 2; Thy loving-kindness is better

than life,' Ps. lxiii. 3. They would rather have some intimations from

God of his love, than life, and comfort, and honour.

[2.] By rejoicing in him when they have at any time found him: Cant. i.

4, The king hath brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and

rejoice in thee;' that the king should give them any closet-mercies,

and the sweet solaces of his chamber: Isa. lxi. 10, My soul shall be

joyful in God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation.'

[3.] By prizing those things where they find most of Christ, viz., his

ordinances and servants, judging they are the excellent ones of the

earth: Ps. xvi. 3, and Ps. xxvii. 4, One thing have I desired of the

Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord

all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to in

quire in his temple.'

[4.] By their boldness in professing him. A man that is ashamed of his

religion dishonoureth it: Heb. xi. 16, They declared plainly that they

sought a country, that is an heavenly.' And St Paul saith, Rom. i. 16,

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.' Nature brands evil with

shame. They conceive more honourably of Christ's ways, than to be

afraid to be seen in them.

[5.] By seeking his honour and praise more than their own concernments.

It is enough if Christ be exalted. They would fain have him exalted not

only in their own hearts, but in the kingdom also where they live. Men

desire that what they esteem should be publicly advanced: Ps. xiv. 7,

Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When will the

Lord bring back the captivity of his people?'

[6.] By avoiding all means whereby Christ may be dishonoured and

disesteemed. They would have Christ held forth in their hearts, and in

their ways. Christians are often pressed to live to the glory of God:

Mat. v. 16, Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your

good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven;' 1 Peter li. 12,

Having your conversations honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they

speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which

they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.' One of their

questions will be, Shall I not dishonour God by this? Nathan, when he

came to David, telleth him he had made the name of God to be

blasphemed: 2 Sam. xii. 13, Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath

put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed

thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme,

the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.'

[7.] By accounting those things which are dishonourable in the world to

be honourable with Christ, such as reproaches and afflictions. It is

said, Acts v. 41, They departed from the council, rejoicing that they

were counted worthy to suffer for his name.' So St Paul saith, Acts

xxviii. 20, For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.' He

holds it up in triumph.

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THE FOURTH VERSE.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did

esteem Mm stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

THE prophet having given you the meanness of Christ's birth, and the

manner of his appearing in the world, beginneth now to draw towards his

death and passion, and in this verse entereth upon it, and doth not

barely describe Christ's agonies and fears, but showeth the cause of

it, confuting the folly of the Jews, who rejected Christ because he

came under this disguise of meanness and sufferings, by showing it was

for their sakes: Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our

sorrows.'

This text is the rather to be prized, because as it is a clear

conviction against the Jews, so it is a ground of all consolation to

Christians. It is a clear demonstration against the Jews; they could

never elude it, insomuch that when Luther urged this place to them,

they had but this poor shift, that certainly the people of the Jews did

not deserve these plagues and therefore the Messiah needed not to take

them away; or if they did deserve them, it was because they did not

persecute Christ enough, the pretended Messiah. Thus it is usual with

people to have an ill apprehension of their miseries. But other Jews

left all upon the reading of this chapter; and being asked why? they

answered, God was stricken and smitten, they could never put by that,

they said. And it is the ground of all consolation to Christians.

Luther said all St Paul's epistles were so, and those floods of

consolation flowed out of this fountain: He hath borne our griefs, and

carried our sorrows.'

Therefore, let us a little look upon it. The parts are two:--

1. Christ's love.

2. Man's unthankfulness.

1. Christ's love, which is set forth in that clause, Surely he hath

borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.' And there consider--

[1.] The certainty of what is averred of Christ: surely.

[2.] The acts of Christ's obedience, set forth in two words: he hath

borne, he hath carried.

[3.] The objects: they are griefs, sorrows.

2. Man's unthankfulness, in censuring Christ and despising him; and

there consider--

[1.] The persons: we.

[2.] The guilt: esteeming Christ stricken and smitten of God. These are

the parts; and that I may open them, I shall go over them in a short

comment and explication, and then clear a doubt about the quoting of

these words by St Matthew. I shall first go over the words.

Surely. To note--(1.) The reality of the thing in regard of Christ's

suffering, it was verily and really done. (2.) To note the truth of the

proposition; this is a true proposition. Christ hath borne our griefs;

he bore them, and it is true that he bore them really. And then for the

acts, he bore and carried. They note a susception or taking up of

things to put them upon our backs. And then the objects, our griefs,

our sorrows. The first word signifieth sicknesses, the last wounds. The

one importeth the sin, the other the punishment of sin. The Septuagint

translates it, outos ta`s amarti`as emon phe'rei kai` peri` emon

odunatai--he beareth our sins, and is pained for our sakes. Then the

specification of the object, our sins, our griefs. It implieth, first,

that it is for our sakes he endured these sicknesses and sorrows for

us. Secondly, He not only bore pains for our sakes, but the pains that

we should have endured, or at least equivalent to what we should have

borne and carried, if we had suffered for sin. And it implieth not only

the cause of suffering, but the quality of suffering. So much for the

first part.

2. For man's unthankfulness, yea, evil requital of Christ's love. For

here is first something implied, an unworthy refusal of him for our

saviour: yet we. Secondly, The ground of this refusal, expressed upon a

false supposition or surmise, that all these calamities came upon him

by the just judgment of God: we esteemed him stricken and smitten of

God. Some read quasi leprosum--stricken with a leprosy. Leprosy was

esteemed among the Jews as the greatest expression of God's anger. They

looked upon him as in the state of leprosy, as if he had the

expressions of God's anger upon him. And then as for smitten of God and

afflicted. Expressions are heaped up one upon another, to show the

height of Christ's sufferings, and their malice. He suffered much, and

they looked upon him as having all the expressions of God's anger:

Stricken, smitten, afflicted.'

But you will say, Was not this true? was he not stricken and afflicted

by God?

I answer--True, but not in their sense; they did not look upon

themselves stricken and smitten by God in him. For the matter of the

censure, it was right, but for the form and manner of application to

Christ, it is wrong.

But now to answer one objection to the whole, and I have done with the

explication.

If this be the meaning of the words, how cometh it then to be quoted by

Matthew in another sense? Mat. viii. 17, That it might be fulfilled

which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our

infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.' Where it is applied to the

healing of corporal and bodily diseases.

This is a doubt fit to be solved, and I shall answer it.

1. Some think, and, for aught I see, Junius is in the number, that this

place is to be meant of bodily diseases, as if it were an argument only

brought to prove that Christ was the Messiah by the power he exerted in

curing those diseases; and that this bearing and carrying intimated no

more than the bare taking them away. But if it be properly to be

understood of diseases, how will the last clause agree? for it is

nonsense to think he was stricken and smitten of God because he took

away diseases.

2. Others therefore think that the proper and literal sense is

concerning the bearing and taking away of sins and punishments, though

in an accommodative sense it has respect to diseases bodily. But how is

it said then, that it might be fulfilled,' which is a note of

difference when a text is quoted for the thing contained in it, or the

words alluded to in it? Therefore--

3. What is to be done then? I answer--We must distinguish of the sense

of a place. There is the proper and full sense, and the less principal,

secondary, and subordinate sense. So it may be applied to diseases,

which was some kind of representation of his great love in taking away

our sins, and is virtually so in this place, because sicknesses are the

effects of sin at least. And this action of Christ's taking away

diseases, was a type of his taking away sin. Now, Matthew applieth that

to the sign, which did more fully agree to the thing itself and the

truth signified. And observe this, for the clearing of this and other

scriptures: as the patriarchs in their actions, and in what they did,

were types of Christ, so Christ's own actions were in a manner types of

what he himself would more principally do, as casting out of devils,

dispossessing of Satan, healing the sick; and so the prophecy was

fulfilled in the type: and it was a taste of Christ's love when he

cured the sick and healed every disease. And so upon the cross, when he

bare our sins, and suffered for them; as it is quoted by Peter r who

expressly followeth the Septuagint's translation of this place, saying,

1 Peter ii. 24, Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the

tree.' Now the words being explained, I shall give you several brief

notes upon them; for if I should speak largely, I shall prevent myself

in the chapter. (1.) From that deep assertion with which this truth is

proposed, surely, look upon it, it is a sure thing: this is a true

proposition, that Christ did bear our sins and carry our griefs; it

noteth the truth of the thing, and the unquestionableness of it: this

surely chiefly relateth to that our sins; though it is to the whole

sentence, yet to that emphatically. The note then is this:--

Doct. 1. That it is a most unquestionable truth that Jesus Christ

suffered for our sins. As the centurion said, Mat. xxvii. 54, Truly

this was a just man, and the Son of God.' They had some tremulous

consent before, but then he puts it out of question: truly it was so,

he was some great man. But to prove it, take that place: 1 Tim. i. 15,

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ

Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' It is a sure thing, an

unquestionable truth. So the gospel of salvation is a word of truth,

Eph. i. 13. In regard of its effects, it is called there the gospel of

salvation; in regard of its property, the word of truth.

I shall prove it to you a little by parts.

1. It is an unquestionable truth against the Jews that he did not die

for his own sins, for to those the prophet chiefly speaketh: and I

should not be faithful to the text if I did not hint it. John viii. 46,

Christ maketh this challenge, Which of you convinceth me of sin?' not,

Who can lay anything to my charge? For they were ready to lay anything

to his charge, and to object against him as a traitor, deceiver,

glutton, demoniac, what not; but they could not make it good, nor

convince him of it. Nay, it is worth the observation, that God would

not surfer him to be condemned till Pilate had solemnly acquitted him

thrice by his own mouth. See it in one chapter, Luke xxiii. 4, He saith

to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man;'

and again, ver. 14, Pilate said to the chief priests, and the rulers,

and the people altogether, I have examined him before you, and have

found no fault in him touching those things whereof ye accuse him;' and

in ver. 22, And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath

he done? I have found no cause of death in him.' And there was nothing

but popular tumult, and a confused noise of voices, Crucify him,

crucify him,' but no cause specified. Just as Tertullian saith of the

old Christians, Suo jure nos inimicum vulgus invadit lapidibus et

incendiis--when they were dismissed from the judges, the common people

would tear them in pieces, but they could assign no cause. Therefore,

surely he hath borne our griefs.' As in the place before quoted, the

centurion and they that were with him, when they saw the earthquake,

and those things that were done, were forced to testify his innocence,

Surely this was some hero, some man highly favoured by the gods.

2. It is an unquestionable truth that he died for our sins, in that--

[1.] It is the sum of all truth: 2 Cor. i. 20, For all the promises of

God are in him yea, and in him Amen.' It is called a more sure word of

prophecy,' 2 Peter i. 19. That part of the prophets that concerned

Christ was more sure than all revelations and voices.

[2.] This truth is confirmed by God's oath, Heb. vi. 14-19, when God

made a promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he

sware by himself, saying, Surely in blessing I will bless thee;' which,

as the apostle reasoneth there, belongeth to us, through Christ. So

that we have two immutable things--God's promise, and God's oath.

Surely that is God's oath; if not, let me not be God.

[3.] This a truth confirmed by Christ's own testimony, by the apostles

and witnesses chosen to this purpose, whom the world was not able to

withstand. And by a multitude of miracles wrought by them, and

extraordinary gifts bestowed on them. Therefore it should be

entertained as a sure truth, as a sure word of promise.

Use. It serveth to show us how this proposition is to be entertained by

us, as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation and belief.

Such truths are so commended to us to show how they should be received.

It is to check our unbelief that these asseverations and commendations

are annexed to great truths. A physician commendeth some medicines, not

that they need it, but that the patient may the better take them. So we

say it is true, not as if there were a doubt of it, but that the act of

your faith may be the more revived and exercised upon these truths. Now

then close with this truth both in the general and particularly.

1. In the general, look upon it as a faithful saying, that Christ the

Son of God came into the world. There is a great deal of difference in

men's assent to the gospel in the general. Every one doth not believe

it to be a word of truth. First, In some there is but a conjectural

apprehension; it may be true, or it may not, for they never made a

strict inquiry into it, only received it by tradition. As the men of

Samaria, Christ telleth them, Ye worship ye know not what,' John iv.

22. So they take up the gospel at hap-hazard, not knowing the worth of

it, never feeling the power of it, nor experiencing the comfort of it.

Secondly, In others there is but opinion, in which the mind is strongly

swayed to think it true, but they cannot tell how it may prove. There

are fears and doubts of the falsehood, as well as of the truth of it.

They cannot contradict it, and yet cannot settle in it, for the

establishing of their souls. There may be some ungrounded overly

persuasions, which may work in them that which the apostle calleth an

enlightening, and a tasting of the powers of the world to come, Heb.

vi. 5. As some were drawn into baptism in the primitive church out of a

probable conceit of the truth of the gospel, there may be some flashy

momentary lightnings, but in few there are real and thorough

persuasions of the truth of this proposition.

2. In particular, we should get the riches of assurance of

understanding, that we may fetch comfort out of it for ourselves. We

should all say, For our sins Christ died; and if that word be too

common, my sins. Take heed of making God a liar: 1 John v. 10, He that

believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the

record that God gave of his Son.' Here is the oath of the Spirit of

God, Surely he hath borne our griefs.' There should be the like

confidence in our hearts as there is truth in the proposition. Do not

doubt of the sure word of promise. Many are loth to determine upon

comfort; they are afraid of presumption; they are afraid to look upon

the promises on the bright side: why then, look upon them in the

humbling way. Claim by the apostle's tenure, He came to save sinners,

of whom I am chief,' 1 Tim. i. 15. He came to die for sinners; why not

then for me? I am sure I am as much a sinner as any other man, and more

too. The faithful saying is, that Christ came to die for sinners;

surely I am sinner enough for Christ to save,--that you can say by

experience. Why, if the word be true, it is as true Christ came to take

away our sins.

But how shall I look upon this as a faithful saying, that Christ came

to die for my sins? Is not that to believe a lie, suppose I be a

reprobate?

Ans. [1.] The word of God excludeth none but those that exclude

themselves. We are to go to God's revealed will; that we are bound to

believe, though in his secret will it should not be truth. As Abraham

was bound to believe, after God's command, that Isaac should die under

his hand, though God had otherwise purposed; for you know it is said, 1

Tim. ii. 4, Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the

knowledge of the truth.' God showeth them that the promulgation of the

gospel is general.

[2.] Though every wicked man is not bound to believe that his sins are

pardoned, yet he is bound to come to Christ that he may obtain

forgiveness. Therefore I close this proposition with a great deal of

joy, that surely Christ came to pardon our sins, and to carry our

griefs. So much to this use and point.

2. From the first act of Christ's love, with the object of it: He hath

borne our griefs;' that is, took our sins upon him: the point is:--

Doct. 2. That Jesus Christ bore the guilt of our sins.

All our griefs were really transacted and cast upon him. The scriptures

delight much in the expression of Christ's bearing our sins, and it

implieth two things:--

1. A sublation, a taking of them away from us.

2. A susception of them upon himself. Look, as the sacrifice is said to

bear the iniquities of the people, and the two goats the slain goat and

the scape-goat--typed out Christ's death and resurrection: Lev. xvi.

22, And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land

not inhabited;' so Christ is said to bear our sins in his own body upon

the tree,' 1 Peter ii. 24--the guilt and the punishment of them. So

Heb. ix. 28, it is said, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of

many;' and John i. 29, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the

sins of the world,'--a'irei: the word signifieth both to bear and to

take away. Now, this bearing, in the language of the scripture,

implieth a real susception of guilt; not only Christ's taking away of

sin from us, but a taking of it into his own person; as Ezek. xviii.

20, The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall

the father bear the iniquity of the son;' that is, his wickedness and

his guilt shall not be transacted upon him. Now Christ bore our sins:--

[1.] That he might make a change with us: 2 Cor. v. 21, He was made sin

for us that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God

in him.' He would take our sins, that we might have his righteousness.

What a great exchange is here! As if a king should take a beggar's

weeds and dunghill rags for his own royal robes. It was much for Joshua

to have his filthy garments taken from him, more to have change of

raiment; most of all that Christ should take such cast-off rags upon

himself. We are righteousness in him, he is sin in us. In the great

contrivance of the covenant, everything is done by way of exchange. The

Son of God was made the Son of man, that the sons of men might become

the sons of God. He took our misery that we might have his glory. He

was born of a woman that we might be born of God. Christ was really sin

for us, that we might be really righteous in him.

[2.] That he might destroy sin in us, by taking it into his own person:

1 Peter ii. 24, He bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might

be dead unto sin,'--apogenomenoi: the word signifieth that we might be

unborn to sin: it cannot be fully rendered. We were before dead in

sins: Christ would make us dead to sin, and, therefore, he took it into

his own person. You know some foul diseases pass from us by the

transmission of the infection to others. Christ was infected, as it

were, by our corruptions, that we might be free. We, that were dead in

sins, are now dead to sin, the vigour and strength of sin being

extinguished by virtue derived from Christ's bearing of them, whereby

the soul is restored to health again.

The uses of this point are:--

1. To discover to us the love of Christ, whereby our faith hath

somewhat to fix and dwell upon. The love of Christ is seen in that he

would not only take away the guilt of sins, but take it into his own

person. Here is the lowest condescension, and so the highest expression

of love, that he was made sin.' This is that which is most ab horrent

from the purity of the divine nature, to be sin; and yet he was so for

our sakes; that was the lowest step and condescension that could be.

Christ was made many things for us, but there is the highest wonder of

his love, that he should be made sin for us. Usually that is the

highest expression of love, when men do not only stoop beneath

themselves, but do that which is contrary to their natures, to do us

good. As when a stern man doth not only serve our necessities in his

own way, but with great affability; and when a modest man is bold for

our sakes. These things take with us, when men deny their very tempers

and dispositions to serve us. This was the greatest self-denial in

Christ, to become sin. Oh, work it upon your hearts, and display it

before your faith! Here is cause of triumph: Col. ii. 14, Whatever was

contrary to us, Christ took it away, nailing it to his cross.' How

nailed it? It was nailed when Christ was nailed: he bore it in his own

person. Oh, how hath God provided for the triumph of our faith!

Doct. 3. I might further observe, that sin is our soul-sickness.

He took our griefs or sickness. The more gracious, the more healthy the

soul is: 3 John 2, I wish above all thing that thou mayest prosper and

be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.' Gaius had a healthy soul in

a sickly body. As a disease blasteth the perfection and beauty of the

body, so doth sin that of the soul,--it doth not thrive and prosper

under it. There are some sins that bear a great analogy and resemblance

with outward diseases, and affect the soul just as they do the body.

But I will not speak to that now.

I proceed to a fourth point from the second act of Christ's love.

Doct 4. That the Lord Jesus Christ took not only our sickness but our

sorrows.

He did not only bear our griefs, but carried our sorrows; that is, took

not only our guilt, but our punishment upon him; that is, the very

wrath that we should have endured if we had suffered for sin, even the

curse of the law and the wrath of God. He put himself in our stead;

Christ would give us an experience of what he freed us from in his own

person. That I may make this out to you, consider:--(1.) What; (2.)

How; (3.) Why Christ suffered.

1. What Christ suffered. His sufferings were not only outward and

visible, such as he endured in the garden, in the hall, and on the

cross,--buffetings, scourgings, taunting insultations, being mocked,

spit upon, crowned with thorns, pierced, crucified. Not only these, but

inward sufferings, such as were:--

[1.] The assaults of spiritual wickednesses. The devil, seeing Christ

under great agonies, thought he had a great advantage upon him, and

therefore was very busy with him. Now God gave him leave, and Christ

offered as it were the occasion, being stirred with passions; though,

as a glass of clean water that is shaken, there was no filth to arise.

God gave Satan leave, the chains of his providence being taken off from

him, as in that place, Luke xxii. 53, This is your hour, and the power

of darkness:' he hora kai he exousia tou skotous. Hell's licentious

time,--it was, as it were, let loose to do what it would. The devil,

who would tempt Christ in his fasting, would now much more in his

dissolution and desertion: hell had a kind of license to tempt Christ,

so far as it might stand with the innocency of his person.

[2.] The desertion of God the Father, whereby all comfort was eclipsed

and hidden from his soul; he was sequestered from all sense of comfort,

though the union were not dissolved. Therefore, he crieth out, Mat.

xxvii. 46, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Though he lost

his Father's love, it was not as if he had apprehensions that there was

any change in God towards him; God was the same to Christ still, though

not appearing in the same way: as the sun is the same, whether it shine

through a red or green glass, and so casteth sometimes a comfortable

and sometimes a bloody reflection.

[3.] He suffered inwardly the impressions of his Father's wrath, and

that was a heavy burden indeed; and, therefore, he saith, Mat. xxvi.

38, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' It is said, Gal.

iii. 13, He was made a curse for us;' not only deprived of love, but

made a curse. He suffered so much of the wrath of God, and underwent

the curse of the law, so far forth as it might stand with his office

and person, that, if he had not been God, he would have remained under

that curse to all eternity.

2. How he suffered. It was with a great deal of reluctancy and

consternation expressed in his prayers, fears, grief, insomuch that he

needed an angel to comfort him; and yet, notwithstanding, he was in so

great an agony, that he sweat great drops of blood: the word is

thromboi, crumbs and clots of blood, Luke xxii. 44. That implieth a

great deal of consternation of mind. Ordinarily, men, when they are in

a great passion, emit sweat; but the impression of it was so strong

upon Christ that he emitted blood,--nay, thick clots of blood, a sign

that his soul laboured under the violence of strong passions. How

poorly, then, do they provide for the honour of our Saviour that say he

suffered no more than the cruelty and malice of men! The martyrs have

suffered a great deal of more outward cruelty from men cheerfully, when

they have been sawed, burned, melted, roasted, harrowed, boiled in lead

or oil. They never felt much agonies and consternations, and,

therefore, there was more in Christ's suffering than man's cruelty.

3. Let us consider why he suffered, and how that will clear the

conclusion we have in hand.

[1.] He suffered to free us from the wrath which he endured, that was

one end: 1 Thes. i. 10, Even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to

come.' Therefore, he underwent it in his own person; and the pains of

hell did in a manner compass him round [about. The ground of this

reason lieth in this, that Christ was our surety and substitute, and,

therefore, was to subject himself to that wrath which we had deserved

by our sins, and should have endured in our persons, if he had not

redeemed us from it. Our surety must carry our sorrows. He was to

suffer not only for us, but in our name and stead; and the surety was

to pay the same sum of money that the debtor oweth: Heb. vii. 22, Jesus

was made a surety of a better testament.' The debt of punishment was to

be exacted of him, as well as the debt of obedience. Jesus was made our

surety, and he fully satisfied God's justice for that punishment that

we owed to him by suffering it in his own person.

[2.] He was to suffer to satisfy for our sins that he had taken upon

him; for our sins were really put upon Christ, as was shown in the

former point. And if the sins and the punishment, which was the wrath

of God, it followeth by a necessary consequence, that he who bore our

griefs should also carry our sorrows. The ground of this reason is,

because, as God meant to magnify his mercy at this time, so also his

justice. He would not pardon sin without satisfaction for sin in us, or

in our surety: Ps. cxvi. 5, Gracious is the Lord, and righteous.' Now,

if God had restored mankind without requiring our sins of Christ, he

had only discovered his mercy. Nay, if an ordinary death had been

accepted, as some dream of an acceptation, it had been all grace still.

Now, it was God's design to express his justice as well as his mercy:

Rom. iii. 25, Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through

faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of

sins.' And the apostle repeateth it, ver. 26, To declare, I say, his

righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that

believeth in Jesus;' that is, that he might be acknowledged just, even

while of mercy he forgave sins. This is what the light of nature

teacheth men, that justice must be satisfied before mercy could have a

free passage. And, indeed, in the business of believing, the soul

sticketh here: God is a just God, and this was what made the most

seeing and knowing heathens to be at a loss how divine justice could be

satisfied; and, therefore, to expiate guilt, they would give all that

was near and dear to them,--the fruit of their bodies for the sin of

their souls. Whereas the gospel, you see, holdeth it forth in a sweet

way,--Christ suffering the infinite wrath of his Father, even as much

as would have sunk any soul to hell eternally, if it had been laid upon

him.

These arguments, I conceive, are sufficient. I will not traverse all

the arguments and doubts that might be objected. Solid and fundamental

truths are much weakened and lessened in the hearts of the hearers,

when they are proposed in a controversial way; and therefore, lest I

should prejudice this comfortable doctrine, while I go about to confirm

it, I shall only touch upon two objections that concern the main state

of the point.

Object. 1. If Christ made a full satisfaction by bearing our sorrows

and his Father's wrath, how then doth God love us freely?--how is mercy

magnified?

I answer briefly--The freeness of God's love or mercy doth not exclude

the fulness of Christ's merit. You shall see the apostle joineth both

together, God's mercy and Christ's merit: Rom. iii. 24, Being justified

freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.'

Freely, in respect of us; we could contribute nothing of desert, nor

nothing of satisfaction toward it. There can be no price paid by

ourselves, nor by any for us. We could not satisfy for ourselves, nor

merit a satisfier. And therefore there is a great deal of freeness of

mercy held forth in it, in that God freely gave Christ for us. The

scriptures always speak of Christ as a gift: For God so loved the

world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' There are divers respects

that set out the freeness of the gift. First, In that he gave him of

his own accord. We could not enlarge our thoughts to such a desire,

Isa. lxv. 1. As God said in another like case, I am found of them that

sought me not.' It is impossible that man or angel could take in such a

contrivance in his thoughts to ask it of God. Secondly, Freely,

because, as we cannot deserve it, so we cannot requite it. God giveth

Christ to them that can give nothing for him. But this must be the work

of another place.

Object. 2 is this, How did Christ suffer our punishment, since his

sufferings were but temporary, and ours to be eternal? There are divers

answers. I will give you that which is most satisfying.

1. I distinguish of our punishment; it maybe considered two ways: as to

the substance, and as to the circumstances of it. For the substance,

Christ suffered it fully, even infinite wrath, though not with such

circumstances as could not stand with his person and office.

2. That those circumstances, the eternity and duration of our

punishment, are not so much in regard of the punishment itself, as the

persons that undergo it. It is because they cannot conquer and get

above it. Now Christ was such an excellent person that he could not

only undergo infinite wrath, but get above it. Christ could set himself

free by his own power. The scriptures hint this answer in that

expression, Acts ii. 24, Having loosed the pains of death, because it

was not possible he should be holden of it.' Death and the curse were,

as it were, in travail; for look, what pains and throes a travailing

woman sustaineth till she be delivered of her burden; even such pangs

did the grave and the curse feel till Christ were gotten free from

them, for it was impossible he could be holden of it. Thus for that

objection. Those curses that would have continued upon him for ever and

ever, Christ conquered by the power of his Godhead, for he was to

suffer triumphantly.

Use 1. Is exhortation, to press you to three duties:--

1. To observe this great work of God, to put the punishment of our sins

upon Christ.

[1.] Meditate upon it in your thoughts. Here is enough to take them up

to all eternity. Deep sufferings seem to challenge from us a serious

contemplation: Lam. i. 12, Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?

Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is

done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his

fierce anger,'--which some have applied to Christ, though I think

improperly. I quote it only to show you that a transient glance, a mere

passing by, is not enough for deep sorrows; you must behold and see.

The scripture speaks of looking upon him whom we have pierced, Zech.

xii. 10. And observe it seriously; it is not a slight turn of the

thoughts this way that will serve. What is the reason that men that

know the evil of sin and the mercy of Christ do not more love Christ

and hate sin? They have but a slight and superficial apprehension--it

swimmeth upon the top of their thoughts, and is readily up: It is true

we are all sinners, and God is merciful. These men, though they speak

often of it, do least of all believe it. Therefore do not hastily run

over these truths. The scriptures always, when they express the love of

God, they seem to give occasion for some pause of the thoughts: God so

loved the world!' Behold what manner of love!' and the like. The works

of God's providence require an accurate search: Ps. cxi. 2, The works

of the Lord are great, and to be sought out by all that take pleasure

therein.' Much more the great contrivance of the covenant. Take it into

your thoughts, what it is to have a God suffering, and a God punishing.

[2.] Observe it with admiration. One said he had gotten this good by

philosophy, that he had learned to admire at nothing. The more you know

of the things of God, the more you will admire at every thing,

especially at this great mystery. There is an observation of curiosity,

when men look into every creek of it by their reasons, and so lose

themselves in a mist of errors. The Christian way is to look upon it

with admiration, to admire the wisdom of God, that he should in such a

sweet way magnify infinite wisdom and infinite justice at the same

time. This very thing, the sufferings of Christ, the angels desire to

pry into, 1 Peter i. 12; if you consult the context, you will find it

so. He alludeth to the two angels that were set upon the mercy-seat,

which was the covering of the ark, and typed out Christ. They would

fain see the utmost of this mystery. They desire to look into it out of

a thirst of knowledge, or a delight in meditation. So 1 Tim. iii. 16,

Seen of angels;' that is, this was the ravishing object that took up

their thoughts.

2. To learn that which God teacheth us in such an instance. There are

many profitable lessons. I will but name them:--First, There is the

evil of sin. God would express his hatred against it by punishing it in

Christ. Sin is such a thing, that when Christ did but take the guilt of

it into his own person, he must suffer the infinite wrath of his

Father. Secondly, Then the impartial severity of divine justice: God

spared not his own Son. It is said, 2 Peter ii. 4, that he spared not

the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell.' But lo, here is a

greater instance: Rom. viii. 32, He spared not his own Son,' when he

bore our sins by imputation. No prerogative then can hinder. In vain do

men pretend privileges against God's wrath. There is nothing but Christ

that hath borne wrath that we can oppose against wrath. There is

nothing that stoppeth the long fur rows but the casting God's Son in

the way. Think of this, that you may fear before him. God is a

consuming fire, Heb. xii. 29. He was so in Christ in a sense, and is so

to all out of Christ. Thirdly, The law's dignity and indispensableness.

God would fulfil every tittle; not the least iota must pass away, but

it must be fulfilled in Christ, both in regard of the duty it

commandeth, and the curse it annexeth to the breach of it. Fourthly,

The love of God in providing amply against all our scruples, that he

would offer us mercy in such a way as he might declare his justice, and

so satisfy all our doubts. There is a saying usual in some men's

prayers, We appeal from thy justice to thy mercy.' This expression is

not so warrantable. God's justice and God's mercy both look comfortably

upon a sinner through Christ. It is mercy, and mercy purchased, when

justice is satisfied. God is now faithful and just. That which before

caused our greatest horror, causeth now our greatest triumph. God is a

just God. What would men have given heretofore to appease justice? It

could never enter into men's thoughts which way that should be done,

till the gospel revealed it.

3. To render praise and thanksgiving to God. We enjoy a great deal of

benefit by it, and great benefits require a great deal of duty. Here is

a double motive to praise. The wrath of God is taken away from us, and

Christ endured it for us. As to its being taken away from us, consider

what it is to be freed from the wrath of God. What should we have

endured if Christ had not made such a satisfaction! You cannot expect

that I should give you a map of hell. I have observed that great truths

never do well when they are painted by fancy. War and hell are rather

pleasant in the description than horrible. It is like there may be a

little shrinking in the soul; as a gentle fresh gale that is let out

upon the face of the sea may a little furl the surface and upper part

rather than stir the billows, it doth not work soundly. A mere relation

is better than a passionate description. Oh, consider, then, what it is

to be deprived of all sense of the favour of God, to be delivered over

to torments ceaseless, endless, and remediless. One flash of God's

wrath into our consciences, how doth it make us roar! And if a drop be

so irksome, what is it to have an ocean of wrath poured upon us, and to

be overwhelmed in soul and body! Oh, what a mercy is it that our

Saviour hath delivered us from this everlasting vengeance of hell-fire!

I had rather you should enlarge your hearts to think of these things

than expatiate upon them. To have all this taken away should make us

abound in praise. And then, in the next place, consider how Christ took

it upon himself. He hath carried our sorrows!' There are some rare

instances and representations of those in story that have exposed

themselves to violence and cruelty for others; as in Damon and Pythias,

Pambo, &c. But none riseth so high as this, to wit, the leaving of

infinite glory to suffer infinite wrath for us--that was a hard

exchange. Oh, then, work it upon your thoughts, that you may live to

that God that gave himself for you. The main argument that faith urgeth

upon the soul is drawn from Christ's suffering for us: Gal. ii. 20, The

life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God,

who loved me, and gave himself for me.' I should have been given, but

he gave himself in my stead.

Use 2. Is information to the children of God to show the happiness of

those that have an interest in Christ's death. There is no wrath

against them: Isa. xxvii. 4, Fury is not in me.' There may be sometimes

filii sub ira; they may have some apprehensions of God's wrath through

their own sins, when they have offended God. They must get a new act of

pardon assured to them and to their consciences. There may be

displeasure, though not wrath. There may be afflictions, and that in

pursuance of divine vengeance; though for the matter they may be the

same as light upon wicked men, yet their habitude and use is changed

unto God's children. They are of exceeding great use to them, to

quicken them to duties, to humble them for sin, to keep lusts low, to

prevent vanity and pride of heart, and to brine: us nearer to God. So

much for this verse.

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THE FIFTH VERSE.

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our

iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his

stripes we are healed.

THE prophet having in the former verse briefly touched upon the

sufferings of Christ, and the cause of them, by way of confutation of

the Jews, he now amplifieth the argument, and enlargeth himself by

setting it out in other expressions. All words and all thoughts are

little enough for so great a mystery. It should not be tedious, though

a man do always dwell upon it. St Paul's e'krina justifieth a minister,

if he should preach no other thing to you: 1 Cor. ii. 2, For I

determined not to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and him

crucified.' Christ's sufferings are like the widow of Sarepta's cruse;

though we spend much of the oil of it, it will not fail, it will afford

more consolation still; and therefore it should not be grievous to you,

if we hold your meditation to it. The prophet here, now he is fallen

upon the subject, will not give it over. Though he had told you that

surely he bore our sorrows and carried our griefs, yet he will not quit

it so till he hath more fully expressed it to you, as he doth in the

text: He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our

iniquities,' &c. You may here in this verse observe three things:--

1. The history of Christ's sufferings.

2. The cause of them.

3. The fruit and benefit of them. These three things are scattered in

divers expressions throughout the verse.

1. The history of Christ's sufferings, set out by wounds, bruises,

chastisements, stripes; which expressions are multiplied to fasten the

thought of it the more upon our minds. And the words do not only imply

those wounds in Christ's body by the nails, the spear, the scourge, but

the whole bitterness of his bloody death; and some of the expressions

will bear it. He was wounded.' It is the manner of the scripture to use

wounding for killing. He was bruised,' or broken, as it were crushed to

pieces by the hand of God. The chastisement of our peace.'

Chastisement, the word is applied to learning; and because lazy and

slow learners must be whipped, it is applied to signify punishment.

Some think the prophet alludeth to those that were whipped by the

sentence of the law, and by way of punishment. And then stripes,'

mo'lopi autou,--the word signifieth sometimes gore, blood, or scars.

And I conceive these things are the rather mentioned, wounds, stripes,

scars, because Christ after his resurrection, for a testimony of the

reality of his sufferings, retained these wounds and scars. So much for

the first thing, the history.

2. The cause of it: for our transgressions, for our iniquities. The

first word noteth more properly the doing of evil, the latter swerving

from good; sins of omission and commission: Christ suffered for them

all: the least neglect of duty, and the least obliquity in duties

needed Christ to satisfy for them. It was for our iniquities as well as

our transgressions, our defections from the right way.

3. The fruits and benefits: they are two--peace and healing.

[1.] Peace: the chastisement of our peace was upon him. Some understand

by peace whatsoever is good and precious; it being usual with the

Hebrews to express it by the word peace. And because the Septuagint

sometimes turn shelomim, the plural word for peace, into retributions,

some read it thus, The chastisement of retributions was upon him;' that

is, God payed him what should have been payed us, namely, punishment

and wrath. But I conceive it noteth here that peace and reconciliation

that is between God and a sinner. Christ was chastised to procure it

for us. Sin made us odious, and enemies to God. Here is the first

privilege: Christ bore the chastisement of our peace.

[2.] Healing. A strange paradox, you will think, that we should be

healed by another's stripes; but so it is. The meaning is, by this our

souls are cured from the wounds and infection of sin. From the wounds,

Christ took them upon himself. From the infection, sin is wounded by

it, as you will see hereafter.

I come to the points, which are three, according to the parts of the

text.

1. That the Lord Jesus at his death endured many cruel and bitter

sufferings.

2. That all these sufferings were undergone for our sins and

transgressions.

3. That by these sufferings Christ hath purchased for us peace and

healing.

Doct. 1. That Jesus Christ at his death endured many cruel and bitter

sufferings. The prophet sets them out here by wounds, bruises, stripes;

which words, because they imply most of all his outward and bodily

sufferings, and what he suffered from the cruelty and malice of man, I

shall most of all touch upon these things, that they may be matter of

meditation to you.

1. He was betrayed by his own disciple; that is sad. It was a double

stab to Caesar's heart when Brutus was among the conspirators; the

grief is the more by far. David, in the person of Christ, complaineth

of it, Ps. lv. 12, 13, It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I

could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify

himself against me; then I would have hid my face from him. But it was

thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.'

2. Forsaken by the rest of the disciples: Mark xiv. 50, And they all

forsook him and fled;' that is, all the disciples. And that is a

misery, to be deprived of the solace of friends when we most want them.

A friend is for adversity; that is the reason of our choice, that we

may have some to stand by us in evil times. But all are gone.

3. He was an object of the common hatred. They do not only come out

against him with swords and staves, the usual instruments of vulgar

fury, but thirst after his blood, cry against him, His blood be upon us

and on our children.' They would rather have Barabbas released than

Christ.

4. Then he was haled to the judgment-seat, and there accused and

sentenced contrary to all law, and their own conscience. When Pilate

asked of them what evil they found in him, they could rejoin nothing

but a tumultous noise, Crucify him, crucify him;' that is all the

reason they urge.

5. There are several expressions of contempt used to him, which are

like vinegar to wounds, the very smart and quintessence of grief. They

buffeted him, that is an ignominious expression of cruelty; buffeting

being the punishment of slaves. Spitting, which was another token of

contempt among the Jews: If her father had spit upon her, should she

not be unclean seven days?' Numb. xii. 14. Yea, Job reckoned it as a

great aggravation of his sufferings: Job xxx. 10, They abhor me, they

even dare to spit upon me.' And then they whipped and mocked him with a

robe, a sceptre of reeds, and a crown of thorns. There can be no

greater dishonour done to a man than to twit him with his dignity, to

put the mock habiliments of majesty upon him. And then as to their

several beatings and smitings, I cannot mention all. And at last they

crucified him, a death designed for men accursed. Usually those that

suffered that death were looked upon as accursed by God and men; Deut.

xxi. 23, Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree.' It was the

death of grievous malefactors, such as blasphemers and idolaters. Nay,

he was hanged between two thieves, in medio latronum, tanquam latronum

maximus; he was put in the midst, as if he was the greatest malefactor

of the three. And when he was dead, he was wounded with a spear, John

xix. 34. An impotent, silly malice, to triumph over the dead! Thus I

have given you a taste of what you may read more fully in the

evangelists.

I come now to apply it.

Use 1. It serveth for consolation, for examples are apt to ease the

soul. The great sting of misery is, that we think it strange, and such

a thing as never happened: Is there any sorrow like my sorrow?' Lam. i.

12. We are all apt to say so. Why, here is a great example. Christ,

that he might sanctify afflictions to us, endured them in his own

person. Comfort is never so well taken as when we speak to the

particular case. Why, here in Christ's instance there is comfort.

Whatever the case and distress be, there is some use in the argument: 1

Peter ii. 21, Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we

should follow his steps.' There is a great deal of merit in Christ's

sufferings. Example is not all, and yet example is much. God would

suffer too, that he might provide against all the terrible troubles you

can be cast upon. I shall instance a little in those things that cause

the greatest storm and tumult in the heart.

1. In case thy greatest woe is brought about to thee by the men of

thine own family and cherishing, remember Christ was so used, and so

was St Paul. Among the other dangers that he reckoned up, he saith, In

perils among false brethren.' And divers of the martyrs in church

history have been betrayed into the hands of their enemies by their

friends and allies. It is much, I confess, to meet with evil usage from

whom we least looked for it. And yet you see this hath been the lot of

Christ and the people of God before you.

2. Is the case so, that you are in misery and forsaken of friends? It

is a very miserable case, that you find respect no longer than you are

able to purchase it. Why, Christ was left by his own disciples; and it

is the lot of many a faithful servant of God, and will be till you can

weed self-love out of men's hearts. Usually they aim at their own good

in dispensing of their respects; and when they cannot serve them selves

of us, they will leave us: Prov. xiv. 20, The poor is hated by his

neighbour, but the rich hath many friends.'

3. Is it so that thou art an object of the common hatred, like Ishmael,

thy hand against every man, and every man's hand against thine? Christ

suffered it, and it is the lot of many a public-spirited servant of

God. Lapidibus nos invadit inimicum vulgus, saith Tertullian. The

common people are ready to brain us with stones wheresoever we go.

Remember the Ephesian tumult, where the common people raged against

Paul, so that he speaketh of them as if they had put off all humanity:

1 Cor. xv. 32, If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at

Ephesus, what advantageth it me?' Hinting at that story in Acts xix.

And it is the lot of many of God's people now to be cruelly handled by

rude hands; and evil neighbours look upon the day of their brethren's

adversity, and are as some of them that do it.

4. To be denied the benefit of law, the wall of our safety, the fence

of our privileges and interests. The thing we suffer many times doth

not grieve us so much as the injustice of it. Why, remember it was

Christ's case; he was condemned, though none could fasten the least

guilt upon him. So it is many a Christian's case to be denied all right

and equity: Eccles. v. 8, If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and

violent perverting of justice and judgment in a province, marvel not at

the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there

be higher than they.' The primitive martyrs were condemned before they

were heard. Tertullian complaineth much that they would not hear the

Christians plead for themselves. So it would make a man gnash his teeth

for indignation to see what undue proceedings there were against the

martyrs that were convened before the bishops here in England; the case

was determined before heard. It was likewise so of late, agreeable to

what Tertullian spake of the heathen.

5. Art thou handled with a great deal of contempt, as in all the in

stances of Christ's sufferings, buffeted with the back of the hand? So

was Christ: Mat. v. 39, Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek,

turn to him the other also.' A transverse blow, such as might light

upon the right cheek, expresseth great contempt. Christ would have you

bear it. Again, be it spitting upon us, any expression of contempt,

this is that which the nature of man stormeth at; every one counteth

himself worthy of some respect. And yet Christ submitted to it. So Job,

they even dare to spit upon me.' See how the prophet speaketh in the

person of Christ, Isa. l. 6, I gave my back to the smiters, and my

cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame

and spitting.' Suppose thy case to be an opprobrious punishment. John

Frith was put in the stocks, mocked, and made a laughing-stock, marked

as a common vagrant. So was Christ, so was Samson, and so it was with

Israel: Jer. xlviii. 27, For was not Israel a derision unto thee? Was

he found among thieves?' They did hoot at them, as boys do in the

street after a thief when he is taken. Again, is there some upbraiding

pageantry used in contempt of thee? Why, they gave Christ a reeden

sceptre and a thorny crown. John Huss and Jerome of Prague had painted

coats put upon them with devils round about them; and many poor souls

have been served in that manner. I remember a story of a king of

England in his distress, whom they would trim upon a hill with cold

water. Ay but, saith he, Hot water will come, meaning his tears. Is thy

case so, that thou art called to suffer a shameful death for Christ?

Christ suffered the shamefulest death that can be for thee. Hanging is

no dishonour to a Christian. It is not the death, but the cause that

maketh it shameful. Ludovicus Marsaius thought himself honoured by his

rope. Cur non et mihi quoque torquem donas, et hujus ordinis equitem

creas?--Give me a rope likewise, saith he, and make me a knight of this

noble order. St Paul saith, With this chain,' holding it up by way of

triumph. A man would have thought that it had been a golden chain that

he spake of, since he honoured it so much, when, alas! it was iron.

Christ hath taken away all shame of punishment. And then they gave

Christ vinegar instead of drink. This has been the lot of many

Christians upon the inquisition-rack. So to have your dying words

misconstrued and misreported; there have not been wanting in all ages

those that have turned the saints' Eloi into Elias. What reports have

there been of Tremellius turning Jew, and of divers protestants turning

papists! So after death; for you may live in such calamitous times in

which you may see a great deal of cruelty exercised, not only upon the

bodies of the saints here, but even after death; so it was with Christ,

and so with his people. They were not safe when they had taken

sanctuary in the grave. So the papists did against the bones of

Wickliffe, Bucer, and others. Nay, if it were possible, they would

reach to the damnation of the soul. As the papists said of John Huss,

mandamus animam diabolo. And then, as Christ was crucified in the midst

of two thieves, so it may be your case to be numbered among

transgressors, to be counted heretics, factious, schismatics; this is

what the people of God hath suffered from the proud men of the world.

Papists would make Protestantism a bundle of old errors, as Baily says

in the Jesuit's Catechism. Thus the enemies, like the cruel watchmen,

would fain take away the garment from the spouse, expose her to shame

and contempt in the world. But remember, in all these cases Jesus

Christ has gone before you.

Use 2. Did Jesus endure such cruel and bitter sufferings? It informeth

you how unlike Christ they are who live in a way of pleasure and ease,

as if the way to heaven were over a bed of roses. If Christ were a Man

of Sorrows, certainly they are men of pleasures, such as mind nothing

but present contentments and satisfactions. Thus I have given you the

history of Christ's sufferings.

I now come to the cause. We must not only look upon the sufferings of

Christ, but must look upon the cause of it. The point is:--

Doct. That Jesus Christ endured all these bitter sufferings at his

death for our sins. Take a place or two of scripture to prove this:

Rom. iv. 25, Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for

our justification.' You have need of places to confirm you when the

most substantial truths are questioned. Delivered, that is delivered to

death for our transgressions: 1 Cor. xv. 3, For I delivered unto you

first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our

sins according to the scriptures.' This was the doctrine St Paul would

preach among them, and the doctrine that contained the drift of the

scriptures. He suffered for our sins, that he might become a sacrifice

to appease God for us. That was it that all the world thirsted after,

an expiation; and it is fully performed by Christ. God for a while

trained up his people in sacrifices, that he might type out the Lamb of

God that was to be slain for the satisfying of wronged justice. But I

shall say no more to that here, but proceed to application.

Use 1. It confuteth divers errors and mistakes in doctrine, viz.:--

1. That evil blasphemy of the Socinians, that say that Christ only died

by occasion of sin, not for sin. The scriptures speak plainly, and yet

vain men list to blaspheme, that they may take away the merit of

Christ's passion, and establish only his example. Christ did not only

leave us an example, but satisfied for our sins. Adam left us more than

an example of sin, and Christ left us more than an example of

suffering.

2. The derogatory doctrine of the papists, who extend this full

satisfaction of Christ to sins only committed before baptism; but as

for mortal sins, and sins committed after baptism, they say we receive

forgiveness only of the eternal, but not of the temporal punishment of

them, which remaineth to be suffered by us to the satisfaction of

divine justice. But when the scriptures speak so fully of all sins,

transgressions, and iniquities satisfied for, why should men fancy a

restraint? In human matters we account those things that are in our

favour may be construed in the largest sense that they can bear with

probability. Christians, stand for your liberty against those

encroachments of Antichrist.

3. That fond dream of some that think Christ's sufferings were any way

for himself. They urge for it Luke xxiv. 26, Ought not Christ to have

suffered these things, and then to enter into his glory?' That proveth

it an antecedent, not a cause or merit of glory. There is a difference

between consequents and effects: Phil. ii. 8, 9, He became obedient

unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly

exalted him:' dio` signifieth after which. In Dan. ix. 26, it is said,

The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.' And so here, He was

wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.'

Use 2. Is exhortation to look upon the cause of Christ's sufferings. Mr

Perkins well observeth it to be a superstitious looking upon Christ,

when we reflect upon his passion without looking upon the cause. So to

look upon him in a crucifix is superstition to the eye; and to look

upon his sufferings as a dolorous and sad story, is superstition to the

ear. Look, then, upon them as they refer to the cause, to wit, our

sins. This is the consideration that maketh them profitable and useful

to us. The cause yieldeth this profit.

1. Here is matter for our faith to work upon. Christ died for those

things that trouble a gracious heart, viz., sins. One saith, Send

drooping Christians to the 53d of Isaiah, send them to this place, He

was wounded' for that for which your consciences were wounded. When the

soul groaneth under the sad apprehensions of God's wrath and hell's

horror, why here is thy comfort, He was wounded for our

transgressions,' Pray as those for the distressed: Job xxxiii. 24,

Deliver me from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.' O Lord,

here I have found a ransom; show him Christ's wounds: O Lord, wilt not

thou forgive in a servant what thou didst punish in a Son? What is

there in sin that there is not in Christ's sufferings? Are they

manifold? Tell God here are wounds, bruises, stripes, chastisements.

Are they great? Here is infinite wrath suffered, divine justice fully

satisfied. Art thou a base, vile, filthy person? Christ is a glorious

and all-sufficient Saviour. Every way here is triumph for faith.

2. Here is an object for your love. It is a great testimony of the love

of Christ, that he was wounded for our transgressions. Viscera patent

per vulnera--you may see his bowels through his wounds. A strange kind

of surgery! The whole body is sick, and the head wounded to cure it. We

committed the sins, and Christ suffered the punishment due to them.

Usually, we love them more that suffer for us, than those that

otherwise do us good. Oh, work it upon your affections!

3. It giveth you help in your endeavours against sin.

[1.] It is a help to humble us for sins past. There is a leanness in

the soul many times, and we cannot make sin so odious and grievous to

our souls as we would. Take in this circumstance; all Christ's

sufferings and wounds were but the effects of our sins. This is a glass

which will discover it to us, our knowledge is by the effects. The

effects of sin were never so apparent and eminent as in Christ. Oh,

look upon him whom you have pierced, and then mourn, Zech. x. 12.

[2.] To caution you against sins to come. Here is a double argument,

from experience, and from love.

(1.) From experience. Sin is not so sweet as the sinner imagines.

Christ suffered bitter things when he bore it in his body upon the

tree. It lieth when it flattereth you with hopes of some contentment.

Sin indeed smileth upon the soul at the first coming. Therefore Solomon

saith, Prov. xxiii. 31, Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it

giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright;' that is,

upon the seeming pleasure of it. Oh, remember, it cost Christ dear; it

is a flattering, deceiving thing.

(2.) From love. Oh, shall I wound Christ again? Shall I grieve God once

more? We hate that which hath injured our friends. Shall I allow that

in my bosom which Christ hates? Use yourselves to these meditations

upon the least solicitations to drunkenness, adultery, and the like: 1

Peter iv. 1, Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm

yourselves likewise with the same mind.' The apostle meaneth, we should

arm ourselves with such contemplations as Christ's death affordeth us.

He speaketh of it as a great remedy against temptations. By such

thoughts the work of the Spirit is perfected. By drunkenness, thou

givest him vinegar to drink; thy oppression is a wounding of his sides;

wresting scripture is a turning of Eloi into Elias; scoffing at

religion is spitting upon him; jeering of his ministers is like the

soldiers jeering at him; professing him for fashion's sake, and hating

him in your hearts, is a putting mock habiliments upon him; by abusing

of his servants thou dost again buffet and beat him. Thus you may

exemplify in every sin.

I am now to make entrance upon the last point--

That by these sufferings, Christ hath purchased for us peace and

healing.

I begin with the first of these benefits.

1. That Christ hath purchased peace for his people, The chastisement of

our peace was upon him.' Peace, among other expositions of the phrase,

I take to be that reconciliation and amity that was wrought out between

God and a sinner. Christ was chastised to procure it for us, and all

other good things that follow upon it.

I shall prove it to you by scripture, that one of the great benefits

that we enjoy by Christ's sufferings is peace, or the favour of God.

Take a few scriptures: Rom. v. 1, Being justified by faith, we have

peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' There is peace of

conscience, and peace with God, which is nothing else but our atonement

and reconciliation with him. Every one that is justified hath not peace

of conscience; but every one that is justified hath peace with God.

There is a quarrel between God and the soul because of sin; your sins

have separated between God and you. Sin maketh God not only an utter

enemy, but a severe punisher. Now this strife and quarrel is taken up

by Christ: through Jesus it is said we have peace. He maketh God our

friend; so Col. i. 20, And having made peace through the blood of his

cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.' By the blood of

his cross; that is, by the bloody cruel death he suffered upon the

cross, he took away sin and wrath. The scriptures speak of what is most

visible: so Eph. ii. 14, He is our peace, who hath made both one, and

hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.' He is our

peace, the abstract for the concrete; such a speech as is usual in

relation to the business of Christ's undertaking; even as he is wisdom

to us, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so Zech. ix. 10,

He shall speak peace to the heathen;' so Isa. ix. 8, Christ is called

the Prince of peace.' Look, as we call men by the better title, as we

say the king of England, not mentioning the lesser dominions, as Scot

land, Wales, Ireland; and the king of France, not taking in the petty

governments in our ordinary way of speaking; so Christ is set forth by

the great privilege he hath purchased for mankind, which includes other

things: Mic. v. 5, And this man shall be the peace.' This man shall be

our peace, the Prince of peace. All these expressions imply, that as we

are said to have it this way, so we can have it no other way.

I come to the reasons of the point.

1. Because Christ by his death hath slain all hatred. It is the

apostle's phrase: Eph. ii. 16, And that he might reconcile both unto

God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby;' that

is, took away the cause of hatred; and the cause being taken away, the

effect ceaseth. Look, as when there is a whisperer that goeth between

party and party, and sets them at odds and variance, we say we shall

never be friends till such an one be removed out of the way; so it was

between God and the soul, there is no hope of agreement till those that

do the ill offices between God and us be removed. And therefore Christ

himself would die rather than not slay our enemy. He hath slain hatred

by taking away the cause of it, which was:--

[1.] The just wrath of God. Now that was abolished by Christ; he

conquered it by suffering it; insomuch that God saith, Fury is not in

me.' Isa. xxvii. 4. God's justice being satisfied in Christ, he doth

not pursue revenge against his people. Is there any fury in God?

[2.] Sin in us, that was the cause of hatred. You may consider it both

in its guilt and power, and both sit heavy upon the soul.

(1.) The guilt of it. There can be no peace as long as this lieth

charged upon the soul. This works all that distance and hatred between

us and God; and therefore guilt will cause horror: Job xiii. 26, Thou

writest bitter things against me, and makest me possess the iniquities

of my youth;' that is, bitter enough to possess sins, to own the guilt

of them. It was as great a threatening as Christ could use, when he

told the Jews they should die in their sins, John viii. 21-24. Oh, it

is a miserable thing that death should seize upon us in our sins! What

a perplexity is the soul then left to! Whither will it go when it dieth

in its own guilt? Now this is taken away by Christ; and therefore it is

so often said that we have remission of sins by his blood: 1 John i. 7,

And the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.'

(2.) The power of sin. This disturbeth and filleth the soul with the

sense of God's wrath, and embittereth the soul against God. Through the

strength of sin we hate God, because we cannot but look upon him as a

punisher of it. Now Christ slayeth this hatred by sending his Spirit to

kill our enmity, to heal our poisoned natures, and maketh us more

willing and careful to please God. It is said, Titus iii. 6, The Spirit

of regeneration is shed on us abundantly (or richly), through Jesus

Christ our Saviour.' He taketh away that rancorous disposition that is

in the heart. This is the first reason: Christ taketh away hatred, and

therefore purchaseth peace.

2. Because he hath taken away all show of hatred. The ceremonial law

was an ordinance hinting out our guilt. Now Christ would take away

whatever in show made against us, or was contrary to us: Col. ii. 14,

He took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.' He would not leave

any ground for doubt or suspicion; he hath provided against all our

scruples: Christ would not leave the least line uncrossed, our own

confessions do not make against us. As soon as you give in the bill,

Christ teareth it; he hath nailed all in triumph to his cross. You can

urge many things against yourselves; ay! but all these things are

pardoned, and God hath nothing to show for the debt. St Paul says, 1

Tim. i. 13, I was a blasphemer and a persecutor;' a heavy bill, but I

obtained mercy.' All this was taken out of the way. Christ hath not

only paid the debt, but torn also the bonds. By his death on the cross

he did as it were declare to the believer that God hath nothing to show

against him. As there is not anger, so there should not be suspicion of

anger. He hath taken up the controversy that was between God and the

soul.

3. Christ hath procured us favour. Not only the matter that kindleth

anger, and all show of it is taken away, but love is procured: the

children of wrath are become the children of love: Mat. iii. 17, This

is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' The eyes of God's

holiness cannot but be offended with a filthy, polluted sinner, yet he

is well-pleased with them in Christ, and so they are not only objects

of his love but of his delight: Isa. lxii. 4, But thou shalt be called

Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee;' and

in another place, He shall rejoice over them to do them good.' A man

delighteth in things that are most suitable and agree able to his

nature. There cannot be a more pleasing work to God than to do his

people good. It is said, Luke xv. 5, of the lost sheep, that when he

hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.' Before there

could be no work more suitable to God's justice than to punish sinners;

whereas now it is, as the prophet calleth it, his strange work,' Isa.

xxviii. 21, a thing that he would not be acquainted with towards his

people. Whereas, to the wicked, still he laughs at their destruction,

Prov. i. 26. Therefore, Christ hath purchased peace for us, because he

hath not only taken away anger but procured favour. Among men, anger

many times may be taken away, but they have not love. Rebels, after a

pardon, live in a great deal of umbrage, and are under suspicion; the

scars remain though the wound be cured: as Absalom, when pardoned, did

not see the king's face. Artificial cracks will be seen though

soldered; but it is not so here, for we are re-instated in God's love

and affections. Christ hath satisfied wrath and merited favour; so that

the soul can look upon God with a great deal of comfort and joy.

Use 1. This serveth to reprove those--

1. That fetch their peace anywhere else. No comfort is lasting but what

floweth from the blood of Christ; that only is the true peace that he

hath merited.

2. Those that are against peace, or the settling of the heart in the

sufferings of Jesus Christ. I begin with these first, and they are of

two sorts:--

[1.] Such as are grossly ignorant of Christian privileges, and think it

a duty to doubt, and a matter of merit to keep themselves upon terms of

perplexity. A popish spirit haunts many; they think assurance a dry

doctrine, and therefore do not strive to settle their hearts; as if

there could be no duty where there is no fear. Hereby they plainly

discover out of what principles they act for God,--to wit, out of a

servile spirit; and therefore they cannot be kept right any longer than

they fear wrath. O brethren! turn these evil thoughts out of your

hearts. True peace is a great benefit that Christ hath purchased for

us.

[2.] Such as would fain apply themselves to Christ, but are loth to

busy themselves with what should make for the settling of their hearts

and establishing their spirits; as if it were more pleasing to God to

keep the conscience raw with sins, than to heal it with Christ's

righteousness. A man should labour after peace with God, and peace of

conscience too. It is a natural superstitious thought to think God is

pleased with the mere sorrow of a creature; and, therefore, false

worshippers have wounded themselves, that they might make some dolorous

impressions upon his mind. Christ suffered the sorrows that you might

have the peace; the chastisement of your peace was upon him. Why should

you stand out against comfort, if there were not some secret thought of

satisfying by your sorrow? Now you are not to satisfy, but Christ. It

is good to reflect upon wrath, to drive us to mercy; but it is not good

to dwell always in the preparations, for that is to forget our errand,

and to stay in the porch when we should enter into the temple. Labour

to get an interest in him in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead

bodily.

3. It reproveth such as would have peace, but not this way, but upon

wrong grounds. Now that is an evil peace that cometh any other way.

Look to the grounds of your peace. How came you to such a peaceable

frame of heart? The false grounds are:--

[1.] Ignorance of our condition. A man doth not fear danger till he be

sensible of it. Now many do not know that God and they are at such

terms of distance and anger. Little doth a man trouble himself when he

doth not know what evil is determined against him: Rom. iii. 11, There

is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God, they

have no understanding.' And it is easy to go hoodwinked to hell.

Blinded sinners go merrily to the pit of destruction, never dreaming

that danger was so near hand. Poor souls that do not know the worst by

themselves! This is the greatest judgment that can be fall them.

[2.] Carelessness in others. When men cannot put off sorrow, they put

it by, and will not so much as reflect upon themselves. You may know it

is bad with men when they cannot endure to look inward. Things that are

evil cannot brook a trial; men will put all care out of their hearts as

to their eternal concerns.

[3.] When men avoid whatever may put them in mind of their misery.

There are two things that humble men, doing of duty and striving

against sin.

(1.) Doing of duty seriously, that will make men see what profane,

unsavoury, and senseless spirits they have. A man that lieth abed doth

not feel his lame leg, but when he goeth to walk upon it he does.

Exercise the soul in inward duties, and you will see it diseased. We

know things when we come to make trial of them: therefore, wicked men

will not meddle in inward and hearty duties, lest thereby they should

discover the soul to itself. Formal duties make men the more secure:

they are thereby apt to think better of themselves than they ought. The

pharisee thought himself in a good case, because of his vain fasting,

giving alms, and paying tithes. So formal duties are a vain refuge. But

now duties wholly spiritual, and spiritually performed, make men see

the weakness and wickedness of their spirits; but they are looked upon

as such a disturbance to wicked men that they cannot endure to hear of

them.

(2.) Resisting of sin. Tumult is caused by opposition. When a man

tamely yieldeth to Satan, no wonder if he be let alone. The devil

rageth most when we set against him: Rev. xii. 12, For the devil is

come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath

but a short time.' Dying beasts bite shrewdly. Oh, how is the poor soul

tortured with sin, when it is about to quit it! The sea doth not rage

so much when the wind and the tide go together. Please the worst

natures and they will not disturb you. This is a peace that will end in

trouble: there will be a quarrelling between affections and convictions

when a sinner cometh to be serious and thoughtful.

[4.] When men do what they can to divert all care and minding of their

condition: this is like a few stolen waters, when they can get

conscience asleep. As it is said, Prov. ix. 17, Stolen waters are

sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.' They lull the soul

asleep by pleasures, or distract it by business. They never keep the

heart empty that they may enter into themselves. As Cain built cities,

so carnal men drown themselves in business or pleasures.

Use 2. Is direction, to teach us what to do if we would have peace when

our consciences are enraged. Go to Christ; the chastisement of our

peace was upon him. Get an interest in Christ, and you have an interest

in God. God is not to be had as a friend without Christ. Get him and

you are presently interested in God's favour. For he that has the Son

hath the Father also.'

But, you will say, how shall I get an interest in Christ? I answer--in

one word--By faith; that is the way to get Christ to you with all his

benefits; and, therefore, faith is expressed by receiving Christ: John

i. 12, To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the

sons of God;' and Eph. iii. 17, Christ is said to dwell in our hearts

by faith.' You must say, in the language of faith here, The

chastisement of our peace was upon him.' Those that offered a

peace-offering were to lay their hands upon the head of the sacrifice,

which implieth a kind of joining. So Christ is the peace-offering, and

you must lay your hands upon his head. When Thomas believed, he cried,

My Lord and my God.' That gives your souls the possession of Christ;

and if of Christ, of God. But briefly I might from this speak to two

sorts of persons:--

1. To secure sinners.

2. To poor broken-hearted sinners that labour under the sense of wrath.

But having spoken from several passages of Christ's sufferings for

them, and more remaining to be insisted on from other verses, I shall

now only speak a little to secure sinners. I shall press them to two

things:--

[1.] To consider their condition; and,

[2.] The danger of their condition.

[1.] Consider your condition. You are. in a state of enmity with God;

God is at war with you. That this may appear to you, weigh these things

following:--

(1.) That your condition is not to be measured by your present feeling

and apprehension. A man may be in danger, though he be not sensible of

it: Isa. lvii. 21, There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked: they

are like a troubled sea when it cannot rest.' The wicked do not think

so, but my God saith so. It is what God speaketh to you, not what you

think of yourselves. Wicked men's lives slide away in pastimes, and

pomp, and pleasure; but still they are under continual danger, though

they mind it not. Mark that expression; 2 Peter ii. 3, it is said,

Their damnation slumbereth not.' Though they slumber, their damnation

doth not slumber. If men could make their condemnation sleep as well as

themselves, it were well. Do not measure your estate by your own

thoughts, but by God's heart towards you, how he looketh upon you in

Christ. God may be angry with you and you not know it.

(2.) Remember that God is angry with every man in his natural

condition. Till you get an interest in Christ, you have not God for a

Father. There is a war between God and every natural man. Those that

think themselves at peace with God from their cradles upwards, never

were at peace with him. You are at peace with God, you say, when you

are at war with him. The scripture speaks otherwise of you: Eph. ii. 2,

You are children of wrath, even as others.' And, John iii. 36, The

wrath of God abideth on them.' This you must take for granted. There

was a time when you were fallen out with God and God with you, even as

well as others those that embraced the Christian profession, as well as

Turks and pagans. We are indeed estranged from the womb, but we are not

reconciled from the womb, Ps. lviii. 3; therefore, whatever you think,

you must conclude that God is angry till you can get him pacified in

Christ.

(3.) There are expressions of this anger and enmity that pass between

God and the soul, though we do not take notice of it.

(1st.) On our part there are a great many expressions of our enmity to

God; as hatred of his being, wishing he were not, slighting of his

ordinances, rebellion against his laws, a rising of heart against his

servants; a rancorous tumult, and rebellious storming in our affections

against his providence; a vexing that he doth so thwart us in our ways

and courses. This is our war. Then vexing and grieving his blessed

Spirit. God hath told us what will grieve him, and yet, contrary to all

the motions of his blessed Spirit, and the checks of our own

consciences, we will go on our own way. As Esau took a wife from the

daughters of Heth, which was a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah, Gen.

xxvi. 35.

(2dly.) From God to us. There are some flashes of wrath, and opening of

our consciences, fears of hell, horrors, Hosea ii. 6. Hedging up our

ways with thorns, and making a wall that we should not find our paths,

which maketh us to vex and storm when we cannot have as much as we

desire. So likewise by turning all providences into a snare, cursing

all ordinances to us. Now and then, I say, God discovereth much wrath

to the soul, that it cannot but see it. Oh, then, labour to be sensible

of your condition. You think to rub it out well enough, and yet you see

there are many expressions of war between God and you.

[2.] Consider the danger of your condition. Oh, it is a sad thing to be

at war with God. If a man were at war with one with whom he were able

to make his party good, it were no such matter; but this you can never

do with God. Foolish man thinketh so, and therefore the apostle saith,

1 Cor. x. 22, Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than

he?' Will ye act so flatly against his commandments, as if you thought

you should be able to bear out yourselves in the transgression? That

you may not think so, consider:--

(1.) He it is that upholdeth you in your beings, and he can resolve you

into nothing, as easily as he could create you out of nothing. Solomon

saith, Prov. xvi. 14, that the wrath of a king is as the messenger of

death;' that is, you had as good have one to come and tell you that you

shall die, as to come and tell you that a king is angry with you. A

wrinkle in the brow of majesty is as a grave to you. If men were

sensible, it is much more true of the wrath of God; he can speak you

out of your beings in an instant. It is said, Heb. i. 2, He upholdeth

all things by the word of his power.' And would a man be angry with him

that is able to speak him into nothing? Now thus it is with God.

(2.) Besides his power, consider the whole creation taketh part with

God; and when he pleaseth he is able to arm the meanest creatures

against you. As he said that would not dispute with a king, I have

learned not to contend with him that is able to command legions;' so

should we say, that we will not contend with God, that is able to

command the creatures. The meanest worm is able to revenge God's

quarrel against you. Sometimes God declareth his power against his

enemies by frogs, flies, mean contemptible things, as we read

concerning the plagues of Egypt. So Herod was eaten up of worms, Acts

xii. 23; and Pope Adrian was choked with a gnat. I would not willingly

expatiate on these things, to offer only matter to your fancies, but

beseech you to weigh it in your thoughts. God might kill you with the

least fly that hummeth about you, and you have deserved it. It is not

only the more dangerous things that can do man hurt, but all things.

Consider this, I pray you; God doth more eminently discover it to you,

that you may consider it.

(3.) If nobody else, yet God can make use of your own selves against

yourselves. He need plague a man no worse than to open his own

conscience against him. As Luther said, for a man to see but his own

sins, is as great a hell as can be imagined. This hath made saints to

roar, Ps. xxxii. 3. This dried up David's moisture, ver. 4. Spira would

give all the world for one motion of the Spirit to make him believe

what was proposed to him concerning Christ. See that expression, Job

vi. 4, The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof

drinketh up my spirits; the terrors of God do set themselves in array

against me.' Just as a man runneth up and down in distraction that hath

a poisoned arrow shot into his bowels. In the whole circuit of nature

you cannot find one medicine that will heal this grief. All friends,

comforts, and relations, are nothing, and all other troubles are but

sport and recreation to these. Spiritual good and evil, both are not

known till felt. Oh, consider how it will be with you when God shall

bring out all those unclean thoughts, horrid oaths, lies, deceits that

you have been guilty of. All shall be set on upon the heart, and you

become a terror to yourselves.

(4.) He is able to ruin you, body and soul, eternally; and so he will

deal with all his enemies: Mat. xxi. 41, He will miserably destroy

those wicked men.' Not only destroy, but miserably destroy. Many are

encouraged in their attempts, that if they be ruined, it is but their

fortune, there is the worst of it. Now he is able to destroy you so as

you shall not know the worst of it; he is able to sink you below all

happiness of being or subsistence. Oh, consider the end of those whose

peace is not made with God! Judgments without measure, most extreme and

exquisite sufferings without mitigation, not a drop of cold water to

cool the tongue; judgment without mercy.

By his stripes we are healed.

Doct. That the healing of our natures, as well as peace and

reconciliation with God, is the fruit of Christ's sufferings. Three

things are here to be taken notice of:--

1. Healing puts us in mind of a disease incurable by human art, or any

remedies that are in our power.

2. Health implieth our recovery out of this disease, or our salvation

by Christ.

3. The means of this recovery is by Christ's stripes.

First, For the disease.

1. The soul hath its diseases as well as the body, and may be in a good

or ill plight, as well as the body. It is in a good plight when it is

fit to serve God or enjoy him. It is in an ill plight, or diseased,

when it is disabled for these ends. The diseases therefore of the soul

are those inordinate dispositions by which it is hindered from bringing

forth actions agreeable or belonging to the spiritual life. This came

to pass by Adam's sin, which, according to the tenor of the first

covenant, is imputed to all those who were naturally propagated from

him, they being thereupon deprived of original righteousness; whereby

we became blind in our minds, perverse in our hearts, and so sold under

sin; and till we be freed by the grace of God, we cannot but act

sinfully, and daily contract and strengthen evil habits and

inclinations. Therefore the work of conversion is expressed by healing:

Isa. vi. 10, And convert and be healed.' When these distempers and

perverse inclinations of the soul are done away, we are healed,

otherwise we lie under the power of a blind mind, and a hard heart, a

guilty conscience and carnal affections, which are as so many deadly

wounds and diseases of the soul.

2. The diseases of the soul are greater than those of the body, as

being seated in the nobler part, and so the wound is the more grievous.

As a cut in the body is worse than a rent in the clothes, so is a wound

in the soul more grievous than a cut in the body. The diseases of the

body tend only to the death of the body, which of itself must

necessarily die: Eccles. xii. 7, Then shall the dust return to the

earth as it was;' and then by the power of God shall certainly rise

again. But the diseases of the soul, as they make us unuseful to God

for the present, so they tend to eternal destruction and death both of

body and soul for ever: Mat. x. 28, But rather fear him that is able to

destroy both body and soul in hell.'

3. I assert that sin is the great sickness of the soul. There are two

sorts of diseases in the soul:--

[1.] Terrors, or spiritual bondage, by which the soul is driven from

God, and cannot think of him, or seek after him, with any comfort or

peace. And this is a sore and evil disease indeed, for the curing of

which Christ also came; for it is said, Ps. cxlvii. 3, He hath healed

the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds;' Luke iv. 18, He hath

sent me to heal the broken-hearted.' Which he doth by pardon or peace,

the former benefit mentioned in this verse.

[2.] Sins, or evil habits and inclinations, which disable us from

pleasing of God. These are the worst sort of diseases, as being the

cause of the other; for terrors entered into the world with sin. When

Adam had sinned against God he was afraid of him, and ran to the

bushes, Gen. iii. 8-10. And when sin is taken away, the others cease.

Now that sin is the great sickness and wound of the soul, I shall prove

by these considerations:--

First, It is a wasting disease; it bringeth the soul into a languishing

condition, and wasteth the strength of it. Therefore our natural estate

is described to be an estate without strength: Rom. v. 6, When we were

yet without strength, Christ died for us;' that is, without strength to

help ourselves out of that misery into which sin had plunged us. Sin

hath weakened the soul in all the faculties of it, which all may

discern and observe in themselves. The mind is weakened; for how acute

and discerning soever it be in earthly things, it is stupid and dull in

things spiritual and heavenly. We see little of the danger of eternal

damnation, or the worth of eternal salvation, or the need of Christ, or

the serious preparation for the world to come: 2 Peter i. 9, He that

lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.' These things,

that is, faith and other graces of the Spirit. And then the memory is

weakened; it is true and faithful in retaining what is evil, but

slippery and treacherous in what is good. These things we easily let

slip, as leaky vessels do the liquor contained in them: Heb. ii. 1,

Therefore we ought to give the more diligent heed to the things which

we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.' Our will is

fixedly inclined to evil, and averse to good: Their heart is fully set

in them to do evil,' Eccles. viii. 11. The affections are like tinder,

apt to catch fire at the spark of every temptation: Prov. vii. 22, He

goeth after her straightway.' But they are like wet wood as to the

entertainment of any heavenly motion: 1 Cor. ii. 14, The natural man

receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know

them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Therefore sin hath made

fearful havoc in the soul, and destroyed the strength and right

constitution of it. The strength of man lieth not in the robust,

healthy temper of his body; that is a brutish strength, and a bull or

an ox exceedeth us in that; nor merely in the strength of natural

parts, for therein many pagans excel many Christians: but it lies in

the strength of grace, strength to overcome temptations to sin, to

govern our passions and affections, to do the things which God

commandeth, that is strength indeed, the strength of the inward man.

See, on the other side, man's proper strength described, Prov. xvi. 32,

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth

his spirit, than he that taketh a city.' On the other side see weakness

described, Ezek. xvi. 30, How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God,

seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish

woman!' That is a weak heart that lieth open to every temptation; that

is at the beck of every foolish and hurtful lust, as pride, sensuality,

worldliness, carnal fear and sorrow. An imperious heart is a weak

heart, and this weakness sin hath brought upon us.

Secondly, It is a painful disease, it woundeth the spirit; and a

wounded spirit who can bear? Prov. xviii. 14. Greatness of mind may

support us under a wounded body, but when there is a breach made upon

the conscience, what can relieve us then? Take either a tender

conscience, or a raging, stormy conscience, for an instance to show

what sin is. Ask of Cain and Judas, and they will tell you what horror

and anguish it breedeth in the soul, what storms and tempests it

raiseth in the mind: Gen. iv. 13, My iniquity is greater than I can

bear.' Their lives, yea, all their comforts, are a burden to them. Nay,

ask any man whose heart is well awaked, and he will tell you, that the

sense of the guilt of sin is bitterer to the soul than the gall of

asps, and that no tortures are comparable to the piercing stings of an

accusing conscience. Even holy David could say, Ps. xxxviii. 1-3, Lord,

rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thine hand presseth me sore.

There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is

there any rest in my bones because of my sin.' If this holy man, whose

heart was upright with God, did thus complain, what should they do who

are nothing else but wounds and putrified sores from the crown of the

head to the sole of the foot? We think a man in a fever is in a

miserable condition, who hath little rest day or night: but alas!

feverish flames are nothing to the scorchings of conscience, and the

fearful apprehensions of divine wrath: they that are under these are

miser able indeed, because the pains of hell do compass them round

about, and wherever they go, they carry their own hell along with them.

Object. But you will say, They that are most infected with sin feel

little of this; how is it then so painful a disease?

Ans. 1. If they feel it not, the greater is their danger; for stupid

diseases are the worst, and usually most mortal. It is an ill crisis

and state of soul when men are past feeling: Eph. iv. 19, Who, being

past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness.' These have

out grown their consciences. There is hope of sensible sinners; their

anguish may drive them to the physician, and make them inquisitive

after a remedy: Acts ii. 37, When they heard this, they were pricked in

their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and

brethren, what shall we do?' But it is more dangerous when sins do not

terrify but stupefy. A spiritual lethargy is the common disease that

ruineth the far greatest part of the world.

2. The soul of a sinner never sits so easy but that he has his qualms

and pangs of conscience, and that sometimes in the midst of jollity; as

was the case of Belshazzar, while carousing in the cups of the temple.

Certainly they feel enough to show that if they were cured of this

disease, it would be a great comfort and felicity to them; their best

pleasures are but stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret, poor

sneaking delights, when they can get conscience asleep.

3. Though they feel not their diseases now, they shall hereafter. Oh,

what a pain will sin be to them when God awakeneth them, either in this

life, by letting a spark of his wrath fall into the conscience, and

then they become a terror to themselves; or, if not here, yet in hell

hereafter, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Thirdly, It is a loathsome disease. The pain of sin, which worketh upon

our fear, is first and soonest felt: but the loathsomeness of sin,

which worketh on our shame, requireth a quicker and more tender sense.

As a man overgrown with noisome boils and sores, is first affected with

the pain caused by them, and then with the sight and smell of them; so

it is with soul-distempers: Ps. xxxviii. 5, My wounds stink and are

corrupt, because of my foolishness;' and ver. 7, My loins are filled

with a loathsome disease.' The soul abhors, and is ashamed of itself,

when it hath anything of tenderness, or lively sense of the purity of

God. Solomon telleth us that a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to

shame,' Prov. xiii. 5. How loathsome? He is loathsome to God, who is of

purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' Hab. i. 13. Loathsome to good men,

who can no more delight in him than a sound man can in the conversation

of a leper: Prov. xxix. 27, An unjust man is an abomination to the

just.' Loathsome to indifferent men, for those that can allow sin in

themselves dislike it in others: Titus iii. 3, Hateful and hating one

another.' Another's pride, sensuality, and worldliness, is offensive to

us. Though we be proud, sensual, and worldly ourselves, yet it is an

offence to ourselves; therefore a sinner dareth not converse with his

own heart, but doth what he can to fly from himself, to divert his

thoughts from the sight of his own natural face in the glass of the

word, as being ashamed of himself and his own ways: Rom. vi. 21, What

fruit had ye then of those things whereof ye are now ashamed?' However

it is enough for our purpose, if loathsome to God: Ps. xiv. 2, 3, the

psalmist telleth us, The Lord looked down from heaven.' And what did he

see here below? They are altogether become filthy and abominable.' All

their persons, all their actions flowing forth from their corrupt

hearts, are vile and loathsome in God's sight. When God looked upon his

creatures just as they passed his hand, all was very good, Gen. i. 31.

But when once they were infected with sin, the case is altered, they

are all become filthy and abominable; some more, some less gross, as to

the outbreaking of sin; but they are all odious to God, and we are

sensible of it, as appeareth by our shyness of God, and backwardness to

look him in the face.

Fourthly, It is an infectious and catching disease. Sin cometh into the

world by propagation rather than imitation: yet imitation and example

hath a great force upon the soul: Eph. ii. 3, kata` to`n aiona, Among

whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our

flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by

nature the children of wrath, even as others;' Isa. vi. 5, Woe is me,

for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among

a people of unclean lips.' Living among such, he had contracted some

contagion and taint. It is hard to converse with wicked ones and not to

be defiled: Micah i. 9, Her wound is incurable, for it is come into

Judah.' Samaria was desperately sick of provocations, and the taint

reached to Judah also.

Fifthly, It is a mortal disease if we continue in it without

repentance, for by sin came death' into the world, Rom. v. 12; and the

wages of sin is death.' Rom. vi. 23. Not only death temporal, which

consists in the separation of the soul from the body, but death

spiritual, which consists in an estrangement from God, as the author of

the life of grace; yea, death eternal, which consists in a separation

both of body and soul from the presence of God for ever, and is a

perpetual living in deadly pain and torment. The second death is set

forth by two notions--the worm that never dieth,' and the fire that

shall never be quenched,' Mark ix. 44; by which is meant the sting of

conscience and the wrath of God. Conscience worketh on what is past,

present, and to come. There is a vexing remembrance of what is past,

your past folly and evil choice, past neglects of grace, past misspense

of time, past abuse of mercies, past despising of the offered

salvation. Oh, what cutting thoughts will these be to the damned to all

eternity! There is a sense of what is present; they have nothing to

divert their thoughts from their misery, no company nor sensual

comforts, but are left to the bitter apprehension of their sad estate.

There is also a fear of what is to come, or a fearful looking for of

more wrath from God. The fire is the wrath of God, which inflicts pains

upon the damned both in body and soul. There is no member or faculty

free, but feeleth the misery of the second death. The agonies of the

first death are soon over, but those of the second endure for ever. The

first death is the more terrible because of this death which is to

succeed it. In the first death our struggling is for life, we would not

die; but here, for death and destruction, we would not live. This is

the fruit of sin.

Secondly, Our recovery out of sin, and all the effects of it, which is

our health. Before the application of the blood of Christ, every man in

his natural estate is in no less dangerous a condition than a man that

is wounded and bleeding to death: Luke x. 30, A certain man went down

from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of

his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.' Not

as if he had any spiritual life at all, but it is spoken in respect to

his natural life. So before Christ's blood is applied, every man is

dead spiritually, and is posting towards eternal death; but when he is

regenerated and converted to God, then he is translated from death to

life. Therefore this healing must be considered--

1. As to its nature.

2. With respect to the several periods of this benefit, as to its

beginning, progress, and final consummation.

1 The nature of this cure, or health bestowed upon us, will be best

understood by considering what is in sin. There are in sin four

things--culpa, macula, reatus, poena.

[1.] Culpa. The fault is the criminal action, which is the foundation

of our guilt. Now this properly is not healed, but passed by, or not

brought into judgment against us, for as it is an action it cannot be

reversed. Factum infectum fieri nequit. As it is a criminal action

against the law of God, it cannot lose its nature, for Christ came not

to make a fault to be no fault. This properly is not healed. Indeed

some phrases express pardon but by a passing by: Micah vii. 18, That

pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of

his heritage.' The Lord passeth over the fault, or quits the plea

towards them that own their faults. The Lord seeth them, and not seeth

them; that is, will not lay them to their charge: Isa. lvii. 18, I have

seen his ways, and will heal him;' that is, not enter into judgment

with him. In short, the fault is not disannulled, but passed over, and

cast behind God's back. The offender is not made innocent, but

pardonable on certain terms. We must remember the fault, but God

forgets it.

[2.] Here is macula, which is the blot or inclination to sin again. So

he healeth us by sanctification, renewing and cleansing us by the

.Spirit, which is the work of God: Exod. xv. 26, I am the Lord that

healeth thee.' This is most properly his healing grace. So God reneweth

and healeth our natures: Ps. ciii. 3, Who forgiveth all thine

iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.'

[3.] There is reatus, the guilt or obligation to punishment. God

dissolveth this by his sovereign authority, according to his new

covenant: 2 Chron. xxx. 20, The Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed

the people.' There was no actual stroke or judgment upon them, but

healing--there is dissolving the guilt. He forgave their sin, or

remitted the penalty which they had incurred by eating the passover

otherwise than it was written.

[4.] There is poena, the punishment, which is external, internal, or

eternal. The external punishment is affliction. This is the wound that

sin maketh in us. This wound God healeth by restoring prosperity: Hosea

vi. 1, Come, let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will

heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up;' 2 Chron. vii. 14, I

will forgive their sin, and heal their land.' The internal punishment

consists in trouble of conscience, or the anguish and pain occasioned

by the fear of God's wrath, which he healeth: Ps. vi. 2, Have mercy

upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are

vexed;' Ps. xli. 4, Lord, be merciful unto me, and heal my soul; for I

have sinned against thee.' As to eternal, or the mortal wound of sin,

he healeth that by reversing the sentence of eternal death, and

bestowing upon us eternal life, that from children of wrath we may be

made heirs of glory. This grant is the true balsam for a wounded soul,

when it is not only freed from the fears of the flames of hell and the

sting of death, but made heir according to the hope of eternal life. If

God and heaven be not matter of comfort, I know not what is. This is

the portion of one that believeth in Christ.

2. The several periods of this benefit.

[1.] The cure is begun when we repent and believe, and so are renewed

and reconciled to God; then the danger of death is over: John v. 24, He

that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath

everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed

from death to life.' The disease will not prove mortal.

[2.] It is carried on by degrees, as he doth sanctify us more and more

by his Spirit, and settles us in the peace of the gospel. Christ is

still in hand with the cure: Mal. iv. 2, The Sun of righteousness shall

arise upon you with healing in his wings, and ye shall go forth and

grow up like calves in the stall.' Increase of grace and joy in the

Holy Ghost is our continued healing. Dangerous sores and deadly wounds

are not so soon cured. We have defects and distempers which disable us

for duty, but the healing virtue prevaileth more and more. The wicked

grow more and more diseased, and in the godly there are some ups and

downs; but the Lord promiseth to heal our backslidings: Hosea xiv. 4, I

will heal your back sliding, and I will love you freely; for mine anger

is turned away from you.' He will take away more and more the guilt,

pollution, and other effects of sin.

[3.] Our state of perfect health is in heaven; there is our complete

and eternal welfare, when sin and misery shall be no more. Therefore

heaven is set forth by the tree of life which groweth in the midst of

paradise, and beareth twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth its fruit

every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the

nations,' Rev. xxii. 2; and ver. 14, it is said, Blessed are they that

do his commandments, that they may have a right to eat of the tree of

life, and may enter in through the gates into the city;' that is into

the happiness of the saints in glory. These enter into the New

Jerusalem, and are there fully healed.

Thirdly, The means of our recovery is by Christ's stripes.

1. None but Christ can cure us, for he is the physician of souls--all

else are physicians of no value. Sin is the disease, the, Redeemer's

grace the medicine, and salvation is our health.; and then it is

perfect when we are fully saved from sin, and all the consequents of

it. Now this is above the sinner's cure, till God himself takes us in

hand. Christ is the Sun of righteousness, who hath healing in his

wings, and hath set forth himself under the notion of a physician: Mat.

ix. 12, The whole need not the physician, but they that are sick.' This

sore sickness can be cured by no other hand. And the proper nature of

his grace is to be medicinal, that is, a healing dispensation.

2. Christ cureth us not by doctrine and example only, but by merit and

suffering; for it is said in the text, We are healed by his stripes. I

confess the doctrine of Christ hath a great tendency this way; for it

is said, Prov. iv. 22, My word is life to them that find it, and health

to their flesh.' There is the medicine for sick souls; there are our

cordials and encouragements to prevent sinkings and despondences of

spirit; there are potent arguments against distrustful cares and fears,

excellent remedies against covetousness, sensuality, and pride;

forcible dissuasions from unkind and unholy walking. In short, it is

the common shop and storehouse against any distemper incident to the

soul. The words of the Lord Jesus are wholesome words, but yet the

virtue of the word mainly results from his merit and satisfaction: John

xvii. 19, And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be

sanctified through the truth;' and Eph. v. 25, 26, Christ loved the

church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it

with the washing of water by the word.' So his example hath a great

force, seeing how prone the nature of man is to imitate. And this

example is so much commended to us by his kindness and condescension in

coming down to be subject to the same laws we live by, by the exactness

of it, and the issue and consequent--life and immortality--into which

he entered to give us a visible demonstration of the success of our

obedience. But an example would nothing at all have profited those that

are dead in sin and hated of God, if some other means had not been

used. Compare 1 Peter ii. 21 with 24; For even hereunto were ye called,

because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we

should follow his steps;' then ver. 24, Who his own self bare our sins

in his own body upon the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live

unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed.' There needed grace

to make example effectual: 2 Cor. iii. 18, We all with open face, be

holding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same

image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

3. Christ's merit and sufferings do effect our cure, as they purchased

the Spirit for us, who reneweth and healeth our sick souls: Titus iii.

5, 6, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according

to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the

renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through

Jesus Christ our Saviour.' We have it by virtue of Christ's sufferings:

Gal. iii. 13, 14, Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,

being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that

hangeth on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the

Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the

Spirit through faith.' So in many other places. He is powerful to

change our hearts, and to take away sin. Our wound is not in curable.

The Spirit of God can and will heal the diseased soul. God's justice

being satisfied in Christ, he is at more liberty now to dispense his

grace.

Use 1. Is for reproof, and that to divers sorts; as--

1. Those that are not sensible of their deadly wounds and the diseases

of their souls. There is a carelessness and insensibility in most of

soul diseases. If the body be but ill at ease, they complain presently,

and seek help for their bodies, but never think of the languishing

condition of their souls, and how lamentably distempered they are. They

are hard by death's door, on the brink of destruction, yet are merry

and laugh, lay not their condition to heart; nay, think it an injury

done them, if you mind them of their cure. Though they are spiritually

sick, yet they will not know nor acknowledge it, but, like persons of a

distempered brain, who take the physician for an enemy, they murmur at

and resist all Christ's healing methods, as if their duty were their

torment, and not their disease. These are in love with their diseases:

John iii. 19, This is the condemnation, that light is come into the

world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are

evil.'

2. Some would have peace and comfort by Christ, but neglect healing;

whereas both were purchased by him, and both must be regarded by us. We

should aim at a sound cure, not to have the grief assuaged only, but

the distemper removed. It is a mountebank's cure to stop the pain and

let alone the cause; yet such a cure do they seek after that are more

earnest for ease and comfort than grace. A good Christian is troubled

with the strength of sin, as well as the guilt of it, and mindeth the

rectitude of all his faculties as well as the ease and peace of his

conscience, that he may be enabled to walk with God cheerfully, in the

way of holiness, as well as enjoy the pardon of sins: 1 John i. 9, He

is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness.' He would be an unwise man who, having his leg broken,

should only mind to be eased of the pain, but not take care to have it

set right again. So foolish is that Christian who is earnest for

comfort, but taketh no care how to be directed and enabled to please

God. Sin, in some sense, is worse than damnation.

3. It reproveth those who think it impossible to get rid of their

carnal distempers. Will you lessen the merit of Christ and the power of

his Spirit, or doubt of the promise of God? Jer. iii. 22, Return, and I

will heal you.' Now, upon these terms we should come to Christ with

confidence, to be the better for coming: Jer. xvii. 14, Heal me, and I

shall be healed.' God can heal, and he will; that is, he is ready to do

it, or else why did he take this course?

Use 2. Is to press us to come to God for healing. I shall give you a

few directions.

1. You must, in a broken-hearted manner, be sensible of your sickness.

It is the sensible sinner Christ undertaketh to cure; the heart-whole

are not within the compass of his commission: Luke v. 31, 32, They that

are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to

call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' A sense of our disease

is a good step toward our cure. God will so heal that he will make us

feel our sickness, that the smart of it may be a warning to us for the

future, that we may not presume to offend again when we are recovered:

Josh. xxii. 17, Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which

we are not cleansed until this day?' We must not make too bold with

God.

2. We must by earnest prayer seek this blessing of God, for God will be

entreated for all things which he meaneth to bestow: Isa. xix. 22, He

shall be entreated of them, and he shall heal them;' Ps. xci. 14,

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.'

The leven of these distempers is so kneaded into the nature of man that

it cannot be gotten out presently; therefore come often to God by

prayer for healing, sometimes this, sometimes that distemper; now that

our pride may be mortified, and anon our impatience; at another time

our carnal fear, our sensuality; still praying as occasion requireth.

We speed well at the throne of grace if we obtain the rid dance and

abatement of any one spiritual disease.

3. We must use God's means, viz.:--(1.) The word, which is our

medicine: 2 Tim. i. 13, Hold fast the form of sound words which thou

hast heard of me in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.' Keep the

soul healthy. (2.) The sacraments, they are a part of the medicinal

dispensation, sealing the great benefits of God towards us, and our

duty towards him, and so are a help against backsliding. (3.)

Meditation on the death of Christ, not only as a price and ransom, but

morally, as it represents the odiousness of sin, and also the love of

Christ towards us. So that, out of gratitude to him, and kindness to

ourselves, we are bound to abstain from sin for the future. Viscera

patent per vulnera. By his stripes we see what we have deserved, and

what Christ hath endured.

4. When God is seriously dealing with us about a cure, and applying

means of healing, let us take heed we do not lose the advantage and

grow worse: Jer. li. 9, We would, have healed Babylon, but she would

not be healed.' So of Sion it is said, Hosea vii. 1, When I would have

healed Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered.' God is willing

to offer us help to cure us of our sins, and affordeth us special means

and excitations to that purpose. Now, when the waters are stirred, we

should step in that we may be made whole; otherwise the disease is the

more irritated, and breaketh out in a worse manner than it did before.

The great Physician of souls must be carefully observed and constantly

waited upon, and in time he will give us perfect ease and health.

5. Take heed, when you are healed, of casting yourselves into new

diseases: John v. 14, Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a

worse thing come unto thee;' Heb. ix. 14, How much more shall the blood

of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot

to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living

God?'

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THE SIXTH VERSE.

All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his

own way; and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all.

IN this verse we have two things which ought to be matter of continual

meditation to us all our days, to wit, our misery by sin, and our

remedy by Christ.

1. Our misery in the former clause; where--

[1.] Our sin is charged upon us collectively in common: we have all

gone astray.

[2.] Distributively: every one to his own way. We all agree in turning

aside from the right way of pleasing and enjoying of God; and we

disagree, as each one hath a by-path of his own, some running after

this lust, some after that, and so are not only divided from God, but

divided from one another, while every one maketh his will his law.

Velle suum cuique est, nec voto vivitur uno: several desires breed

difference.

2. The remedy provided against this misery: and the Lord hath laid upon

him the iniquities of us all. The burden of sin, that would otherwise

have ruined us, is cast upon Christ. The sheep wander and the shepherd

is slain. He is the good shepherd that layeth down his life for the

sheep. David saith, 2 Sam. xxiv. 17, These sheep, what have they done?'

David was more tender of his people than of himself, yet David was

guilty. But here it is otherwise, for our iniquities were laid upon

Christ. Here we may observe:--

[1.] The author of this benefit, or who it was that provided this

remedy for us: the Lord.

[2.] The nature of the benefit: he laid our iniquities on him; that is,

on Christ.

[3.] The persons concerned: the iniquities of us all; all those that

are at length gained to believe in him, and return to him, as the

bishop and shepherd of their souls.

First, I begin with the misery or the woeful case wherein all those for

whom Christ died were in before conversion.

1. They wandered in their ignorance and sinful ways to their own

destruction, set forth by the going astray of sheep: All we, like

sheep, are gone astray.' It is a usual similitude, which is not put

here by way of extenuation, as in some scriptures, as I send you forth

as sheep among wolves;' but in a way of aggravation, not to extenuate

the sin, but to set it out the more. It is to show the folly of man.

Sheep, of all creatures, are most apt to stray without a shepherd. They

are apt either to be driven out of the fold as a dog or wolf scattereth

the sheep, or to wander of their own accord, a fit emblem of our folly,

who love to depart from God, and go astray from the way of life: Rom.

iii. 12, They are all gone out of the way;' that is, the way to true

happiness.

2. They were unable to bring themselves into the right way: Luke xv.

18, I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I

have sinned against heaven, and before thee.' St Austin saith, Domine,

errare per me potui, redire non potui--Lord, I could go astray of my

own accord, but could not return by myself.

3. In hazard to be preyed upon by the roaring lion, and the dogs and

wolves that are abroad: 1 Peter v. 8, Be sober, be vigilant, because

your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom

he may devour.' Our misery is mentioned to show the necessity of a

Saviour; and this misery is made to consist in sin or straying from

God; the sense of which is our first motive to make us look after

Christ, that we by him may return again to our own happiness, even to

God, who is the refuge of our souls, and the centre of our rest. But

let us more nearly observe how our misery is described. And first of

the universal particle, all we; and then of the distributive particle,

every one.

First, From the universal particle all, we may observe:--

Doct. 1. That no son of Adam can exempt himself from the number of

those that are gone astray from God and the way of true happiness. I

shall explain the point in these considerations:--

First, All are sinners by nature. There are three branches of original

sin:--

1. The communication of Adam's guilt.

2. The want of original righteousness.

3. The corruption or pollution of nature. These are derived from Adam

to all his children, and in respect of these they are all out of the

way.

1. Because the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to us; his guilt we

receive as children do the brand of their ancestors, that are tainted

in blood and forfeited in law. Look, as Reuben's act in defiling his

father's bed was a stain to all his posterity, and they lost the

sovereignty by it, Gen. xlix. 4, so all mankind, being in Adam, as they

descended from him, and were in him as in a common person, they sinned

in him, so that what Adam did we did. Thus it is said, Heb. vii. 9,

Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.' There is ground you

see in nature for the imputation of the father's deed to those that

descend of him: and God may as justly impute to us Adam's sin as to

Levi Abraham's paying of tithes. When Abraham did it, it was as if Levi

did it; and when Adam sinned, it was as if you sinned. We were all in

his loins at that time; and, if it had been our personal case, we

should have done so. Now this answer may satisfy as to the angels, that

do not beget one another, and, therefore, sustain not the person of one

another; their sins do not take hold of one another; they, being all

immediately begotten by God, are not guilty of each others' sins,

unless it be by consent and mutual agreement; therefore, those only

fell that combined to follow one as the ringleader of the faction.

Hence it is said, Mat. xxv. 41, The devil and his angels;' not as if

begotten by him, but adhering to him. But to return, in pursuance of

the former matter, note, the scripture looketh upon parents as

sustaining a common person, and, therefore, what injury is done to the

father, is spoken of as done to his seed; and many families suffer for

the miscarriages of their progenitors: Gen. iv. 10. Thy brother's blood

crieth unto me:' thou hast shed the blood of his offspring in spilling

his, and, therefore, it is bloods, in the plural number. And so for

Jacob and Esau, God elected them as sustaining the common persons of

their posterity, and so likewise in many places. Now this holdeth good

in man's justice, for treason in the father taints the blood of the

son.

2. The want of original righteousness, which cometh upon us thus. As

poor and ignoble parents convey their poverty and want to their

children, and none can give what he hath not. A bankrupt father must

needs leave his family poor; so Adam, having lost his righteousness, he

could not bequeath it as a legacy to his children.

3. As to the corruption and pollution of nature, that is conveyed as a

leprosy is propagated to the children of lepers: 2 Kings v. 27, The

leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and to thy seed for ever;' so

that every child born of that line was born a leper. Thus men be get

children like themselves, corrupt and sinful; the copy answereth the

original--the blood resembleth the kind. Of vipers there cometh nothing

but vipers, and sinners produce sinners after their kind. If the

immediate parent be sanctified, yet, that being not natural, doth not

alter the case; from a circumcised father there doth not come a

circumcised child,--threshed corn doth not produce threshed corn. But

let us consider these branches a little more particularly.

1. All men are sinners as they partake of Adam's guilt in being

descended of him. As they sprang from him, they were in him as in a

common person, and sinned in him; as Levi paid tithes in Abraham, as

aforesaid, Heb. vii. 9. To be sure, sin and death came upon him and

upon all: Rom. v. 12, Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the

world, and death by sin, so that death passed upon all men, for that

all have sinned.' If death, as is visible, then sin, even upon

children: ver. 14, Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them

that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.'

Otherwise the apostle's reason would not be good and cogent, and there

would be a punishment without a guilt: but ubi poena, ibi culpa. Yea,

Rom. v. 19, For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so

by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' Made sinners is

meant sensu forensi, in a law or court sense, by the imputation of

Adam's guilt, as appeareth by the opposition. In short, those things

are said to be imputed to us which are reckoned ours to all intents and

purposes, as much as if they were our own. As another man's debt, taken

on upon my score and account, is really and truly mine: so Adam's

disobedience, and Christ's righteousness are imputed to all those whom

they represented.

2. They are sinners as they want original righteousness: Rom. iii. 23,

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' By the glory

of God may be meant his glorious recompenses, or his glorious image.

The latter, questionless, is meant: 1 Cor. xi. 7, A man ought not to

cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the

woman is the glory of man.' See also 2 Cor. iii. 18, But we all with

open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed

into the same image from glory to glory.' This necessarily maketh them

sinners: for the soul being destitute of a principle to incline it to

God, wholly accommodateth itself to the interests of the flesh, and is

only employed to cater for the body and the bodily life; for, though it

be created by God, yet being created destitute of grace and original

righteousness, and put into the body, it soon forgets its divine

original, and that region of spirits from whence it came, and

conformeth itself to the body; as water put into a round or square

vessel, taketh form from the vessel into which it is put. The soul doth

only affect things present and known, having no other principle to

guide it. Now things present and known are the delights of the body and

bodily life, such as meat, drink, natural generation, sports, wealth,

honour, and pomp of living. And the soul is turned from the love and

study of better things. That self-love that carrieth us to these things

is naturally good but morally evil, as it destroys the love of God, and

the care of pleasing and enjoying him. There is a conversion from God

to the creature, a falling off from our last end.

3. There is pollution or corruption of nature, the stock of sin which

we have inbred in us, consisting in a blind mind, perverse will,

disorderly affections, an unruly appetite, and evil inclinations to

sensual things. This corruption is often spoken of in scripture: Ps.

li. 5, Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother

conceive me;' John iii. 6, That which is born of the flesh is flesh.'

We all partake of the same carnal nature, the dunghill of corruption,

which wreaketh out in the mind by vain thoughts, in the heart by carnal

desires, and constantly discovereth itself by a proneness to all evil:

Gen. vi. 5, the imaginations and the thoughts of his heart are evil,

and that continually.' An aversion from and enmity to all that is good:

Rom. viii. 7, The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject

to the law, neither indeed can be.' Man, in respect to that which is

good, is described not only by terms that imply weakness, but hostility

and opposition, as unfit for every good work, and so opposite to it:

Col. i. 21, Alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works.' If a

man were indifferent to good and evil, a neuter and not a rebel, the

case were the less; but the bent of his heart is against it, as

appeareth not only by scripture but experience. There is a proneness,

and a greater inclination to evil than to good. Now, from whence should

it come? Not by example, for then this inclination would not discover

itself so early, and children would be as capable of good as evil. We

catch a disease from the sick, but not health from the sound. We find a

manifest disproportion in all our faculties. In the understanding, a

sharpness of apprehension in carnal things, but a dulness and slowness

to conceive of what is spiritual--the will is backward and slow to what

is good, but there is a strong bent and urging in it to what is evil.

We need a bridle to curb and restrain us from evil, and a spur to

excite and quicken us to good. Evil things persevere and continue with

us. Oh, but how fickle and changeable are we in any holy matter! The

memory is slippery in what is good, firm and strong in what is evil,

the affections quick, and easily stirred; like fire in tinder, they

catch presently what is evil, but are cold and dead, like fire in wet

or green wood, to anything that is good. The body is unwieldy for any

holy use, but ready to execute any carnal purpose. In short, there is

the seed of all actual transgressions before it break forth; so that we

are gone astray and out of the way indeed. This should be minded by us.

Nothing inferreth so much a contra diction to God as our being sinners

by nature. This is a standing enmity; actual sin is a blow and away, a

fit of anger, this a state of malice. Surely, we had need look to a

redeemer and a change by regeneration, that are so corrupt and fleshly

in all the powers and faculties both of soul and body. This secludeth

us from any possibility of attaining heaven and true happiness.

Secondly, All that come to the use of reason have actually sinned

against God. The bad: 1 Kings viii. 46, For there is no man that

sinneth not.' The good: Eccles. vii. 20, For there is not a just man

upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.' Our nature, being

unsubdued, discovereth itself in acts suitable: Gen. viii. 21, For the

imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and that

continually.' Though there be mixtures and intermissions, and though

this corruption be in part broken, yet it is not wholly vanquished; as

cloth dyed in the wool doth not easily leave its first mixture.

Principles in the best are mixed, so are their operations, like fair

water passing through a dirty sink. Bonum non est nisi ex integro--not

so purely good, as merely evil before. The best are either overtaken,

Gal. vi. 1, or over borne, Rom. vii. The saints in heaven are called

spirits made perfect.' Heb. xii. 23. They sin no more; but here we come

very short of that exact obedience which the law requireth: Prov. xx.

9, Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?'

They have entered upon the work of cleansing their hearts, but cannot

get them quite clean, but still go on with the work, and make use of

the blood of Christ. Though none accuse them, yet God and their own

hearts may justly condemn them for many sinful swervings from their

duty.

Thirdly, This departing from God and his ways is fitly represented by

the straying of sheep: All we like sheep have gone astray.'

In the general it implieth:--

1. That we are brutish in our sin and defection from God: it could not

be expressed but by a comparison fetched from the beasts; we were like

sheep led aside in a sensual way. Man aimed at being equal with God,

and he was made beneath himself: Ps. xlix. 12, Nevertheless, man being

in honour, abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish.' He

continued not in the honour of his creation, and in that excellency and

dignity wherein God had set him; but became like a beast, governed by

his senses and lower appetite. It is true of all men, they do not

continue in the excellency of their being, they have lost much of the

dignity of their reason, and are more led by sense, as the brute

creatures are. And therefore you have the saints often complaining: Ps.

lxxiii. 22, So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before

thee.' I was as behemoth, a great beast. Sometimes they have no command

of their affections, but are merely led by the unruliness of appetite

or passions: so Prov. xxx. 2, I was more brutish than any man;' that

is, he was no more able to gain heavenly knowledge, whereby to be wise

for heaven and salvation, than brute creatures are able to wield man's

reason, whereby to apply themselves to the affairs of this life.

Therefore man is often compared to beasts for fierceness and cruelty,

as the prophet calleth the proud oppressors cows: Amos iv. 3, And ye

shall go out of the breaches, every cow at that which is before her.'

So for their rude wanton simplicity, they are compared to a wild ass's

colt,' Job xi. 12. And here to a sheep in decay of knowledge and

government. In the general, then, it implieth something brutish in us,

and that through the fall we have slipped beneath the excellency of our

rank and being.

2. Proneness to err. No creature is more prone to wander and lose his

way than a sheep without a shepherd, which is easily seduced. So are we

apt to transgress the bounds whereby God hath hedged up our way: Jer.

xiv. 10, Thus saith the Lord unto this people, thus have they loved to

wander.' They loved to try experiments in a way of sin. Man indeed

would fain transmit the fault from himself, as Adam doth obliquely upon

God: The woman which thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the

tree, and I did eat,' Gen. iii. 12. It may not be the shepherd's fault

if the sheep wander, but their own nature, their aptness to wander.

When we bring ourselves into inconveniences, we are apt to murmur, and

secretly to accuse God in our thoughts, as if he did not sufficiently

provide for us. Solomon saith, Prov. xix. 3, The foolishness of man

perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.' It is our

own folly, and we blame our own fate, our evil destiny, and those

unlucky stars that shone at our birth; and in these things we blame God

himself. The saints themselves have been guilty of this evil, fretting

at God for what inconvenience comes to pass through their own sin and

folly. 2 Sam. vi. 8, it is said, David was displeased, because the Lord

had made a breach upon Uzzah.' He should have been displeased with

himself and his own ignorance, to order the ark to be carried upon a

cart, when it should have been carried upon the priests' shoulders.

Thus, as sheep, it noteth to us self-abasement, because of our own

proneness: we did it as sheep, and they are apt to wander.

3. Our inability to return, or to bring ourselves into the right way

again. It is like a sheep, not like a swine or a dog; these creatures

will find the way home again, but a sheep is irrecoverably lost without

the shepherd's diligence and care: Jer. 1. 6, My people have been lost

sheep, their shepherds have caused them to go astray; they have turned

them away on the mountains, they have gone from mountain to hill, they

have forgotten their resting-place.' The farther they go the farther

they will be from the flock, and in a very sad condition. It holdeth

good too here; for we do not know the way back again to God. Austin

saith, I could wander by myself, and could not return by myself. And

God saith as much, Hosea xiii. 9, O Israel, thou hast destroyed

thyself, but in me is thy help.' That is done in a moment which we

cannot help to all eternity. Our destruction is from ourselves, but our

reparation from God. The good shepherd bringeth home the lost sheep

upon his shoulders, Luke xv. 5.

4. It noteth our readiness to follow evil example. A sheep is animal

sequax, they run one after another, and one straggler draweth away the

whole flock: Eph. ii. 2, 3, Wherein in times past ye walked, according

to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of

the air, that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom

also we had our conversation in times past, in the lust of our flesh,

fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature

the children of wrath even as others.' There is Satan, corrupt

examples, and evil inclinations, the world and the flesh, all

concurring to ruin man. We easily swim with the stream and current of

others' examples, and do as they do; and even so men take and do a

great deal of hurt by evil examples. Thus sins are propagated, and we

live by imitation; like sheep, we draw others out of the pasture

together with ourselves. Sheep go by troops, and so do men follow the

multitude to do evil; and what is common passeth into our practice

without observance.

5. The danger of straying sheep, which when out of the pasture, are

often in harm's way, and exposed to a thousand dangers: Jer. l. 6, 7,

My people have been like lost sheep; all that have found them have

devoured them.' So are we in danger to be preyed upon by the roaring

lion, and the dogs and wolves that are abroad. In our sinful estate we

are as sheep whom no man taketh up, being out of God's protection, and

so a ready prey for Satan. See how pathetically the prophet describeth

the misery of Israel: Hosea iv, 16, Now the Lord will feed them as a

lamb in a large place.' Oh, consider what it is for a poor solitary

lamb to wander through the mountains, where, it may be, some hungry

lion and ravenous wolf looketh for such a prey. Even so it is with

straying men, their judgment sleepeth not; it may be the next hour they

will be delivered over to destruction: Rom. iii. 16, Destruction and

misery is in their way, and the way of peace they have not known.'

Use 1. Is to show us the necessity of a Redeemer. All are included

under a necessity of looking after a remedy; if all be sick, they must

all seek to the physician or perish. And therefore it concerneth every

one to see what they have done for the saving of their lost souls. All

the world is become guilty before God,' as the apostle saith, Rom. iii.

19. Guilty you are, but have you sued out your discharge? By nature you

lost the glory of God, but are you changed into the image and likeness

of Christ from glory to glory? You were polluted in your first birth,

but are you born again of water and the Spirit? Are you saved by being

washed in the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost,

which he hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour?

You are sinners by practice, but are you washed in the blood of the

Lamb, and reconciled to God? You have gone astray, but is the case

altered with you? 1 Peter ii. 25, For ye were as sheep going astray,

but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.' Do

you use Christ as a mediator to seek the favour of God by him? Do you

put yourselves into his hands as your Shepherd, and resign and give up

yourselves to be governed by him as your bishop and overseer? As the

misery involveth all, so doth the care and necessity of looking after a

remedy concern all. In the first Adam we contracted guilt, and became

liable to the wrath of God; in the second, we have righteousness, which

is a pledge of God's favour. In the first Adam we lost the image of

God; by the second, we are made partakers of the divine nature. In the

first, we lost paradise; but by the second, are restored to a better

paradise, heaven itself.

But let us not reflect only upon this common necessity, but our own

personal necessity, what need we have to look after a Redeemer, and to

get an interest in him, and that his redeeming grace may become

glorious in our eyes.

1. In your natural estate you were every one of you as lost sheep,

fugitives, and strangers, and enemies to him. Thy way was lost, thy God

lost, thy happiness lost, thy soul lost; so it was, for Christ came to

seek and to save that which was lost.' Then the devil was thy shepherd,

then thou didst put thyself under his conduct, and God was looked upon

as thy enemy. Oh, think of it; at a day old thou wert sinful, even to

the death, and worthy of God's hatred: Col. i. 21, You were sometimes

alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works.' And his wrath

remaineth on you, till application be made of the blood of Christ upon

gospel terms: John iii. 36, He that believeth not the Son, shall not

see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' These terms are

repentance and turning to God. Now dost thou believe that thou wert a

child of wrath by nature, a firebrand of hell? and canst thou be

secure, and desirest thou not to be freed from so great a danger?

2. In practice. How didst thou wander and depart from God throughout

the whole course of thy life? The stragglings of thy youth, how canst

thou look back upon them without shame and blushing? Cry out then, Ps.

xxv. 7, Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:

according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O

Lord.' And in thy riper years how shamefully didst thou stray from God,

even since thou begannest to have more of conscience, and a greater use

of reason? It were end less to trace us in all our by-paths: Who can

understand his errors?' Ps. xix. 12. In every age, in every condition,

in every business, we have been wandering from God.

3. Since grace received we have had our deviations: Ps. cxix. 176, I

have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant, for I do not

forget thy commandments.' Though our hearts be set to walk with God in

the main, yet we are ever and anon swerving from the rule, either

neglecting our duty to God, or transgressing against the holy

commandment. Oh, therefore eat your passover with sour herbs, and bless

the Lord for finding you out in your wanderings, and following you with

the tenders of his grace in Christ.

Use 2. If the Spirit of God sets forth our natural estate by the

straying or wandering of sheep, see if this disposition be still in

you, yea or no. Are you not apt to go astray from God and from his

ways?

1. From God. Every sin is a departing from him, but especially

unbelief: Heb. iii. 12, Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of

you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' Adam

thought to find much happiness in forbidden fruit, to mend and better

his condition, but was miserably disappointed. So when we do not

believe God in his word, we will be trying our fortunes and taking our

own swing and course. But I speak of a more general disposition. There

are some whose main care it is to be getting away from God; as the

prodigal went into a far country, Luke xv. 11. They think to be better

anywhere than at home under God's eye and presence. This appeareth by

the care they take to keep God out of their thoughts: Ps. x. 4, God is

not in all his thoughts.' A thought of God rushing into their mind is

very unwelcome and unpleasant to them; they are backward and hang off

from communion with God, and the duties of religion are looked upon as

a melancholy interruption.

2. From the ways of God. Though they are the only ways of peace and

life, and will surely make us happy in the end, yet naturally we are of

a libertine and yokeless spirit. Sinners looking upon all things

through the spectacles of the flesh, count them harsh and unequal, and

a strict confinement: Mat. vii. 14, Because strait is the gate, and

narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find

it.' They cannot endure God's restraint: Prov. xiv. 12, There is a way

that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of

death.' The broad and easy ways of sin are pleasing to flesh and blood,

but destructive to the soul. Well, then, he that counteth the company

of God or the ways of God irksome, hath this wandering disposition

still remaining with him; and if it be not checked it will prove his

eternal destruction. The sheep do not fare the better for going out of

the pasture. We leave all good in leaving the chiefest good; and in

departing from God you turn your back upon your own happiness; as

beasts put into a good pasture will yet seek out some gap that they may

range abroad.

I come now to observe from the distribution of this common error: every

man to his own way:--

Doct. 2. That there are many several ways of sinning; or thus, though

there be one path to heaven, yet there are several ways of sinning and

going to hell.

Every man hath his several course. And as the channel is cut, so his

corrupt nature findeth an issue and passage: Eccles. vii. 29, God hath

made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.' One hath

one invention, and another, wherein he imagineth to find contentment

and happiness, but findeth none. Man swerving from the state of

happiness and sufficiency wherein God had created him, thinketh to

better his condition, and therefore hath many devices and inventions,

which indeed make it worse. So 1 John ii. 16, For all that is in the

world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of

life.' Though no sin cometh amiss to a carnal heart, yet some are more

kindly and suitable to that particular humour. One's notorious blemish

is the lust of the eyes, worldliness; another, sensuality; another,

pride; one this sin, another that. Hence the psalmist saith, Ps. xviii.

23, I kept myself from mine iniquity.' That which most urgeth us, and

prevaileth with us, we should endeavour to mortify.

The reasons how this cometh to pass are:--

1. Because of the activeness of man's spirit. It is always a-devising

wickedness, which as it is true most especially of the malicious musing

mind, so of all evil hearts: Ps. lxiv. 6, They search out iniquities,

they accomplish a diligent search; both the inward thought of every one

of them, and the heart, is deep.' A wicked spirit is a searching

spirit; they contrive new ways; they are always finding out new

inventions and devices; they are not contented with the way God hath

set them, and therefore will try others.

2. It happeneth through diversity of constitutions. Amores animi

sequuntur humores corporis--the conditions of the mind follow the

constitution of the body. The matter of some men's bodies is more

viciously disposed than others are. We plainly see the body hath some

indirect operation upon the soul; the affections, in their work and

exercise, depend upon the body; and these corrupt affections meeting

with a disposed body for them, by a violent sway carry the whole man

with them. And this reason is the stronger, because the devil joineth

with our tempers to help on those sins to which we are naturally

disposed, as wantonness, drunkenness, gluttony; or if of a better

constitution, to pride and vainglory. As when the devil observeth a

lustful man, he helpeth forward the temptation, and offereth occasions,

stirring up raging and immoderate desires, until at length, forgetting

all shame and modesty, or the danger of punishments, he does most

foully pollute himself. So if to luxury and gluttony, he presents sweet

baits till the soul is drowned and drenched in meats and drinks, and

there be no sense of piety, and the heart is made unwieldy to prayer or

any good duty. So for contentious or furious persons; whatever the

constitution be, he worketh mightily in the children of disobedience.'

Eph. ii. 2. Godly men find least hurt by him, as being led by the

Spirit, and avoid the occasions and snares, and strive against evil

suggestions, and yet they smart too much under his malice many times,

through the advantage he hath over them by their constitutions.

3. It happeneth from their business and occasions in the world. Many

men are engaged to ways of sin because they suit best with their

employments, the sin of their calling, as vainglory in a minister. The

apostle saith, Ordain not a novice, lest he be lifted up of pride, and

fall into the condemnation of the devil,' 1 Tim. iii. 6. So worldliness

suits a man of business, or deceitfulness in his trade; and corruption

is common to a magistrate. Several callings and businesses have their

several corruptions. Men easily slide into the corruptions of their

way, and every calling, through the wickedness of our hearts, is made

to serve this or that sin.

4. Custom and education. Aristotle saith, It is ill education that

engageth men to a way of wickedness, and it is not easy to break them

off from it. Vessels will not easily quit their first savour, and

customs will not easily be left. Teach a child the way of the Lord and

it will stick by him: Prov. xxii. 6, Train up a child in the way he

should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.'

5. Company and example. Men learn from them with whom they converse,

and thence come national sins, partly as they run in the blood, but

more by example. Of the Germans we learn drunkenness and gluttony; of

the French, wantonness. Men shape their practices to the patterns that

are before them, and learn their way; for it easily taints the spirits.

And thus you see why there are so many inventions and ways of

wickedness.

Use 1. Well, then, do not be too ready to bless yourselves, provided

the sins of others break not out upon you: do not flatter yourselves

that you run not into the same sins that others do. The devil may take

you in another snare that suiteth more with your temper and condition

of life. Some are sensual and some vainglorious, others worldly; many

meet in hell that do not go thither the same way. A man may not be as

other men, and yet he may not be as he should be: Luke xviii. 11, The

pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I

am not as other men;' yet the publican went down to his house justified

rather than the proud pharisee.' Those that slighted the invitation to

the marriage-feast had their several diversions and reasons of excuse:

Mat. xxii. 5, But they all made light of it, and went their ways, one

to his farm, another to his merchandise.' One hath business to keep him

from Christ, and another pleasures and the pomps and vanities of the

present world, and another has his superstitious observances. But all

obstruct the power of the truth, and the receiving of Christ into their

souls. Every man will have his way, saith Luther upon this text. Some

follow their hawks and hounds, and neglect their precious and immortal

souls. Others busy themselves in heaping up riches; others are for

plays and sports to fool away the day of grace. My way,' saith he, when

I was a monk, was to fast and pray till I had made myself sick; to

observe the statutes of my order strictly. I called upon the blessed

Virgin, and St George, and St Christopher'; and this was my way. And so

vile a creature as I was, for all this, became the more sinful.' Others

may hate this or that public and visible blemish, but what are thy

failings? John viii. 7, He that is without sin among you, let him cast

the first stone at her.' We may rashly censure others, and descant on

their faults, but it is better to look inward. Do not I offend God as

much another way as those whom I censure? There is a double

madness--not only that which is idle and light, and breaketh out in

strange freaks and furious extravagances, but that which is more sober,

solemn, and grave. A frenzy betrayeth itself by deep musings and high

conceits. So it is true of these discoveries of sin. Some delight in

vain pleasures, others go to hell in a graver course. When a man

perisheth, he eateth the fruit of his own way, and is filled with his

own devices,' Prov. i. 31.

2. Stop your way of sinning, pluck out thy right eye, cut off thy right

hand, Mat. v. 29, 30. Your trial lieth there, as Abraham was tried in

offering up his Isaac; and David voucheth it as a mark of sincerity:

Ps. xviii. 23, I was upright before thee, and kept myself from mine

iniquity.' It will prove a stumbling-block, and eat out all the heart

and power of grace if let alone. It concerneth us in our covenanting

with God to set against the sin of this inbred and natural inclination.

Though original sin dispose us to all sin, yet our particular and

personal inclination may carry us more strongly to some one kind of

sin: Heb. xii. 1, Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth

so easily beset us.' Thus childhood is wanton, and old age touchy and

covetous. Sins take the throne by turns, according to our vocation and

course of life. Every calling hath its temptations, and there is a

snare which others meet not with. Every condition of life hath a

predominant sin; as the young man with his great possessions. Oh! let

us consider our tender parts, our Delilah, our Herodias, that sin that

hindereth us most in closing with Christ, that sin that most engrosseth

our thoughts; for they always follow the temper of our hearts. Some

sins we hide under the tongue, Job xx. 12, which we cannot endure

should be touched; our private sore is a tender place. Thus Herod would

not be crossed in his Herodias, and Felix trembled when Paul reasoned

of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.' Acts xxiv. 25,

because he lived in intemperance with Drusilla, his pretended wife.

That which you reserve in turning to God, that which you set up a

toleration in your hearts for, even this sin must be bewailed to God,

and you must seek the blood of Christ to mortify it with all the

promising occasions of it. Act the contrary grace, and see how you can

deny yourselves in what you most affect.

Use 2. Is caution not to walk slightly. There is but one right path,

there are many evil ones. As one said, Evil is manifold, and the way of

sin divideth itself into divers paths; you may easily mistake. See that

place, Prov. iv. 26, 27, Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy

ways be established: turn not to the right hand, nor to the left;

remove thy foot from evil.' Walk with a great deal of care and

circumspection. When it is so easy to err, a man would be solicitous.

The apostle blameth those that did not orthopodein, not walk uprightly

according to the truth of the gospel.' Gal. ii. 14. They did not go

with a right foot. The world thinketh strictness to be folly and

niceness. You see there is a great deal of reason for it: there is

error on both sides of truth, and you may easily miscarry: there is an

extreme on both hands. A little to direct you, mind that place, Mat.

vii. 14, Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there be

that find it.' There are some way-marks. I think, without wrong to that

place, that I may give you three--a strait gate, a narrow way, and few

company.

1. A strait gate. The entrance into it puts the soul shrewdly to it,

whether taken for the coming out of ourselves, or the getting into

-Christ. It is a narrow way to carry the soul right. It is like the pas

sages by which Jonathan and his armour-bearer sought to get up to the

Philistines: 1 Sam. xiv. 4, There was a sharp rock on the one side, and

a sharp rock on the other side; the name of the one was Bozez, and the

name of the other was Seneh.' So here, between presumption and despair,

it is hard to keep the soul right, sometimes the wind bloweth in one

corner, sometimes in another. How to keep our selves from despair in

going out of ourselves, how to keep ourselves from presumption by

getting into Christ, is not so easy.

2. There is a narrow path, tethlimme'ne e odo`s, an afflicted, rough

way, such as will engage believers--

[1.] To the exercise of care. A diffident, regardless soul is out of

his way: you have but a ridge to walk upon: Eph. v. 15, Walk

circumspectly;' not even as it hitteth; for it is a hard matter to keep

a good conscience, Acts xxiv. 16; and Prov. xxiii. 19, Hear thou, my

son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the right way.' You had need

look to it.

[2.] To a great deal of pains and sorrow. He was mistaken that said,

Take thine ease. Many can swallow sins, and pursue them, and yet have

no sense of them that they are wrong. It is a way that will put you

upon much sorrow and affliction, because you have such a distempered

soul, and such a deal of pride and intemperance and anger in it: Rom.

vii. 24, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body

of this death?' Ps. cxx. 5, Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I

dwell in the tents of Kedar!' The saints are apt to grieve that they

have such a worldly spirit in a heavenly journey.

[3.] To a great deal of self-denial. It is a way that restraineth

nature; therefore we are called upon, Mat. iii. 3, Prepare ye the way

of the Lord, make his paths straight;' Heb. xii. 13, And make straight

paths to your feet.' There must be strictness in our course. It is not

such a way as will leave you to the sway of your own hearts. Nature

would have a thing many times, but you must put a knife to your

throats, as if you were more ready to slay your appetite than to

satisfy it. The thoughts, the affections, the speeches, the actions,

must be reduced to the strict rules of the word. When men please nature

to the full, it is a sign they have mistaken their way.

[4.] It will engage you to much mortification, to much opposition: Eph.

vi. 12, For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against

principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of

this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' You have

strong lusts to cope with, and those must be mortified, which you

cannot do without the Spirit of Christ, Rom. viii. 13. It will cost you

many prayers and tears, and fighting with spiritual wickednesses.

3. The next way-mark is, that you have but little company: Narrow is

the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it.' Many walk

as others do, and so mistake. Others sever themselves from the world,

but go in the ordinary track of profession, not out of the common road.

This is to be true to a sect and company of men, not to the ways of

God. As Paul, when he was a pharisee, he lived by the eye, and did as

others did; he lived after the strictest sect of religion y Acts. xxvi.

5. You must put a difference between the ordinary number of professors

and yourself. But if you be vain and sensual, what do you more than

they? Christians should look after the distinction and the difference

between them and others: Mat. vi. 32, For after all these things do the

Gentiles seek.' Implying, a man should do more than they, more than the

men of the world can ever do: Ps. iv. 6, There be many that say, Who

will show us any good?' That is the fashion of the men of the brutish

multitude. But the godly say, Lord, lift up the light of thy

countenance upon us.'

Use 3. Is to press you to look into the state of your hearts, and see

what you have by long experience observed, what is your sin, your way

of wickedness, what assaults you most frequently, most fiercely;

observe the frequency of temptations, and the strength of them, the law

in the members, and a thorn in the flesh; so, as it is conceived, he

calleth the violent stirrings of lusts. Now bend all your strength

against these; as the king of Aram said, 1 Kings xxii. 31, Fight not

against small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.' So bend

the strength of the soul against this way of wickedness.

I come now to the last point of the first part of the text, and that is

drawn from that possessive particle whereby every man's by-path is

expressed: Every man to his way.

Doct. 3. That this is the sin of men in their natural condition, that

they turn to their own way.

The phrase implieth these two things--First, A defect or want of divine

guidance; Secondly, A rejection of the ways of God when made known to

us. We do not like them so well as some other, which we fancy to be

better to us, because more suitable to our carnal desires; and

therefore it is often charged upon the people of Israel, especially by

Jeremiah, that they would not regard the ways of God, but the way of

their own imaginations. See Jer. vii. 24. God had told them that all

that he required of them was this, Obey my voice, and walk in the way

that I have commanded you; but they hearkened not, nor inclined their

ear, but walked in the counsel and in the imagination of their evil

heart, and went backward and not forward.' So that you see it argueth a

refusal of God's ways when discovered to them, as not being for their

turns. So Jer. ix. 13, 14, Because they have forsaken my law which I

have set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked

therein, but have walked after the imagination of their heart and after

Baalim.' They think their own path better, safer, or more comfortable,

and therefore would not meddle with God's. So Jer. xi. 8, Yet they

obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the

imagination of their evil heart.' This refusal is the more sottishly

perverse; as in Jer. xliv. 17, But will certainly do whatsoever thing

goeth out of our mouth.' So that here is a scorning to have their ways

prescribed, out of a presumption that they can better provide for

themselves. The drunkard, the adulterer, thinks God's way is either

insipid or injurious. Our first parents thought their conceit was

better, and that God in envy had denied it to them; and therefore they

did not weigh God's restraint and prohibition, Gen. iii. 17; she would

eat, the devil had fastened her fancy to it, and she went on with the

temptation.

1. There is a defect or want of divine guidance. God leaveth men to

their own sway, and taketh away all check and restraint from them; and

then whatever a man doth is purely from himself. So it is said, Ps.

lxxxi. 12, I gave them up to their own hearts' lust, and they walked in

their own counsels.' When all divine guidance or direction is taken

away, you will be left to the impure dictates of a corrupt mind, or at

best to some poor remains of civility. As it is said, Gen. xx. 6, I

also withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered thee not

to touch her.' Some restraints and chains God casteth upon men, that

they are not able to do the evil which naturally they would. Though

they do not go God's way, they cannot go their own. But when God

pleaseth he letteth men alone, and then they do what is right in their

own eyes; as you shall see, Acts xiv. 16, Who in times past suffered

all nations to walk in their own ways;' that is, to live according to

their own pleasure, prescribing no restraint to them by discovering

himself in a law; or, to those that have the outward written word, by

using no inward motions of his Spirit. So that this is the first thing,

the privative part, a defect of divine guidance, either by such outward

prescriptions as may revive natural light, or such inward motions as

may restore it.

2. That which is positive or more formally imported is a following of

the dictates of our own corrupt minds, and fulfilling the desires of

our own corrupt wills. For I conceive this turning to our own way is

expressed by the apostle upon the same occasion, Eph. ii. 3; for he

saith there, that natural men have their conversations in the lusts of

the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' There

is a natural inclination to obey his corrupt mind, and to satisfy his

corrupt will. It is but a pleasing of themselves. It is the way they

have devised, and the way they have desired. But to speak of these

things a little severally:--

[1.] There is a following the dictates of a corrupt mind. This is the

first and chiefest, and therefore it is often expressed, According to

their imaginations and their counsels.' There are a great many

prejudices in a natural understanding against the ways of God. It is a

way of their own contriving. Men think their way is good: Prov. xiv.

12, There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof

are the ways of death.' Their blind hearts dictate to them that their

own way is the best, safest, most pleasant, and comfortable. The mind

chooseth, pauseth, and determineth upon what it conceives to be better

for it than the rule of obedience. Therefore it is called our own way,

because it is not of God's appointment, but our own choice. Men consult

with their own hearts, and think sin is better. You may go through all

the commandments of God, and you shall see a natural understanding

dictates otherwise than God saith. As to the first table, man hath some

confused knowledge that there is a God, who is to be worshipped, to be

spoken of with reverence and observance; that there is some time to be

set apart for his worship. Now what this God is, what is his worship,

what time is to be set apart for it, and how it is to be spent, there

reason faileth. We have some ways that seem right to us for that; and

we are guided either by our own reason, or prescript of time, or

education, or example, or custom. It is our own ways that we turn to,

and therefore do not give God the glory that is due to his name: Rom.

i. 21, Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,

neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their

foolish heart was darkened.' They do not glorify him as God. We paint

out worship by our own lazy thoughts, or overdo it by some fancies of

our own: this is our own way. Then, as to the second table, there

natural light is most clear. There we have some sparks and knowledge

left of good and evil, and yet even there our carnal understanding

easily leadeth us into a way that we think better to us than that which

God hath set us; and so we think liberty is better than obedience to

superiors; revenge is sweet, and injury is looked upon as profitable,

and mere adultery as pleasant, some thinking nature never planted such

strong desires in a man but to have them satisfied. And as to theft and

oppression, why should a man be scrupulous and stand upon conscience

when he seeth a present benefit? So calumny and reproach of others

pleaseth us and serveth our ends, by making them odious to others whom

we ourselves hate. Thus, by a little use, all knowledge of good and

evil is blotted out of the mind, and a thing seemeth right to us,

though condemned by God.

[2.] There is a fulfilling of the desires of our corrupt wills. Men go

the way of their own affections; and though it be not according to the

law of God, it is according to their desires, lust being their law; as

if it were warrant enough to do a thing because they desire it. The

apostle saith, Titus iii. 3, Serving divers lusts and pleasures;' that

is, their mind was to obey their vile affections. They think the desire

was planted in them that they might satisfy it, and they are not bound

to thwart it: it were a wrong to their natures, whose bent and force

they follow. It is said of Eve, Gen. iii. 6, that when she saw that the

tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a

tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and

did eat.' Men think there is no harm as long as they do but please

appetite, and only meddle with what tempts the desire. But, brethren,

do not deceive yourselves: the mere fulfilling of natural desires

without thwarting is a walking in your own ways; for even so you may

wander beyond those bounds by which the word hath hedged up your way,

be it of pleasures, honour, or profit. One of the first lessons in

Christ's school is self-denial. You must reckon upon it to go against

your desires, and indeed it is a hard lesson. The way of natural men is

their own way, they do not love to be restrained in their desires, and

therefore they have ventured upon sin, notwithstanding great

restraints, yea, the more for restraints. Men fancy some exceeding

goodness in forbidden fruit, and think the prohibition cruel and

envious, and therefore will venture and try their own way, as being

loth to lose their longing and to disappoint nature. See that place,

Rom. vii. 5, For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin which

were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto

death;' that is, when in our natural condition, the restraints of the

law revived sin, and we let it work, though it were to our destruction.

Men's voluptuous hearts will not let them enter upon such a strict

course as the law prescribes. Well, now, gather all together, and you

may see what it is to turn to our own way. It is to be left to

ourselves, and then to reject the ways of God, upon a supposition that

we have found something that is better for us, because it is more

pleasing to our fancies, and more suitable to our desires.

The reasons may be referred to two heads. Our own way can never be

right, either--

1. To please God; or,

2. To do ourselves good.

1. Not to please God. This appears in that:--

[1.] God will not stand to our appointment. Nothing pleaseth him but

what he hath required; all other things he looketh upon as mere

invention or imagination. Though man should be very zealous in his own

way, with never so devout an intention, it is not acceptable. There is

naturally implanted in the creature some desire to please God. Now, you

will never do it in your duties, or in your lives, if your carriage be

not suitable to his rule: Micah vi. 7, 8, Will the Lord be pleased with

thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give

my first-born for my transgression, and the fruit of my body for the

sin of my soul?' Here is a very liberal proposal. Bat what doth the

prophet rejoin upon this? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and

what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy,

and to walk humbly with thy God?' There is the trial what God hath

required of us. He will not stand to the creatures' courtesy; it is his

prerogative to appoint what pleaseth him best. God hath been angry with

things, though done with a good intention, if not according to what he

hath showed. Uzzah's breach sets forth this: 2 Sam. vi. 7, God smote

him for his error;' it is said there, for doing besides the rule.' So

you may see in a case that concerneth conversation as well as worship:

Rom. x. 2, it is said of the Jews, that they have a zeal of God, but

not according to knowledge.' They were very furious in it; they had

good intentions, but they did not understand God's way. A man may seem

to have much zeal, and much scrupulous tenderness of doing good, and

avoiding evil; but it is such as is in his own fancy and apprehension,

but not in God's law; he hateth it. The false teachers had some

seemingly strict ordinances: Col. ii. 21, 22, Touch not, taste not,

handle not;' but they were the doctrines and commandments of men. Thus

you see God will not like our way, though it should be never so strict,

and accommodated with the advantage of many devout and pure intentions.

A popish spirit may be very devout, but God regardeth it not, because

it is not according to his appointment. A good intention cannot make

the action good, but the conformity of it to the rule; otherwise, those

that slew the apostles and crucified Christ pleased him; many of them

did it with a devout heart to that way which seemed right to them and

they thought was pleasing to God: John xvi. 2, The time cometh, that

whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service.' They

think this is well, and will please God. Usually that hath been the lot

of the saints hitherto, to suffer under such rage as hath been rashly

and unadvisedly conceived for God's sake. Ecclesia nunquam magis passa

est quam sub nomine ecclesiae. Therefore I say, God doth not look to

the intention of a thing, but the conformity of it to the rule, and to

his appointment, that he liketh; otherwise that which is odious to him

would seem right in our eyes.

[2.] Suppose God should commit it to ourselves, yet we should never do

that which would please him. If God had left us no direction but the

light of our own reason, we would never reach the right way, but there

would be divers hindrances; as--

(1st.) Ignorance. Natural men know not which way to go about it: they

are described, Rom. i. 21, to be such as became vain in their

imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.' A frivolous mind

every man hath; the word is dialogismois, they are vain in their

discourses and reasonings: they have very unsavoury apprehensions of

the ways of God. It is spoken of the heathen there. And the like you

shall see of the Jews, and of natural men within the church: Jer. iv.

22, For my people is foolish; they have not known me, they are sottish

children, and they have no understanding; they are wise to do evil, but

to do good they have no knowledge.' Men of parts are sometimes

extremely ignorant in point of duty towards God and man, and therefore

certainly their own path must needs be a wrong way. Brethren, it

signifies not what men in a notional way can discourse or argue

concerning duty, for their foolish darkness will be discovered when it

cometh to practice.

(2dly.) Their antipathy against anything that concerneth the ways of

God. Our way must needs be seen, for our heart is exceeding averse to

the will of God: Rom. viii. 7, The carnal mind is enmity against God.'

Mark, it is not only an enemy, but enmity. There is the spirit of

malice in it against all the ways of God. Therefore, God's appointments

and carnal devices will never be brought together; if you be wise to

the flesh, you cannot be wise to duty. A carnal wise heart must needs

err in its choice then. There is a disallowing of all that is good, and

an approving of all that is naught: this is most suit able to us. See

Isa. v. 20, Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put

darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet

and sweet for bitter.' The prophet useth divers expressions to set out

that wicked disvaluing of the ways of God that is in all carnal hearts.

They think all the comfort and sweetness is in their own ways of

jollity and excess, and for God's ways they look upon them as bitter

and dark, such as will banish mirth and eat out all contentment, and

fill the heart with sad fears and darkness. Oh, how are these men

mistaken!

(3dly.) We have a base, paltry heart, and are loth to serve him as far

as we know. It is said, Rom. i. 28, They did not like to retain -God in

their knowledge.' They do not approve or make such precious account of

the ways of God as they should do. Carnal men are loth to go contrary

to their desires. They like the knowledge that they have, and are

better content with ignorance,--as it is said, 2 Peter in. 5: the

apostle Peter saith, They are willingly ignorant' of what might make

against them. This they are angry at, that they know so much, and are

willing to practise so little; and, therefore, what is chosen and

followed with full consent by such hearts must needs be a wrong way.

You may well suspect whatever nature deviseth so willingly, and

practiseth so cheerfully. This is the first reason: Our own way is not

the right way, because we can never please God in it.

2. Our own way is not the right way to do ourselves good. The more we

please the flesh, the more we wrong our own souls: passions and corrupt

affections do but blind the heart to its own destruction. As the fishes

that play down the pleasant streams of Jordan devolve themselves into

the Dead Sea, so ways that are altogether suitable to our nature do but

end in destruction: Prov. xvi. 25, There is a way that seemeth right

unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.' Mark, it is the

plural, ways,--it is multiplex. A man ruineth himself many ways, by one

sin or another; some their way is adultery, that wasteth the strength,

blasteth the beauty, bringeth infamy, poverty, reproach, horror of

conscience, death, and eternal destruction. Another drunkenness, which

besots the brain, wasteth the estate, betrayeth a man to reproach,

brawneth the heart, and bringeth death and destruction. I will not

stand longer upon the reasons, but apply it.

Use 1. Is caution to you not to go in your own ways, neither in worship

nor conversation; that is the sin of men in their natural condition.

Now, that you may not do so--

1. I shall give you some cautionary propositions.

2. A few directions.

The cautionary propositions I shall spread before you for the greater

quickening and incitement of you.

[1.] God may not like what men like: Prov. xvi. 2, All the ways of a

man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirit.' A man

that doth not weigh his service in the balance of the sanctuary is not

sensible of the defects of it God weigheth and can look beneath the

veil of pretences: so Luke xvi. 15, For that which is highly esteemed

amongst men is abomination in the sight of God.' You may please

yourselves in your ways, and yet you may very much displease God. The

rule holdeth in duties. You may pass it off as if it were a seemly

beast for an offering, whereas God looketh upon it as a poor, sick

sacrifice, a corrupt thing, Mal. i. 14. This rule likewise holds good

in conversation. Men please themselves in an easy moral way, but God

can find a great deal of evil in it. We look upon sins as they are

odious abroad, but God considereth inward guilt. Now, when men live in

an easy, voluptuous, sensual way, they do not check themselves for it

because others do not, but God may hate them for it.

[2.] Nay, the more thy way pleaseth thee, the more thou shouldest

suspect it doth not please God. Whence cometh all this vigilance?

Either the thing is carnal, or, if it be spiritual, thou art set on by

the concernments of the flesh. Certainly, thy carnal heart is set on by

something that is suitable. David did not dare touch the waters of

Bethlehem, because he longed for them: 2 Sam. xxiii. 15, 16, Oh that

one would give me of the water of Bethlehem!' He would not drink of it,

because they went in jeopardy of their lives that fetched it, but

poured it out before the Lord. I say, in doubtful things, when thou art

so vehement, suspect thy heart; and the more thy life pleaseth thee,

fear it is the less acceptable to God. Consider not what thou art

willing to do, but what God alloweth. Nature would not be so strongly

bent upon a thing, if there were not corruption in it. These are the

two quickening propositions. The rules or directions are three:--

[1.] Lead your life by a divine rule; have respect to the commandment.

See how heartily David prayeth, Ps. cxix. 10, With my whole heart have

I sought thee; let me not wander from thy commandments.' That is the

rule--the law a man should go by. Advise with the word. Bind it

continually about thine heart, and tie it about thy neck.' The

commandment is a lamp, and the law is light. When thou goest it shall

lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when thou wakest

it shall talk with thee,' Prov. vi. 21-23. He would not deviate into

his own path: Gal. vi. 16, As many as walk according to this rule,

peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God;'--they that

walk by this rule, that is, according to the word of God. The law is

the expression of God's will to us creatures, therefore conform to

that. If Christians had oftener recourse to the rule, they would have a

better sight of duty.

[2.] Beg divine assistance. We cannot keep to God's rule without God's

power; beg it of God, then, as David in the psalm before mentioned.

There are divers places hint this in scripture. It is a sign we run

beyond ourselves when we would not be directed by God. When God leaveth

us to ourselves, then we leave his law: Acts xiv. 16, In times past God

suffered the Gentiles to walk in their own ways.' A man left to himself

cannot but err; and, therefore, desire God that he would guide you; for

a blind mind and a wicked heart cannot guide you in his ways. This is

called a taking heed to the word, Ps. cxix. 9; and ver. 101, I have

refrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep thy word;' and

David prayeth, ver. 133, Order my steps in thy word.' God must order

every step, or else we shall soon go astray.

[3.] Look up to divine encouragement. As you must take the word for

your rule, and the Spirit for your guide, so the promises for your

encouragement: 2 Cor. vii. 1, Having, therefore, these promises, dearly

beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all. filthiness of the flesh and

spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;' 2 Peter i. 4, Whereby

are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these

you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the

corruption that is in the world through lust.' Worldly wisdom is seen

otherwhere: Rom. viii. 5, For they that are after the flesh do mind the

things of the flesh; and they that are after the Spirit, the things of

the Spirit.' Christians should fetch in a supply that way; it is a sign

you are in God's way when you eye God's encouragements. Some mind only

to compass their carnal ends, and sweeten all their endeavours by

fleshly considerations; they are in their own way: To be carnally

minded is death.' To savour only fleshly encouragements argueth a very

naughty heart.

Use 2. Is examination, to try whether you be in the state of nature or

no. Your own way is a sinful way; and, therefore, what is the

generality of your conversations? Is it not a turning to your own way?

But, you will say, how shall I know that?

1. By the suitableness of it to nature. A life led in pleasures,

without self-denial and mortification, certainly is none of God's way;

it is a way of your own choosing: 1 Tim. v. 6, She that liveth in

pleasure is dead while she liveth.' Though she liveth a natural life,

she dieth a spiritual death. This is even just as nature would have it.

Observe what compliance it hath with your carnal desires and delights.

2. By the easiness of it to nature. It is your own way, for you can

walk in it by your own strength. It is often said of such as were in a

natural state, He did that which was right in his own eyes.' You have

shaped out to yourselves such an easy course; but what difficulty is it

to be such a Christian? Solomon saith, Lean not to thine

understanding,' Prov. iii. 5, but trust in the Lord with all thine

heart.' That is necessary to true Christianity; but now here men keep

up themselves well enough, though no intercourse be between them.

3. The serviceableness of it to nature, and to natural ends and

courses. Every man naturally is for himself, to attain honour, plea

sure, profit, or satisfaction to his lusts. Our own way will serve for

our own end. Though many things that man may do be of divine

appointment, yet it is but your own way still; you borrow means of God

to further your own purposes. The glory of God is the great Christian

end, but men value themselves by other things.

Use 3. Is exhortation; to press men in their natural condition to turn

from their sottishness and foolish ways by repentance. Now repentance

first beginneth with turning from our own ways, as the prophet Jeremiah

calleth it: Jer. xxvi. 13, Therefore now amend your ways and your

doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God.' To this end a few

things must be spoken to.

There are two things that make this exhortation fruitless:--

1. Carnal prejudices. Do not believe what your own hearts suggest to

you concerning the folly and uncomfortableness of God's ways, for these

prove the best and most comfortable to the soul. Other pleasures are

but for a season, Heb. xi. 25. Natural reason calleth sour sweet. The

best way to know is to try them once, then you will see how all was

delusive; mistakes and prejudices will vanish then.

2. Despairing stubbornness. Men have been in an ill way, and they are

loth to quit it: they think now they must try the worst of it: Jer.

xviii. 12, And they said there is no hope, but we will walk after our

devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.'

But I would not tarry too long on these black lines and dark shadows of

man's sin and misery which are in the text; therefore I come now to the

comfortable part, viz., God's remedy: and the Lord hath laid on him the

iniquities of us all. There I propounded three things:--

1. The author of our deliverance: the Lord; that is, God the Father.

2. The nature or manner of our deliverance: he hath laid our iniquities

on him.

3. The parties interested: the iniquities of as all.

1. The author: the Lord.' You may take it essentially for the whole

Deity, or personally for God the Father, who, in the mystery of

redemption, is looked upon as pars offensa, the wronged party against

whom the offence is committed, and the supreme Judge to whom the

satisfaction is tendered. The point is--

Doct. That God the Father laid our iniquities on Christ.

I shall a little open this point to you, and therein you shall see,

that whatever Christ did as Mediator, or whatever was done to Christ,

is attributed to God the Father, to his counsel and appointment.

1. He designed the person, and therefore it is said: Gal. iv. 4, God

sent forth his Son;' Rom. viii. 3, God sending his Son in the likeness

of sinful flesh;' 1 John iv. 14, God sent his Son to be the Saviour of

the world.' It noteth the decree and designation of God the Father

concerning the second person: John x. 36, Whom the Father hath

sanctified, and sent into the world.' When a thing or person is set

aside for divine uses and purposes, it is said to be sanctified. And so

it is said, John vi. 27, For him hath God the Father sealed.' The

Father cannot but accept of the obedience of Christ in the name of

those for whom it is offered, and who do lay hold upon him by faith,

seeing Christ did not come of himself, but was sent of the Father to

pay our ransom for us. Moses, that interposed of his own accord, was

denied: Exod. xxxii. 32, If thou wilt not forgive their sin, blot me

out of thy book.' But God told him, The soul that sinneth, him will I

blot out of my book.' But Christ interposed not of his own accord. This

sending his Son was a remedy of God's appointing. So in the place

forementioned, John x. 36, Whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent

into the world;' that is, consecrated him from eternity unto the office

of Mediator, and then sent him into the world to assume human nature

into the unity of his own person. Him hath the Father sealed;' that is,

the Father hath authorised him to be the Saviour and Redeemer of lost

sinners. He hath a commission under the broad seal of heaven. Thus

kings give commissions to their ministers of state, who are employed in

their affairs: Esther viii. 8, For the writing which is written in the

king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.'

Christ coming in God's name is fully authorised to do your souls good.

2. He qualified him for his office, and therefore he is said to be

anointed with the Spirit of the Lord to preach the gospel to the poor,

and to heal the broken-hearted.' Luke iv. 18; and John iii. 34, For he

whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the

Spirit by measure unto him.' As Mediator he is endowed with the Spirit

for the discharge of his office, that he might be a full storehouse of

all grace for his people: 1 Cor. i. 30, Who of God is made unto us

wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' Surely

we may use him for what he was made of God.

3. Whatever was done to Christ as Mediator, was from God the Father;

either, first, mediately by men; God ordered their cruelty with

reference to his own designs: Acts iv. 28, For to do whatsoever thy

hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.' God hath so laid

the state of our redemption, that whatever was done to Christ, he

ordereth the whole business from first to last. Or, secondly,

immediately by God: Isa. liii. 10, It pleased the Lord to bruise him,

he hath put him to grief;' Zech. xiii. 7, Awake, O sword, against my

Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow.' Our sin and

punishment was not taken up by Christ without the Father's privity and

consent; it was not by our desire and will, but by the counsel of the

Father, that he laid our iniquities upon him.

4. Whatever was done by Christ, you shall find in the scripture; Christ

always going according to the appointment of the Father, the whole work

being but a testimony of his obedience: Heb. x. 7, Lo, I come to do thy

will, O God.' In the whole transaction Christ would be ordered by the

will of his Father; the Son is become a servant in this business;

therefore it is said, Phil. ii. 7, He took upon him the form of a

servant.' So in that place, Heb. x. 5, A body hast thou prepared me.'

It is in Ps. xl. 6, Mine ears hast thou opened,' or bored; that is,

made me a wise and faithful servant in the work of redemption. They

were wont, under the law, to bore the ears of their servants: Exod.

xxi. 6, So that he was to be a servant for ever.' And thus you have

Christ always professing his obedience to the Father. As if it were not

his own business that he was set about, and he could not do as he would

in it, but he must be acted and guided by another: John x. 37, If I do

not the works of my Father, believe me not;' John x. 18, I have power

to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again; this

commandment have I received of my Father.' All which is a testimony

that the Father was satisfied by his sufferings, and is a ground of

strong consolation to believers. The way was agreed upon between God

and Christ long before the accomplishment. It was not out of impotence,

as if forced to give place to the devil and the violence of wicked men,

but obedience to God's designed way.

Now in two things Christ showeth this:--

[1.] As if he acted altogether by the Father's power: John v. 19, The

Son can do nothing of himself.' So ver. 30, I can of mine own self do

nothing;' that is, the Father and he were distinct persons in

themselves, but not separate in nature, power, and operation. The Son

acts by the Father, and the Father in the Son. The Son doth nothing of

himself, that is, separate from the Father. Or understand it of the

manhood of Christ, that is guided by God the Father in its operations,

it doth not act at pleasure. Christ would will or act nothing separate

from the will and power of the Godhead. This is spoken to remove such a

gross speculation, as if the union between God and Christ were no other

than that between a natural father and son.

[2.] As if he acted by the Father's appointment: for he would do

nothing, neither lay down his life, nor take it up, unless God the

Father said Amen to it; as where Christ speaketh of some power he had

in himself, yet it was a power limited by the Father: John x. 18, No

man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay

it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I

received from my Father.' Christ would lay down his life for his

people, and take it up again, and all because of the Father's

commandment. The words are spoken to exclude any external power or

violence that could be offered to Christ; none could impose upon him,

but at the Father's commandment he would lay it down, and take it up

again. Christ would leave a testimony of his love and obedience: John

xiv. 31, But that the world may know that I love the Father, as the

Father gave me commandment, even so I do.' No outward force can impose

upon him, but the Lord can impose. Jehovah laid on him the iniquities

of us all.'

The reasons of the point.

1. Because none else had any power to lay it on Christ but God alone.

That God could, it is clear by virtue of that interest he had in him. A

loving son can deny the father nothing. Now, it being the ordination

and the will of God, Christ would not gainsay it; and as long as the

Father's commandment lasted, he would obey; and therefore, when the

burden of our sins lay sore upon him, to whom doth he address himself

but to the Father? He laid it on, and he alone could take it off: Mat.

xxvi. 39, He fell on his face and prayed, O my Father, if it be

possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, riot as I will, but

as thou wilt.' Though it were a deadly cup, yet Christ would not have

it any way to pass from him, unless it were the Father's will. He had

such an interest in him, that he would stoop to that: no other could

have gained Christ to such a service but the Father.

2. Because if God should not lay iniquity upon Christ, it would be to

no purpose; for to him it belongeth, because against him was the

offence committed. Ps. li. 4, see what David saith there with eyes

brimful of tears, Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this

evil in thy sight.' He had sinned against Bathsheba and against Uriah,

yet against thee only have I sinned.' His sin was not known to many,

for the plot was closely carried: 2 Sam. xii. 12, Thou didst it

secretly,' as the prophet Nathan told him. But how should he do to get

it expiated by him against whom the offence was chiefly committed, and

who knew it well enough? Ps. xli. 4, Lord, be merciful unto me, heal my

soul, for I have sinned against thee.' Against whomsoever else the

offence be, the chiefest aggravation is that it is against God, and

therefore he must have all the ordering how the iniquity must be

forgiven: Isa. xliii. 25, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy

transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' God

would have you to look to him as one that only hath to do about the

guilt of his people's sin: I, even I, am he.'

Use. Is to inform us what abundant matter here is for your faith to

work upon. Jehovah laid the iniquities of us all on him. God, whom you

most fear, God the Father, he is first in the design, and he layeth the

command upon the bowels of Christ. Do but lay it abroad in some

particular considerations before you pass over this circumstance: the

Lord. Certainly all the triumph of faith cometh from it.

1. The Lord, to whom belongeth forgiveness. It is not the business of

others to lay it upon Christ, it is not their right, it is not what

they say, but what the Father saith; you must look to that. You see

when Christ prayeth for pardon he addresseth himself to his Father, as

if it were not in his own single power: Luke xxiii. 34, Father, forgive

them, for they know not what they do.' The Son prayeth, there is hope:

Father, forgive them.' If it passeth with God the Father, the matter is

ended. So 1 John ii. 1, Christ is said to be an advocate with the

Father.' And so you shall see frequent places, as John xiv. 16, I will

pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.' Forgiveness

and mercy and comfort, they all proceed from the Father. It is true, we

read Mat. ix. 6, that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive

sins,' but it is by commission from the Father, and as having the mind

of the Father in it; as it is said, John v. 22, For the Father judgeth

no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.' So the immediate

dispensation of all censures is given to the Son by the Father, whose

will passeth for a law. God the Father, in all the work of salvation is

to be considered as a superior wronged. And what an encouragement is it

to a poor soul, in the matter of its faith, to understand that God has

laid its iniquities on Christ! Oh, then, as you would magnify the

sufficiency of the Son's merit, so magnify the largeness of the

Father's mercy. Look upon Christ as able to save you, and look upon God

as willing to give Christ to you. Christ hath fully satisfied for

iniquities; the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all. Tell me

then, where should the soul stick? Usually it sticketh here: they doubt

whether Christ be for them or no. No pardon is granted but it first

passeth the Father. Why? because the Father is first in the design. God

sent the Son. If men would reason thus out of the scriptures, how might

they shame their hearts in the sense of their unbelief! Oh, wait then

for the Spirit to fix this truth upon you. Though a man should frame

never so many deductions without the Spirit, it would not do.

Therefore, I cease to wonder why men do not believe, though they can

object nothing against the free grace of God.

2. The God whom you have wronged. Sin is against all the persons of the

Trinity, but it is chiefly against the Father. You may despise the Son,

and grieve the Spirit, but the chiefest injury is against the Father,

because he is the fountain of all; nay, all that is done to the other

persons redounds to the Father's dishonour. Thus our Saviour often

reasoneth with the Jews, He that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent

me.' And the injury to the Spirit, it is called a vexing of his Spirit:

Isa. lxiii. 10, They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit.' Therefore the

prophet inquireth, Isa. vii. 13, Is it a small thing for you to weary

men, but will ye weary my God also?' Oh, what a grievous thing is this,

to do all this despite to God, that you have vexed and wearied God by

your stubborn resisting of the motions of his Spirit! Why, yet this God

puts Christ upon this task, the Lord hath laid on him our iniquities.

He whom you have most cause to fear is your greatest friend. A soul

that is sensible of sin is sensible of the wrong he hath done to God.

Why, though you have wronged him, he is chief in the design of mercy.

You have not only the Son on your side, but you have the Father.

Jehovah laid our iniquities upon him. You shall see the apostle maketh

it a great advantage to mercy that we have the Son and Father too: 2

John 9, He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the

Father and the Son.' He hath one that is willing and one that is able

to save him, and therefore the wronged party is of his side and

reconciled to him. O Christians! triumph now in this great design of

salvation, if you believe you have an interest in the Father's

affection, as well as the Son's merit. Nay, to invite you to believe,

consider what a remedy here is against all your doubts; it was the Lord

that put Christ upon all that he did for you. I use the more words that

I may bring you to weigh these things. Why should you stick at your

sins? The first motion to pardon cometh from him that should avenge

them. You have sinned against Jehovah, and Jehovah hath laid on him the

iniquities of us all.

3. The Lord, whose will and word is alone to be looked to. It is no

matter what Satan saith, or what your hearts say, for it goeth

altogether by what God saith, who hath laid our sins upon Christ. See

how the apostle rejoiceth that God's hand was in the acquitting of poor

sinners: Rom. viii. 33, 34, Who shall lay anything to the charge of

God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It

is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen.' What a bold challenge

is there! Satan may say, I can, and our consciences may condemn us too.

The devil is an accuser of the brethren to God as well as men, and a

poor soul can go and indict itself at the throne of grace, and bring in

many a sad charge against itself, and find its own case liable to death

and damnation. I have sinned, and the wages of sin is death. Ay! but

who will you believe--God, or Satan and your own hearts? The Lord hath

laid your sins upon Christ, and you will believe Satan, and lay them

upon yourselves. God would have Christ not only to suffer the death,

but to bear the sins; that, as he did take away the condemnation, so he

might take away the accusation too; for mark, the apostle saith, Who

shall charge?' and then, Who shall condemn?' Satan hath nothing to do

to bring in the sad charge, or to collect the doleful inferences.

Brethren, keep your ground still. It is God that justifieth, the whole

business of your acquitment is carried on by the Lord. Satan telleth

you, you have been a swearer, a drunkard. It is a sad thing that you

have been so, but has God given you a sight of this? Here is your

comfort, God hath ordered all this to be laid upon the back of Christ.

Ay! but Satan saith, the soul that sinneth shall die. But keep your

faith on what God has done; he hath less reason to condemn than he hath

to accuse. It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again.'

Thus you see what comfort there is in God's acquitment. It is the Lord

hath laid: now, nobody is to be believed before him. It is the great

policy of Satan to make you put this high affront upon God, that you

should believe him before the Lord: thus he did by our first parents in

another case, Gen. iii. 4, Ye shall not surely die.' Here he telleth a

poor distressed soul, Ye shall surely die. The devil acts his part on

every hand; but do not you believe him, for it is God that justifieth.

Satan saith it shall be laid on thyself; the Lord saith, on Christ. Do

not believe the father of lies before the Father of lights.

4. The Lord hath laid, even God, that hath so great an interest in

Christ that he can deny him nothing. Look, as God denieth Christ

nothing that he asketh him, so Christ denieth God nothing that he

commandeth him. Thus you shall see when God commandeth Christ to die

for souls, Ps. xl. 8, I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is

within my heart.' It was a gladsome intimation to Christ to be ordained

to such a service. There is a law upon the bowels of Christ; he is

called to bear your sins; he will be accounted the sinner, and you

shall go free. Therefore see what rich matter there is for your faith

to work upon, and beg the Spirit to fix it upon you.

Use 2. Is exhortation to glorify God for his goodness. Here are two

things I would exhort you to:--

1. To glorify God for his mercy and goodness; and,

2. To glorify him alone.

1. Glorify God. Though Christ effected your deliverance, yet he was

sent by the Father; the Lord laid our iniquities upon him. We have

experience not only of Christ's love, but of God's; every person of the

Trinity hath a hand in it, and every person must have his distinct

glory. I will not speak now of what the Son did, or what the Spirit

doth, but of the love of the Father. He showed a great deal of love:--

[1.] In deputing Christ to this office, and laying his command upon

Christ for it: John xvii. 23, That the world may know that thou hast

sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.' It is a high

expression of the love of God to lay our sins upon his own Son, to send

Christ to die for our sins. It is an expression of the same love to you

that God bare to Christ; it was the same kind of love, though not the

same degree, God's complacency in Christ being infinite and

incomprehensible, above all the creatures in the world.

[2.] In fitting Christ to bear the sins that were laid upon him. God

anointed him with a compassionate spirit, so that the Spirit of the

Godhead was always with him in the greatest agonies, and also in giving

him readiness and strength. Acts x. 38, it is said, God anointed Jesus

of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power.' It is usual in

scripture to express the powerful graces of God's Spirit by anointing.

[3.] In loving him for it, for taking our sins upon him according to

his will: John x. 17, Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay

down my life, that I may take it up again.' Though God's love to Christ

were eternal, yet you see how he expresseth it, as if he were loved the

more for his kindness to us. The like expression you have John xv. 10,

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I kept

my Father's, and abide in his love;' that is, his commandments about

the office of his mediatorship. This is a great endearment to God's

affection.

[4.] God rewarded him for it: Heb. ii. 9, But we see Jesus, who was

made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death,

crowned with glory and honour;' so Phil. ii. 9, Wherefore God also hath

highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name.' God

restored him to his glory with a great deal of renown in the eyes of

men. So Christ prayeth, John xvii. 5, And now, O Father, glorify thou

me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the

world was.'

2. Glorify God alone. Let not other things share with him in your

thoughts; do not think it is for your sakes. God can have no higher

motive than his own will. The Lord laid it upon Christ, but nothing

moved him to lay it but his own goodness. Now men usually fancy

something without God to be the ground of his love; but he expressly

saith, Isa. xliii. 25, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy

transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Mark,

his own sake. Therefore exalt God, in that, as you see, nothing else

could lay it upon Christ: Isa. ii. 11, The Lord alone shall be exalted

in that day;' that is, so separately and so singly, that you may see it

was his own mere will that put him upon such a design of mercy. Dr

Crisp disputeth at large that nothing else could lay it upon Christ,

and so excludeth faith and all holy means, out of a mistake that we

think faith layeth it on Christ, whereas faith only apprehendeth it to

be laid on Christ. But this we may safely say, Nothing did put God upon

it that could be found in us, no good disposition, faith or works

foreseen. It is merely his own sovereignty and goodness; and therefore,

Rom. iii. 24, we are said to be justified freely by his grace, through

the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'

But a little more particularly let me show you how you do not exalt God

alone and separately for laying it upon Christ. It is inclusive two

ways:--

1. If you have such a secret thought in you that it is because you are

less sinners than others, therefore you are pardoned, and your sins are

laid upon Christ.

2. If because you are greater sinners than others, you therefore

conclude you shall not be pardoned, you do not give God the glory of

his prerogative, that he alone should lay your sins upon Christ, but

you look for somewhat in the creature.

1. When you think God laid your sins on Christ because you are not so

vile as others. Take heed, say not in your hearts it is for your

righteousness. God acts according to his own pleasure; he many times

leaveth those that to outward appearance are most righteous. You have

heard of the heathens, and yet they were passed by, as Cato and

Aristides; nay, Fabricius and Socrates, though they did excel in

outward honesty of life, yet God did not regard them in his choice.

Whereas Paul, who was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, his

sins were laid upon the back of Christ, as were those of Mary Magdalen,

and the thief upon the cross, whose whole life was wasted in

wickedness. And Christ telleth the pharisees that publicans and harlots

should enter into the kingdom of heaven before them.' It doth not go by

your works. The apostle Paul doth strive often to remove this conceit

out of our hearts: Titus iii. 4, 5, But after that the love and

kindness of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of

righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved

us.' All that we could bring to God was disobedience, and lusts, and

malice, and envy. So 2 Tim. i. 9, He called us with an holy calling,

not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace,

which was given us in Christ before the world began.' God doth not look

without himself, but only to his own purpose and grace. It is good to

improve natural light, and to live to the utmost of it; but it is a

vain thing to think that by any action of ours we should hope to move

God to lay our sins upon Christ. Luther hath a pretty expression to

this purpose upon this text: Take heed,' saith he, of bringing the

servants or the ass to God's mountain. They may accompany you thither:

Abraham and the lad must go yonder and worship; the servants and the

ass must tarry at the foot of the hill. Only go you with faith to deal

with the mercy of God; do not any way admit your works to the glory of

a pardon.' Therefore, I say, look upon God as laying your sins upon

Christ, being moved thereunto merely by his own purpose and will. He

saw nothing in you to incline him to lay your sins on Christ more than

others'. This is the first way.

2. When you think God will not lay your sins upon Christ, because you

are so great sinners, and have committed so much wickedness. We are all

apt to say, as Peter, Luke v. 8, Lord, depart from me, for I am a

sinful man.' Do not you make God to eye something without himself now

to incline him to this? Alas! it is all one to God whether you are

great or little sinners. The spring and rise of his love in giving

Christ to you is from his own bowels; and if there be any difference in

this kind it is in this, that the greater sins comply with God's ends

and designs. And therefore it is sometimes an argument used to God,

that though they can bring him no other thing, they can bring him

wickedness enough. Thus David saith, Pardon my sin, for it is great,'

Ps. xxv. 11; so Isa. xliii. 24, 25, Thou hast bought me no sweet cane

with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices,

but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, and hast wearied me with

thine iniquities.' What followeth? A man would think terrible,

thundering words. No; it is a sweet and evangelical promise; I, even I,

am he that blotteth out your transgressions, for my own sake, and will

not remember thy sins.' So Gen. viii. 21, I will not again curse the

ground any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is

evil from his youth;' and Isa. lvii. 17, 18, For the iniquity of his

covetousness, I was wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and

he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and

will heal him. I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and

to his mourners.' God, you see, declares that it is according to his

own purpose, and not of our works. He doth quite contrary to the

deserts of man, not to debase strictness, but to exalt his own grace.

Mark, that place fully setteth forth the covenant of grace, Isa. liv.

9, where God saith, For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I

have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so

have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee.'

I come now to the next part, the nature and way of our deliverance: The

Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all.' Our sin and

punishment is transferred to Christ. The point is--

Doct. That the way that God taketh to acquit poor sinners is to lay the

guilt and punishment of sin on the back of his own Son. The Lord hath

laid on him the iniquities of us all.' What the phrase importeth I did

in part discover in giving you the different readings of it in several

translations. Four especially you may take to set it off to your

thoughts.

1. That of the Septuagint, pare'doken auto`n tais amartiais--he

delivered him over to our sins. It is hard and sad with a man to be

delivered over to be torn by wild beasts, to be delivered to

persecutors, to be burned in the flames, to be stretched on a rack, to

be broken on a wheel, and other tortures. But it is far more hard and

evil to be delivered over to sins. Especially for Christ, who was in

flamed with a desire to please God; there is nothing more abhorrent

from his nature than the filthiness of sin. And therefore, though you

should suppose him to be delivered over to the most exquisite

punishments that the world or the wit and malice of man can invent, yet

it is nothing in respect of his being given over to sins. So the

spittings, scourgings, buffeting, his cross, and all, were but as a

flea-biting in respect of his being given over to our sins. God

delivered him to Pilate. The Jews could have done nothing if power had

not been given them from above. But to be delivered over to the power

of our sins, what a heavy thing was this for Christ! And therefore the

expression doth in part reach what is meant here by God's laying it

upon Christ.

2. That of Junius and others, Fecit ut in eum incurrerent peccata

nostra. Our sins did rush upon Christ; they would fain destroy him, as

an enemy pusheth sore to destroy their enemy. We read of a company that

came out to take Christ with swords and staves, and a soldier that

fiercely run him through. Ay! but brethren, there is another company

that came rushing, and would fain destroy him, and that was your and my

sins. We came forth with swords and lances, and, as it were, run him

through.

3. Another version has it, Traduxit in eum, or, as with us, he laid it

on him.' Do but consider what it is to have sin laid upon any. It is to

be bound over to death and destruction; it is to put that upon a man

that will be his certain ruin: 1 Kings xiii. 34, And this thing became

sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it

from off the face of the earth.' When sin is laid upon a man, it will

undo him.

4. Others take our marginal reading, Occurrere fecit in eum: he made

our sins to meet in him; that raiseth it a little higher. Though one

sin be enough to ruin a man, yet all the sins in the world were as it

were concentred in Christ to overwhelm his soul, and to fill it with a

great deal of terror; and indeed he stood in much danger of a great

condemnation unless he could satisfy God's wrath. Thus you see, from

the several readings, what may be gathered out of this expression. And

I the rather note it, because the Spirit of God useth a word here that

hath so many significations. Out of all you may gather a delivery of

Christ over to that which was most contrary to him, which seized upon

his soul, and settled there, and brought him to the death of the cross,

and would not leave him till he had fully expiated and satisfied for

it, even our sins.

But I come more particularly to set out the thing that is intended here

by the Holy Ghost in this expression: but he hath laid on him the

iniquities of us all.'

There are two things in it--one implied, which is a taking off sin from

the creature; and the other more formally expressed, which is a putting

it upon Christ.

First, therefore, I shall show you how far it is taken off from the

creature. But, for the understanding of both, you must know there are

three things in sin:--

1. The fault or offence against God.

2. The guilt or obligation to punishment.

3. The blot or sinful inclination, or vicious disposition to sin.

1. I begin with the first. For the offence, it is as if it were never

committed. The creature, when justified and sanctified, is as free as

if it had never sinned, which is intimated in divers expressions of

scripture. I will give you a few places: Jer. l. 20, In those days, and

in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought

for, and shall not be found; and the sins of Judah, and there shall be

none, for I will pardon them whom I reserve;' Isa. xliv. 22, I have

blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy

sins.' They are exhaled and dried up by the beams of mercy. And Jer.

xxxi. 34, I will remember your sins no more.' It is quite gone from the

creature: Num. xxiii. 21, He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither

hath he seen perverseness in Israel;' Ps. li. 9, David prayeth, Hide

thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.' God doth so

cover the sin as if it were not at all; his carriage to the soul is as

if there were no sin. As a holy and just God, he cannot behold it with

approbation; and therefore, as a merciful God, he doth as it were cover

it from his eyes. Whereas, on the contrary, when God punisheth sin, he

is said to set iniquity before him: Ps. xc. 8, Thou hast set our

iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy

countenance;' Ps. cix. 15, Let them be before the Lord continually.'

God in love will not take notice of the offence.

2. He taketh off all guilt and obligation to punishment: Rom. viii. 1,

There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.' Nothing is done

in a vindictive and punitive way, though many things be done in a

corrective and chastising way. All God's dispensations are as branches

of the covenant.

3. For the blot or sinful inclination; that is more and more taken away

by virtue of Christ taking our sins upon him: 1 Peter ii. 24, Who his

own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead

unto sin, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes we are

healed.' He took away vicious inclinations, as well as the penal

obligations.

Secondly, It is transacted on Christ, or laid upon him. We cannot

safely say the fault, for that is the guilt that groweth out of the sin

inherent; but the guilt was laid upon him, such as groweth out of sin

imputed: therefore he is said to bear the sins of many,' Isa. liii. 12,

and to bear our sorrows and griefs,' ver. 4.

1. So much sin was laid upon Christ as obliged him to make satisfaction

for it to his Father's justice; for having once submitted to the taking

of it, he could not recede; there was a necessity that he should clear

himself with his Father: and therefore it is said, Luke xxiv. 26, Ought

not Christ to have suffered, and then to enter into his glory?'

2. There was so much sin as put Christ in our stead. Therefore, 2 Cor.

v. 21, it is said, he was made sin for us.' And in this chapter he is

said to be numbered among transgressors,' nay, the chief of

transgressors.

3. So much sin as made him liable to the infinite wrath of God;

therefore it is said, Gal. iii. 13, he was made a curse for us.' And in

the Psalms it is said, The pains of hell gat hold of him;' insomuch

that he needed justification as well as we: Isa. l. 8, He is near that

justifieth me, who shall contend with me?' It is spoken of Christ; this

chapter is a chapter of Christ. He needed that God should clear him.

4. So much sin as would have sunk him into eternal misery, had he not

been God to escape out of it: Acts ii. 24, Having loosed the pains of

death, because it was impossible that he should be holden of it.' And

therefore you shall find faith's chiefest support cometh from Christ's

resurrection: Rom. viii. 34, It is Christ that died, yea, rather that

is risen again.' Mark that, mallon de; faith looketh to that as the

wonderfullest thing, that, having such a weight of sin upon him, he

should be able to rise up again. This was a great wonder.

But I come to the reasons of the point.

1. Therefore did God lay it upon Christ, because he was the fittest

person to bear it: he was most able. It best befitted the divine

justice to choose such a person as might not miscarry in the work and

transaction, else we could have had no assurance that satisfaction was

given: Ps. lxxxix. 19, I have laid help upon one that is mighty.' It is

spoken of David, but chiefly means Christ in it. The help is laid on

one that is most able to go through with it, and Christ was most

willing to come to the utmost: Luke xii. 50, I have a baptism to be

baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!' Christ

had not room enough, his heart being enlarged with love, till he had

given testimony of it to the world: Luke xxii. 15, With desire have I

desired to eat this passover.' Christ knew the date of his days was

then at an end.

2. This did suit best with God's design, which was to magnify justice

and mercy at the same time. The mercy-seat did but cover the tables of

the law in the ark. The law was satisfied by Christ, and yet God is

merciful to us. David saith, Ps. ci. 1, I will sing of mercy and

judgment.' God would have his people triumph in both now.

Use 1. To press us to bless the Lord for this wonderful deliverance by

Christ.

1. That sin is taken off from our shoulders and laid upon Christ. How

miserable would it have been if every man had borne his own burden!

Gal. v. 6. How light soever men's sins seem when they are committed,

yet they will not be found light when they come to reckon with God, for

then sin to an awakened conscience is one of the heaviest burdens that

ever was felt. Now Christ hath taken off this burden from us. If God

had laid sins upon us, as he laid them upon Christ, they would have

sunk us to hell. The little finger of sin is heavier than the loins of

any other sorrow. If God give you but a touch of it, or a spark of it

light into your consciences, you will groan sadly: Ps. xxxviii. 4, Mine

iniquities are gone over mine head, as an heavy burden they are too

heavy for me.' When we do but taste of this cup, we cry out presently,

My heart faileth.' You may know it--

[1.] By what Christ felt. He lost his actual comforts, felt strange

agonies, insomuch that he sweat drops of blood. We are of weak spirits,

and soon dismayed, but his soul was exceeding sorrowful: If this be

done in the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?' Many times, a

little before a shower, falls a gloominess and sad blackness: so it was

in Christ's spirit.

[2.] The saints, when the little finger of God is upon them, how have

they roared all the day long 1 Ps. xl. 12, Mine iniquities have taken

hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the

hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.' All life and spirit

is gone when God sets home but one sin upon the conscience. Job saith,

chap. vi. 4, The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison

thereof drinks up my spirits.'

[3.] You may know it by your own experience. When conscience is a

little opened, what horrors and disquiets are there! Prov. xviii. 14, A

wounded spirit who can bear?' Then for thousands of rams, and ten

thousand rivers of oil! Cain crieth out, My iniquity is greater than I

can bear.'

[4.] Consider the life to come, and the threatenings of the word

concerning those that die in their sins: Heb. x. 31, It is a fearful

thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' Who can conceive what

it is to remain in chains of darkness? 2 Peter ii. 4. Sins that now lie

asleep like sleepy lions will be then roused up: Mark ix. 44, Their

worm never dieth, and their fire is not quenched.' This is the portion

of them that bear their own burden and their own transgressions.

2. When you begin to feel the burden of sin, make use of Christ for

ease; remember this burden is laid upon him: Mat. xi. 28, Come unto me,

all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' The

weight lieth upon us, not to press us down to hell and despair, but to

go to Christ, as they were to do under the law to the sacrifice, Lev.

i. 4. They were to lay their hand upon the head of the sacrifice--a

rite expressing that the sacrifice did bear the burden of their sins.

This they were to do with brokenness of heart, acknowledging their

offences--acknowledging that they were worthy to die as the beast died

owning the sacrifice of atonement, Christ Jesus: Ps. li. 17, The

sacrifices of a broken heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' So John i.

29, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world;'

Look on him whom they have pierced,' Zech. xii. 10. This was done to

renew the covenant: Ps. 1. 5, Gather my saints together unto me, those

that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.' And they were to

promise to walk with God in all humble obedience.

Use 2. Is exhortation, to beseech you to believe this truth, that your

iniquities are cast upon Christ. A man hath no benefit by it till he

believeth. There is as much need of your believing as of Christ's

suffering. Believe in the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the

world.'

1. As soon as you feel sin a burden, ease yourselves by considering it

is laid upon Christ. Free grace, as it doth not exclude the merits of

Christ, so not the application of faith: Rom. iii. 25, Whom God hath

set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' The

business was transacted between God and Christ before all worlds. Faith

gets it copied out to the soul. You are weary and heavy laden with sin,

come then to him, Mat. xi. 28, with a lively faith; not as if by faith

we did anew lay the burden of sin upon Christ, only then we apprehend

it to be done for our sakes.

2. After you have gotten an interest in him by faith, renew the sense

of your pardon, God seeth as a just God, and so our sins should be

matter of humiliation to us; but he covereth them as a merciful God,

and so it is matter of comfort. Sins, they were long since laid upon

Christ; renew thy pardon again by faith, and strive to get an actual

sense of it. Remember, Christ's soul was heavy to the death, that thou

mightest go free.

But you say, I could take comfort in these things if I knew that my

sins were laid upon Christ; it is only the sins of the elect are laid

upon Christ.

Ans. The text saith, The iniquities of us all.'

Doct. That Christ is set forth in the gospel, as having all men's sins

laid upon him. The word carrieth it in such a general way, that none is

excepted, and there are very many other places to confirm it, where

Christ is said to reconcile the world: 2 Cor. v. 19, God was in Christ,

reconciling the world to himself;' and to taste death for every man.'

Heb. ii. 9; and to die for all,' It is good to mark that: 2 Cor. v. 14,

If one died for all.' I shall come to the reasons why Christ is

proposed so generally.

1. Because all men in some sort have benefit by him. So far Christ

suffered his Father's wrath that was due to all men's sins, that in a

large sense they have benefit by him. All the common mercies we enjoy

we have by virtue of Christ's death. You know how the threatening ran,

In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die,' Gen. ii. 17; nay, it

is surely die.' And all mankind might have been lost; but yet you see

the absolute accomplishment of the sentence, even to wicked men, is

referred to the day of judgment. The worst, at least, enjoy a reprieve

by Christ. In this sense it is said, 1 Tim. iv. 10, We trust in the

living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that

believe.' Such as is spoken of, Ps. xxxvi. 6, O Lord, thou preservest

man and beast;' by a common salvation and preservation. And the word

soter, which is usually applied to Christ as Mediator, is used there to

hint that it cometh by Christ; though it be a common mercy, it is from

him. Thus it is said, Eph. i. 10, That in the dispensation of the

fulness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ,

both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.' Some

understand it of collecting the scattered parts of the world, and

renewing the creature, which, had it not been for Christ, would have

been lost. As an orator collects the heads of a discourse, that nothing

be lost, and bringeth it into one sum. So the heathens, all their

mercies come to them swimming in the blood of Christ; so the word,

ordinances, covenant, and outward graces to the church. Thus he

suffered for the sins of the whole world, that the whole should enjoy

these common favours and blessings by him.

2. Because there is a sufficiency in the merits of Christ for all, so

that if it had pleased God to give Christ to all mankind, his justice

had been sufficiently satisfied. For there is no defect in the

Redeemer, and therefore there are so many general expressions in

scripture to set out the value of Christ's sacrifice; so that if there

were ten thousand times more sins committed than there are, here is

enough to expiate them all, the person that suffered being so eminent,

and the sufferings so great and infinite. Those that perish do not

perish out of any defect or insufficiency in the merit of Christ, as if

enough were not done to save them; but out of their own fault, because

they did not believe it. Thus it is said, 1 Cor. xv. 22, For as in Adam

all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive;' that is, as there was a

sufficiency in Adam, the first common person, to ruin all his

posterity, so there was a sufficiency in Christ to save all that Adam

ruined; for it must needs be understood so, for take it literally and

it is against all common experience. Many know not Christ, many hate

him and will not come unto him: Ye will not come unto me, that ye may

have life;' Rom. v. 18, Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment

came upon all to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the

free gift came upon all men to justification of life.' The text proveth

nothing but that there was as much sufficiency in Christ to justify, as

there was in Adam to condemn. That we may not have too low and

undervaluing thoughts of Christ's sufferings, the scripture speaks thus

generally: there is enough for me and thee, and all the world. It is a

great in jury done to Christ to lessen and extenuate him beneath Adam,

as if he were not as able to recover as the other to ruin us.

3. Therefore it is expressed thus generally, that all conditions of men

might be included. God would not have any enclosure of his mercy within

the bounds of any nation, persons, and conditions of men, that he might

take off all outward exceptions, and comprise every believer, of what

condition and rank soever; and therefore he expresseth himself

promiscuously to all of every state, every nation, every order. It is

the nature of man to confine privileges to their own nation and order.

We would be singular and shine alone, and have none share with us;

envy, I say, grudgeth at the commonest mercies. We see in common things

nothing is so welcome to us as that which we enjoy alone. The Romans

would be the only civil nation, all else were barbarians. The Romish

clergy would have all learning and knowledge confined within their

function; and the Jews could not endure to hear of a general salvation

for other nations. It was the harshest note that could be sounded in

their ears, that Christ died for all. It is much urged by the apostle,

because of the rage of the Jews, for the enlargement of the pale of

God's church. Therefore I conceive the apostle did inculcate, and so

largely insist upon it, to meet with this perverseness of the Jews, as

that which they would never hear of. In this sense it is said, Heb. ii.

9, he tasted death for every man;' and so 1 John ii. 2, And he is the

propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins

of the whole world;' that is, not only for us Jews, but for all the

world, even of all places, orders, and ranks. God would not have the

creatures envy it to any man, he proposeth it so generally to take away

that Jewish indignation against the Gentiles. Therefore the apostles do

so plentifully abound in these expressions.

4. That no man might accuse God as if he had not made sufficient

provision for his soul. Men are apt to transfer their guilt; though

they will not charge Christ with it in a way of faith, they will charge

God with it in a way of censure; as Prov. xix. 3, The foolishness of

man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.' It is

their own folly and unbelief, and we are apt to impute it to God, as if

he did not intend Christ to us. Now there would be more occasion

offered, if the Lord should have pointed out by name those to whom he

intended Christ. God keepeth it secret what he will do with men, that

he may provoke them to endeavours after duty, leaving themselves to his

good pleasure. No man can plead now, as an excuse for his negligence,

that God left him out; it is we leave out ourselves; and therefore the

proposal and offer of Christ is general. God hath expressed enough of

his will to show man his duty, though not enough of his will to tell

man his pleasure and secret intention. Now the will of God concerning

any particular person is hidden. Men would fain excuse themselves of

duty by prying into God's secrets. God giveth a check to such curious

impudence, by making the proposal and offer of Christ general, though

his intentions to give Christ may be particular; yet we must not meddle

with that. Foolish curiosity proceeds from an innate desire in the

creature to charge God with all its miscarriages: Deut. xxix. 29,

Secret things belong unto the Lord, but those things which are revealed

belong to us, and our children for ever.' The proposal of Christ in the

gospel, that is a revealed thing, and it belongeth to the creatures.

God would have it carried so as rather typing out duty to them than

revealing his own purposes; he would not give the creature such an

occasion to murmur.

5. To denote the multitude that should come into Christ, especially in

the latter times; they are as good as a whole world: he so loved the

world,' John iii. 16. It is understood by many of mundus credentium;

they were but a world when Christ saved them. God's elect, compared

with the wicked world, are but a little flock by themselves, but they

are accounted in the scripture as innumerable: Rev. vii. 9, I beheld,

and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations,

and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and

before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.'

Mark, it is a multitude which none can number; the sheep of Christ's

flock are so many that it is innumerable: in a sort especially, there

shall be a great increase in the last times. And thus you may expound

that place: Heb. ii. 9, He tasted death for every man.' In the next

verse it is so intended, in bringing many sons unto glory.' So Ps. ii.

8, Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for an inheritance, and

the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' The gospel shall

then be spread far and near. God hath given Christ to have and to hold

all the world: Heb. i. 3, Whom he hath appointed heir of all things.'

And it is said in the 10th verse of this Isa. liii., that the pleasure

of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.' Therefore the scripture

speaketh this generally, to comprise the vast multitude that should

embrace the doctrine of Christ.

6. To denote the oneness, or the one way by which all are reconciled to

God: all that have it have it by Christ. I say, many times the

expressions are general, to show that God disposeth of the sins of all

his people one way. Such expressions are rather exclusive of other

ways, than inclusive and comprising all persons. God is said to lay the

iniquities of us all upon Christ, because all those whose iniquities

are disposed in a merciful way, they are disposed this way. Let me

exemplify this a little:--The philosophers define good thus: kalo`n

Estin de pantes ephiletai [9] --good is that which all things desire.

It is not to be understood as if all things in the world did desire

good; for stones and timber, and many other things, have no appetite.

The meaning is, all things that desire, desire that which is good. But

I will give you instances in scripture: Col. i. 20, And having made

peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things

unto himself.' Not that everything is reconciled, but everything that

is reconciled, is reconciled this way, by the blood of Christ's cross.

So Titus ii. 11, The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared

to all men;' that is, to all to whom salvation is brought, it is

brought by the grace of God; it rather noteth Christ's merits than the

persons that enjoy it. Divers such expressions there are in scripture.

Thus, John i. 9, That was the true light which lighteth every man that

cometh into the world.' Not that every man that cometh into the world

is enlightened, there are many that perish and die in their ignorance:

the meaning is, every man that is enlightened, is enlightened by him.

As, for example, such a man cured all the city; not that every

particular man was cured, but all that were cured were cured by him: so

Christ is the Saviour of all men, that is, of all that are saved. These

expressions are exclusive of all other ways, not inclusive of every

person. Thus you have the reasons.

APPLICATION.

Use 1. This serveth to clear to us the mistake of the doctrine of

universal grace, and to explain those expressions in scripture that are

brought to favour this opinion: though you cannot conclude out of them

universal grace, yet you may a universal necessity of believing this

benefit. Solomon saith, Prov. xxiv. 26, Every man shall kiss his lips

that giveth a right answer;' that is, ingenuous men will mightily prize

and be taken with aright answer. Why, here now you have an answer

against the patrons of universal grace. You see the reasons why the

proposals of Christ are so general, and why there are so many

expressions of it to all men: it is because all enjoy benefit by him.

He is sufficient for all: God would not have any enclosure of his grace

to any particular person; and it is to show the multitude of believers;

and that God would have all men look to this, and to no other name, and

to but one Christ.

Use 2. Is to inform us what little reason we have to refuse to come to

God at his call, seeing he keeps open-house for all comers; yea, though

you have no money for heaven: Isa. lv. 1, Ho, every one that thirsteth,

come to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat;

yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and with out price.' The

publication of the gospel is general to all men to all kinds of

men:--nothing hindereth now but unbelief, or the refusal of Christ.

1. Not thy nation. Oh, how are we to praise God that he hath enlarged

the bounds of mercy to us Gentiles now, as well as to the Jews

formerly! You may look upon your iniquities as laid upon Christ: Rom.

xv. 11, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles.' It is quoted out of Ps.

cxvii. 1. All nations now share in this privilege. You know, in traffic

or otherwise, peculiar nations have peculiar privileges, but here all

alike.

2. Not thy condition. Art thou poor? Christ is as mindful of thee as of

the rich. God taketh a great deal of care and knowledge of a poor soul.

In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the poor man hath a proper name,

and the rich man hath an appellative; and it is a great favour, I can

tell you, to be known to God by name. It is spoken as a great privilege

that God knew Moses by name: Exod. xxxiii. 12, I have known thee by

name, and thou hast found favour in my sight;' Acts xvii. 34, Howbeit,

certain men clave unto him, and believed, among which was Dionysius the

Areopagite, and a woman named Damans.' God took notice of the poor

woman at Athens as well as the great scholars. So James ii. 5, Hath not

God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith?' Art thou a poor,

neglected man or woman, or a poor servant? Yet your souls may be as

dear to him as the richest man's alive, and he is as tender over you.

You read in the 16th verse of Philemon, that Onesimus, a servant, was

above a servant in regard of his spiritual condition. Oh, brethren, it

is a great fault in men, they do not look after the poor in the world,

especially poor servants; if they mind the good of the higher servants,

yet they neglect the other. I speak a homely word, and yet a true one;

it may be the soul of the poor scullion-boy in the kitchen may be as

dear and precious to Christ as yours. So it may be said of one

deformed: Acts xiii. I and Simon that was called Niger' was a saint as

well as Moses the fair.

3. Not your sins. Make no exceptions where the word maketh none. Christ

came to die for the dissolute drunkard as well as for the devout

hypocrite. Men in despair look upon their sins as Cain did, and cry

out, My sins are greater than I can bear.' Why, did Christ upon the

cross only except thy sins, thinkest thou? Did he say he would not die

for such a one as thou art? Mat. xi. 28, Come unto me, all ye that are

weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Those that have

committed so many sins that they are even sunk down to hell by them,

Christ calleth to himself; yea, the more unlikely it seemeth to you,

God may have the greater regard to you: Luke xiv. 21, The master of the

house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets

and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed,

and the halt, and the blind.' A man would have thought a morsel at the

door had been great preferment for them, and of all persons they should

never have been invited. There is nothing exempted out of the call of

the gospel but the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that is never

pardoned, because the forgiveness thereof is never asked. Take heed of

making exceptions where God hath made none; a feast may be intended for

thee, though thou hast a poor, blind, lame soul.

4. Not any thoughts that Christ was never intended for us. How do you

know that? Reprobation is God's sealed book. It is not for creatures to

look into it; you would fain justify your unbelief by God's decree

against you, but it argueth an ill spirit. If you can exempt yourself

out of the number of them that go astray, you may exempt yourself out

of the number of those whose iniquities are laid upon Christ. Let God

alone with his secret judgments. Christians are to look to the revealed

will of God--to directions in the scriptures, not to the secret that is

in God's bosom.

But still the soul replieth, If I knew that I belonged to the election

of grace, then I would believe; otherwise, I know that I cannot change

his purpose by any faith of mine. Doth God promiscuously intend Christ

to every one? I reserved the discussion of this doubt, that I might

answer it the more fully. I shall endeavour it in these propositions,

by which I shall lay open the whole matter:--

1. Certain it is that there is enough in Christ's death to merit pardon

for all men in the world, though there were ten thousand times more men

than ever there were or shall be; and so they would find it if they did

believe. It is good to determine that first, for the defect is not on

Christ's part; but this I spoke to before in the reasons.

2. Though Christ's death be sufficient for all, yet the efficacy and

benefit of it is intended only to believers--to those that enjoy it by

faith,--not only applied, but intended only. Mark, I say, that not only

the efficacy of it is to believers, but the efficacy of it is intended

to believers. See some proof of this from scripture: John x. 15, I lay

down my life for the sheep.' There was the intent of God and Christ,

that Christ should die only for those of his own flock; and therefore

many times, where you find the expressions of God's love very general,

you shall see the intention of it is restrained to those that believe.

As John iii. 16, God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten

Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have

everlasting life.' God intended him to the world of believers: whoever

amongst them do believe, let him be whatever he will, or whatever he

was, he should not perish. So Rom. iii. 22, Even the righteousness of

God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that

believe, for there is no difference.' Though it be to all, it is with

this restraint and limitation, to all that believe.' And there is good

reason for it; for if God intended it, he would effect it: Ps. cxv. 3,

Our God is in heaven, and doth whatsoever he will.' If ever God willed

it, certainly he would accomplish it--man cannot frustrate it. And if

God intended the giving Christ to the whole world, Christ would have

prayed for it. A man can not know what was God's will or the Son's duty

better than by taking notice of his solemn prayer when he was about to

offer up the sacrifice of himself: John xvii. 9, I pray not for the

world, but for them which thou hast given me out of the world.' Christ

was given for none but for those that were given to him; and for them

he prayeth, ver. 20, Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also

which shall believe on me through their word.' Christ prayed only for

those for whom he died, and he died only for believers.

3. God no doubt intended him such a sufficient sacrifice to the world.

Christ did nothing but by the Father's will, as was largely confirmed

in the beginning of this discourse: John v. 30, I seek not mine own

will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent me.' It was the

Father's intention as well as the Son's. So far, then, we may safely

say, God intended Christ as a sufficient sacrifice.

4. Though the efficacy and benefit be certainly intended to believers,

yet God's offer of Christ, and the publication of the gospel, is

general: Isa. lv. 1, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters;'

Rev. xxii. 17, Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life

freely.' Such commands being rather an intimation of what he would have

us do than what he intendeth we shall do; of the creature's duty rather

than of God's will. It is the will of God's pleasure that they ought to

seek after an interest in Christ. So it is said, I Tim. ii. 4, God will

have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;'

voluntate praecepti, by the will of his command: and by virtue of this

we are bidden to preach the gospel to every creature, Mark xvi. 16. To

the making it effectual, there is required not only God's will, but

God's grace, still reserving to God the power of his own secret

judgment.

5. God is serious and in earnest in these offers and publications of

Christ to all. That he mocketh no man you shall see: do but try him,

accept him, and he will be as good as his word. It is not made to you

fraudulently, and with an intent to deceive, but God is serious. God is

bound to no man, and wicked men refuse him out of their own

perverseness. And indeed we should rather admire his mercy that he

giveth Christ to any, than quarrel at his justice that he doth not give

him to all.

That God is serious and in good earnest in these offers, appeareth--

1. By his entreaties. He beseecheth you to take him as well as offereth

him: Ezek. xxxiii. 11, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no

pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his

way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will you

die, O house of Israel?' 2 Cor. v. 20, Now then we are ambassadors for

Christ, as though God did beseech you by us.' So God useth all these

entreaties to show that he is sincere and in earnest with all men.

2. Because it suiteth more with his delight that you should take hold

of these offers and not refuse them. God bindeth himself with a strong

oath: Ezek. xxxiii. 11, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure

in the death of the wicked.' Merely as it is the destruction of the

creature, so God doth not any way approve of it, though, as a just

punishment, he delighteth in it. If you look to God's approbation or

delight, your accepting grace more suiteth with it than your refusal.

3. Because he is angry that you do refuse: John v. 40, Ye will not come

to me that you may have life.' He is grieved that men, through their

own folly, neglect that which should do them good: Mat. xxiii. 37, O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them

that are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children

together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye

would not?' He meant by his outward ministry, though not inward call.

He was mighty solicitous and earnest in that. So though God use all the

means with us, and give us all the light that possibly can be into his

will, except saving light, we turn unto our own way.

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[9] Probably kalon estin ou panta epithumei.--ED.

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THE SEVENTH VERSE.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he

is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her

shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

THE main drift of the prophet in this chapter, as I have showed, is to

remove the stone of stumbling and the rock of offence which lay in the

way of the Jews because of Christ's meanness and sufferings. They

looked for a Messiah to come fluttering with the pomp and royalty of an

earthly prince; and therefore, when they found nothing but a mean

outside, a despised branch, and a withered root in a dry ground, a man

of no splendour, but of much sorrow, they did easily dash the foot of

their faith, and split all their hopes upon this rock, as if there were

nothing worthy of the arm of God to be found in Jesus. Against this

scandal the prophet maketh many defences, and showeth the several

reasons why the excellency of Christ was to be hid under the veil of

meanness and miseries; and therefore what a slender ground there was

why it should be turned to the blemish and disrepute of Christ.

1. His first argument was, because it was for our good, and for our

sakes that he did put on this disguise; and so being found in

appearance like us, he might be taken in our stead: Surely he hath

borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.' And what foul ingratitude

were this, not to know a friend because he hath put on a disguise of

meanness and misery for our sakes! Having fully traversed this argument

in the fourth, fifth, and sixth verses, he proceeds to another, a

second defence against the scandal, and that is--

2. The voluntariness and willingness of Christ to undergo these

sufferings. He was not compelled to it unless by his own spirit. He

might have come in the lustre and glory of the Godhead. Or if not so,

yet being a man, he might have hid himself secretly from the malice of

his adversaries; or, when seized upon and taken, he might then have

vouched his innocency, and have pleaded the matter with them; or have

made a party among the people, and so, one way or another, rescued

himself from the ignominy and bitterness of that death that he was to

suffer. No, saith the prophet, here is nothing but patience and a

willing subjection to his Father's design: He was oppressed, and he was

afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.' And, indeed, you had need

observe these words, for they were the occasion of the eunuch's

conversion; for he was reading this very place in Isaiah: Acts viii.

32, And the place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led

as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb before the shearer, so

opened he not his mouth.' And God sent Philip to join with him. And

usually such scriptures have been of greatest account that have proved

effectual to the converting of a sinner; as that place in Rom. xiii.

11, And that knowing the time, that it is high time to awake out of

sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' This

scripture was the occasion of Austin's conversion, as John I. was of

Junius's conversion, and this of the eunuch's. God sendeth the same

Spirit to speak to you as to Philip, and you are to hear with the same

affection. These words are the second argument to take off the scandal

of Christ's death and bitter sufferings. And it is taken from the

willingness and ready patience wherewith he underwent those sufferings.

I may observe in the verse two parts:--

1. The nature of the sufferings: he was oppressed, and he was

afflicted.

2. The carriage of Christ under them: he opened not his mouth; which is

amplified and illustrated by two similitudes, of a lamb going to the

slaughter, and a sheep before her shearers.

The points hence may be many; but because the prophet doth so often

double and redouble expressions about the sufferings of Christ, and I

have spoken so much of almost every circumstance considerable in them

already, I shall be enforced now and hereafter to touch only upon the

main thing held forth in every verse. Notwithstanding, I shall

endeavour to draw out the strength and sweetness of every phrase in the

comment and explication. Briefly, then, to go over the parts.

1. As to what was done to Christ, or the nature of his sufferings: He

was oppressed, and he was afflicted.' There is a great deal of variety

about the rendering of these words, because of the diversity of the

Hebrew pointings. The vulgar readeth, Oblatus quia ipse voluit--he was

offered because he would. Symmachus renders it, He was brought, and he

obeyed. But these do not follow the best pointed Bibles, though they do

not much vary from the sense intended in the verse. Those come nearer

that render, He was punished and troubled; for the first word

signifieth, to exact a thing with rigour and molestation, and is

applied to this case: as if a man should come and molest a surety for

the debt of another for whom he is engaged. I find most of the best

interpreters going this way; and Junius rendereth it, exigitur poena,

our punishment is exacted of Christ: the creditor came upon him for our

debt; as if the word did point to that great truth which is held forth

in other places, that Christ died for us as our surety. And therefore

he is called the surety of a better testament.' Heb. vii. 22. Mat. xx.

28, he is said to give his life, lu'tron anti` pollon, as a ransom for

many.' He laid down his life to set us free from the debt and

engagement; so that they that are Christ's need not fear that the debt

will be required of them again: Luke xii. 58, Lest the judge deliver

thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison, where thou

shalt remain till the uttermost price be paid.' I say this is a very

comfortable truth for God's people, that the surety had paid the debt

for them, so that they need not fear the officer or the prison; God

hath exacted it of Christ. Or you may, if you will, read, as generally

our translation, He was oppressed,' as the Seventy render both words by

one, he was evilly dealt with and evilly entreated: and so our

translation maketh it to be read with an emphasis, He was oppressed and

afflicted;' that is, it was such an affliction as did amount to an

oppression, and yet he bore it patiently. Oppression,' saith Solomon,

maketh a wise man mad.' Eccles. vii. 7. A wise man, that is a man that

hath the greatest command over himself. The heart stormeth and rageth

when it meets with such usage as it did not expect, or hath not

deserved. But Christ was oppressed and afflicted, and he opened riot

his mouth. And indeed the sufferings of Christ, in reference to man, do

best of all come under the notion of oppression; for the other word

afflicted,' it is well rendered, and therefore I will not criticise

upon it.

2. How Christ bore it, or his carriage under it. It is given first in

general: He opened not his mouth;' and then it is particularly

amplified by two similitudes.

First, In the general: He opened not his mouth.' This shows two

things:--

1. The great patience of Christ. When all this was upon him, not an

impatient word dropped from him, either against God or his enemies.

And, indeed, you shall find in scripture that holy patience is many

times expressed by holding our peace. Discontent easily breaketh out

into daring and provoking language. The tongue and lips speak

unadvisedly against God, therefore the bridling the tongue is a great

sign of patience. Hence it is said, Lev. x. 3, that Aaron held his

peace when a remarkable judgment was upon him. Stormy hearts will soon

boil over; but Aaron held his peace. I conceive it was not out of the

greatness of his sorrow--as, indeed, griefs are not always

utterable--but out of the greatness of his patience. As David, Ps.

xxxix. 9, I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.'

He sweetly acquiesced in Providence. And so in the person of Christ,

Ps. xxxviii. 13, he saith, I as a deaf man heard not, and I was as a

dumb man that openeth not his mouth;' as if he had been either deaf or

dumb, not sensible of the injury, nor willing to speak of it. Thus

Christ suffered unjustly for our sake and in our stead, yet spoke not a

word. This showed his great patience.

2. His great love to man, showed in his wonderful silence, even then

when he might justly have spoken in his own defence, but would not seem

to interrupt the design of God. It is witnessed in many places that

Jesus held his peace when they asked him questions about his innocence,

as I shall show you by and by out of several places. I conceive it

hinteth that great silence that Christ manifested upon all his

accusations.

But some may object, and say, How can this be, since Christ did

sometimes open his mouth? Did not he say to the soldiers, Are you come

out against me as against a thief and a robber?' And he said to Pilate,

Thou hast no power unless it be given from above.' And he prayed for

them, Luke xxiii. 34, and rebuked him that smote with the sword, and

forbade Peter to use it. How, then, doth this suit with these words, He

opened not his mouth'?

I answer--He never spoke to hinder our redemption, neither railingly

nor revilingly; for so Peter explaineth it, I Peter ii. 23, Who, when

he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not,

but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.' He used no

threatening, no reviling--no, many times not a modest reply, when a man

would think he might very well have made it. Thus you see the meaning

of the phrase, He opened not his mouth.'

Secondly, Now for the particular resemblance; as--

1. That he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter. The scripture often

useth this similitude; for, indeed, it was not a casual similitude, but

a standing type of Christ; as the lamb in the daily sacrifice, Exod.

xxix. 38, which was offered to God daily, morning and evening, for

pardon--we being only accepted through his mediation; and the Paschal

lamb in the Lord's Supper importeth Christ's being offered to God, for

Christ is called a lamb in scripture, I conceive, for three reasons.

[1.] As it is an emblem of innocence, meekness, and patience, as the

lamb was to be without spot and blemish. Therefore, St Peter saith, 1

Peter i. 18, We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, as of a lamb

without spot and blemish.' A pure, harmless, undefiled lamb.

[2.] As it may import weakness and slenderness of appearance in the

world. Christ is nothing in show, though mighty in power: Rev. vi. 15,

16, And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men,

and the chief captains, and the mighty men, hid themselves in dens, and

rocks, and mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us,

and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from

the wrath of the Lamb,' that is, even from Christ. Christ in his

weakest appearance was but as a lamb, yet such a lamb as at the last

day will make the wolves to shake.

[3.] It noteth the meekness and sweetness of Christ, willingly yielding

to be a sacrifice for us. Christ, when he cometh to judgment, is

expressed in Hosea and other places to be as a lion; but when to save,

then as a lamb. When he cometh to destroy men, he cometh as a lion; but

when he cometh to destroy sins, he cometh as a lamb. Thus here, and

John i. 29, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the

world.' This was the Lamb the prophet Isaiah foretold, and the

sacrifices prefigured that Lamb, the Lamb slain from the foundation of

the world,' Rev. xiii. 8. Well, then, you see the force of the

expression here,--that Christ went as sweetly and readily to the work

of our redemption as an innocent lamb to the slaughter or shambles.

2. The next similitude is, As a sheep before her shearers is dumb.' Of

all creatures the sheep is the most silent. Hogs whine and hout, but

sheep are dumb before the shearer. Christ did not open his mouth,

unless to pray, instruct, and reprove, as before mentioned. Many points

might be observed, but I will sum up all in this one.

Doct. That Jesus Christ underwent cruel and bitter sufferings for us

with' a great deal of willing patience.

For this I take to be the intent of this verse, to show how ready

Christ was to accomplish the office of the mediatorship: Rev. i. 5, he

loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' For in all his

conflicts with malicious accusations and opprobrious speeches, he would

do no violence, nor express anything that might be an occasion to

divert him from his purpose; but, as a lamb is brought to the

slaughter, so he opened not his mouth. I shall prove the point:--

1. By some scriptures that assert it, and show the willingness of

Christ: Phil. ii. 8, He humbled himself, and became obedient to death,

even the death of the cross.' With a great deal of willing patience he

complied with the sorest and most bruising act of the mediatorship. He

was obedient to death, even the death of the cross.' So it is said,

Eph. v. 25, Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.' And in

other places: Heb. x. 7, with its parallel, Ps. xl. 7, In the volume of

thy book it is written of me, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.' Christ

doth, as it were, exult in the command, and rejoice over the work of

redemption: Lo, I come to do thy will!'

2. By several passages in the history of Christ's life.

[1.] His longing for it before it came. When a man desireth a thing, he

is impatient till he obtain his desire; every minute is tedious till he

doth enjoy it: Luke xii. 50, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and

how am I straitened till it be accomplished!' That baptism was the

laver of his own blood. Earnestness of expectation straiteneth joy, and

a man cannot let out his spirit upon other things till he hath what he

waiteth for. How am I straitened!' saith Christ. He consulted with

himself, that thou, and I, and others, have souls to be saved, and

therefore he would not do otherwise: Luke xx. 15, With desire have I

desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.' The earnest and

vigorous bent of his desire is shown in that expression, With desire

have I desired.'

[2.] In not preventing it when he knew it. Many are cast unawares upon

danger, but Christ knew it, and foretold it before he came to suffer:

Luke xviii. 32, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are

written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be

accomplished: that he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be

mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on.' He knew which way

the divine decrees and predictions ran, yet he went to Jerusalem. He

could have kept himself safe from danger, yet he offered himself to it.

It was in his power to have commanded twelve legions of angels, but the

scripture saith it must be so. He could have kept himself and his

disciples safe too, for he had power enough: John x. 17, 18, I lay down

my life, no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have

power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' Unless he had

been pleased to lay it down, no man could have taken it from him.

Voluntarily he submitted to it. Creatures do things out of necessity,

because they cannot do otherwise, but Christ might have prevented it,

for he knew it before: John xviii. 4, Therefore Jesus, knowing all

things that should come upon him, went forth and saith unto them, Whom

seek ye?'

[3.] His cheerful casting himself upon it: John xiv. 31, Arise, let us

go hence,' Presently, upon the end of that sermon, Christ went into the

garden, where he is taken. So he saith to Judas, John xiii. 27, What

thou doest do quickly.' Not to encourage him to the evil in his

treasonable fact, but to show how willing he was to undertake our

redemption.

[4.] In submitting to his Father's will in his highest agonies and

conflicts: Luke xxii., Not my will, but thine be done.' Here was no

murmuring, but a sweet submission and acquiescence at the appointment

of God. Many may seem to submit to God till they come to be pinched

with the soreness of the trial. It is then you may discern and try your

readiness in submitting to God's will.

[5.] By his silence. When he heard the false witnesses, he held his

peace and answered nothing, Mark xiv. 61; so Mat xxvii. 13, Then saith

Pilate unto him, hearest thou how many things they witness against

thee? and he answered him never a word;' so Mark xv. 5, But Jesus yet

answered nothing, so that Pilate marvelled: and he questioned him in

many words, but he answered him nothing.' Christ holdeth his peace,

that we might speak and have boldness with the Father, and taketh the

accusation patiently, that he might break it off from us. His not

answering was to show our guilt; and yet he carried it so that nothing

could be clearly proved to impeach his own innocency: Mat. xxvi. 62,

63, And Jesus held his peace, and the high priest arose and said unto

him, Answerest thou nothing?' Not as if his silence did (as it doth in

others) come from suppressed anger, or scornful stubbornness, but

patience and meekness: He opened not his mouth.' Not a malicious taunt,

or proud reproach, nor angry threatenings; nothing but silence, nothing

but what argued oppressed innocence.

[6.] By forbidding all violence that might seem to hinder this

intention: Mat. xxvi. 52, Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy

sword into its place.' If he opened his mouth, it was to forbid

violence, and to pray for his persecutors: Luke xxii. 51, And he

touched his ear, and healed him.' Every one of these things showeth a

sweet submission, and readiness, and willingness in Christ to suffer

for us.

Now the reasons why it must be so are these:--

1. That he might be fit for the Mediatorship, that all things might

come freely and sweetly to you from his Father. He offered himself

willingly, that thou mayest have mercies willingly. All wicked men's

blessings seem to be extorted from Providence; they have them, as it

were, invito Deo: Hosea xiii. 11, I gave thee a king in mine anger.' So

the murmuring Israelites had quails in anger: Ps. lxxviii. 31, Now

Christ went willingly, that his own people might have everything from

the heart of God as well as his hand: Jer. xxxii. 41, I will rejoice

over them to do them good.' One of the conditions, as divines observe,

how it may stand with the justice of God to punish the innocent for the

nocent, is, if he be willing; for God could not have extorted our debt

of Christ, unless he had been willing. When Paul would take Onesimus

his debt upon himself, Philemon might justly require it of him: Philem.

18, 19, If Onesimus hath wronged thee aught, put it upon my account,

and I will repay it.' It would not stand with God's justice to force

the obligation upon Christ, but Christ voluntarily engageth himself; if

these souls owe thee aught, put it on my account--I will repay it.

There was not only an ordination of God the Father, but a voluntary

susception and undertaking of God the Son; he cheerfully and willingly

submitted to have sin translated upon him, and to be liable by

engagement; put that on my account, and I will repay it.

2. That he might set off the worth of his love to us. Willingness and

freeness commendeth a kindness, extorted courtesies lose their value.

Therefore it is said, He loved us, and gave himself for us.' We see

among men it would be ill taken to do a thing grudgingly. Decius [10]

rode cheerfully into the gulf for the good of his country; nay, in some

men it is a kind of corruption to be over-forward with their favours:

Prov. xvii. 18, A man void of understanding striketh hands, and

becometh surety in the presence of his friend;' that is, before his

friend desires and seeks for it. Many men, rather than lose the praise

of their kindness, undo themselves, their stock being soon spent. It is

folly to be over-lavish and easy in such kindnesses. Therefore much

more now would Christ commend his love to us: this ocean and

overflowing of comforts being in Christ, it was the commendation of his

love; he strikes hands and becometh surety before he is asked; it is

the enhancement of Christ's love, and therefore he willingly submitted

to it.

But you will object, How did Christ do it willingly? did not he pray

that the cup might pass from him? and did he not fear and stagger at

it? Heb. v. 7, Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up

prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that

was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.'

I answer--1. Briefly, Christ's prayers are rather for our example and

comfort, and that he might leave us a pattern where to go, and to whom

to apply ourselves in all our straits, than to declare his willingness

to decline this hot service: he would be tempted in all things like us,

except sin, Heb. iv. 15, that he might be touched with the feeling of

every infirmity.' He would be touched with such a conflict as came

nearest to a sin of infirmity, but without sin. Jesus did it that we

might know ourselves in the like case, when we struggle with the sense

of guilt and the apprehension of divine wrath.

2. To show himself truly man. Christ prayed against the cup, Father, if

it be possible, let this cup pass.' He doth not contend with

instruments, but beseech God. Christ's prayers against the cup were as

the prayers of a private man; and so Christ would show all the passions

of our nature; for if he had not prayed that the cup might pass, he

must have put off all natural affections, because Christ, as a private

person, looked upon it as a mere suffering, it being the nature and

duty of man to decline all those things that are grievous and painful

to him; and Christ having the same love, and hatred, and fear that we

have, as a private person, he would manifest it at this time.

3. As a common and public person, namely, as our Mediator and surety,

so he was extremely willing and desirous to do this great office of

love for us. For so it followeth, he sweetly submitted to his Father's

will: Father, not my will, but thine be done.' Not my will as a private

person, but thy will, which is more to a public person, let that be

done; it was not in reference to the work, but how he should go through

with it.

2dly, For his fears: these were not a shrinking from the work, but only

a natural consternation and retirement of the spirits upon so ghastly

an apprehension as he then had of his Father's wrath against him for

our sins. When the cold hands of death were put into his bosom to pluck

out his heart, no wonder if there were a struggling; it is natural to

be moved with things that are nigh. These fears were a part of the fire

in which this sacrifice was to be burnt and offered to God. No wonder,

therefore, if the Spirit of the Godhead did freely give up the manhood

to be scorched with these fears: Mark xiv. 38, The spirit is willing,

but the flesh is weak.' The willing spirit giveth up the flesh to this

weakness.

3dly, For his tears: they were such an eruption and overflow of his

love; a part of that deluge by which he would drown the world of sin

and wickedness.

Divers inferences may be drawn from hence.

Use 1. Is consolation, and that more generally. Here is comfort for

believers, for your faith to feed upon. You may be sure that God

accepted Christ for you, for he willingly offered himself to be a

sacrifice for you. He went as a lamb to the slaughter, and this lamb

taketh away the sins of the world. You have it twice proclaimed from

heaven that God was well pleased with Christ--at his baptism and at his

transfiguration: Mat iii. 17; and Mat. xvii. 5, This is my beloved Son,

in whom I am well pleased.' God is pleased in Christ with you. Your

willing sacrifices are acceptable to the Lord; God had no respect to

Cain and his offering, because it was offered with a grudging mind. The

Lord loveth a cheerful giver. Christ gave himself cheerfully and

willingly for you; therefore the Lord loveth him, and loveth you for

his sake. Among the heathens, a sacrifice that came unwillingly to the

altar was thought ominous, as when the beast did show much reluctance,

or did roar, or bleat much. O Christians! your sacrifice came

willingly; he was not haled to the altar with rigour, but he went as a

lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb.

Go and urge it to God; willing sacrifices are pleasing to him; Jesus

Christ did not offer himself with a grudging mind.

2. More particularly, there is comfort against sad thoughts about sin.

The great aggravation upon which the soul doth so bitterly reflect is

the willingness of it; and, indeed, here lieth much of the evil of sin.

It was that which heightened Ephraim's guilt, that he willingly walked

after the commandment, Hosea v. 11; that is, so readily complied with

Jeroboam's calves; and, indeed, the foulness of the fact is not so much

to be gathered from the grossness of the acts of it, as from the

propension, and inclination, and disposition of the heart towards it,

and the fulness of the will to it, a deliberate ready-giving ourselves

to it. Wilfulness in sin maketh the heart very sad when it cometh to

see it. But, blessed be God, here is an answer to it--you have a

willing Saviour. Though there be in you much reluctancy against God's

will, and much readiness to offend, yet you could not be so ready to

sin as Christ was willing to die for you: With desire have I desired to

eat this passover.' How earnest was he to show his love! Have you felt

the rage of lust in your bosoms? Christ felt the rage of love. He was

straitened till he were baptized with blood for your sakes. This is the

true reflection upon Christ, when we see enough in him to stop the

mouth of conscience: Who shall condemn? it is Christ that justifieth.'

Use 2. Is exhortation to bless and praise God. This was the endearment

of his love, the willingness of it. Oh, how much are we indebted to

him! The very argument that faith useth in the heart is the willingness

of Christ to serve us in this business: Gal. ii. 20, I live by the

faith of the Son of God, who hath loved me, and gave himself for me.'

Use 3. Is instruction. It giveth out divers lessons, for Christ's life

is a praxis of divinity, and the rules of religion exemplified.

1. To show us how we should give up ourselves to the service of Christ,

how we should come with the sacrifice of ourselves and duties with a

ready and cheerful heart. When you feel any reluctancy and regret of

spirit, oh, remember Christ offered himself willingly. The Socinians

would make Christ's sufferings to serve for some other use, only to be

exemplary; but certainly they were not only to leave us an example: I

Peter ii. 21, Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we

should follow his steps;' but he died in our room and stead, and for

our sakes. And therefore we should give up our selves to him. The

scripture speaketh often of the free-will offering of the saints: Ps.

cxix. 108, Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will offering of my mouth,

O Lord;' Ps. cx. 3, They shall be a willing people in the day of thy

power.' Bernard saith, Lord, I will willingly sacrifice myself to thee,

because thou wert willingly sacrificed for me. Christ was sacrificed

willingly, not for his own gain but your benefit; and will you not give

up yourselves to God, when it is better you should be given to him than

left to yourselves?

2. It showeth us what we should do in all our straits, wants, and

calamities that befall us. The saints are as lambs in the midst of

wolves, Luke x. 3: show yourselves lambs in suffering, as well as like

lambs in danger, not like swine that whine and yell. You should not

open your mouth against God. Do not please your own carnal mind by

murmuring, but rather resign up yourselves to God's disposal; this is

somewhat hard to do. The saints have been troubled with carnal

reasonings, as Job, and David, and Jeremiah, and Habakkuk; but learn of

a higher instance, Jesus Christ, who, though innocent, did not murmur

under his sufferings, but bore all with a ready and willing patience.

Oh, therefore yield up yourselves to God with great patience, both in

life and death.

3. It teacheth us not to use reviling and threatenings words to men.

You may be wronged, so was Christ; he was more innocent than you can

be, for it is impossible but something of the flesh will discover

itself in us; but what a sad thing is it to see the people of God bring

a railing accusation against others! Consider, Christ opened not his

mouth, but went as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before

her shearers is dumb.

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[10] Qu. Curtius'?--ED.

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THE EIGHTH VERSE.

He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his

generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the

transgression of my people was he stricken.

WE now come to the third defence to take off the scandal of Christ's

meanness and sufferings; and that is taken from the glorious issue and

end of these sufferings. It was an ignominious death, but there

followed a glorious resurrection: he was not detained and holden of

death, he got clear of it, and then lived for ever. The text saith, He

was taken from prison, and from judgment,' &c.

There is scarce a verse in the scripture that hath been so variously

expounded as this hath been, not only by others, but by the same men.

Scarce a man hath agreed with himself positively to determine of the

sense of it, the phrases looking so many several ways. However,

difficulty provoketh endeavours. According as I apprehend them, you may

divide them into two parts:--

1. The scandal itself, laid down in the most aggravating terms prison,'

judgment,' cutting off from the land of the living,' and a stroke upon

him for transgression;' as if the prophet had said, Grant all that you

will charge upon him, prison, judgment, strokes, cutting off, express

it the worst way you can, all this will not impeach the glory of his

excellency.

2. We have the defence in other terms: He was taken' from those things,

and who shall declare his generation?' If you think it is not enough to

say that he died for others, and that he was stricken for the

transgression of my people, yet he did not as every man that dieth for

others; he perished not in this expression of his love, as others do:

he was taken from prison, and from judgment, and now liveth gloriously.

There are two things in the defence:--

[1.] His resurrection: He was taken from prison and from judgment;' he

got out from under it.

[2.] His life and duration in that state: Who shall declare his

generation?' These are the parts, which will be the better made out to

you by going over the phrases, as they lie in the order of the words,

clearing this scripture from a wrong sense.

1. He was taken from prison and from judgment. These words have been

variously translated and variously expounded. Some read by prison and

judgment he was taken away;' but that doth not suit with the scope:

others, after distress and judgment he was taken into glory;' that

differeth not from the proper sense: others, without prison and

judgment he was taken away in a violent, wrongful, extrajudicial

manner;' but the Hebrew words do not so easily signify that. Now the

main thing is to reconcile scripture and scripture, though it is

impossible to reconcile interpreters. Therefore to dance after their

pipe would perplex a man with much uncertainty, seeing they knew not

which sense to take themselves. The Seventy translate it otherwise than

it is read here, and the words are quoted in Acts viii. 32, en te, &c.,

In his humiliation his judgment was taken away;' for that place hath

the sense, though not the same words; for in or after his humiliation

his judgment was taken away, when he was taken from it: in the middle

of death he was a conqueror. Others now follow our reading, and give

the sense thus: He was taken from prison and judgment to the cross;' as

soon as bound and condemned, presently crucified. But that mistaketh

the sense, and the following words show it is wrong, for they declare

the glory of his resurrection, as these do his resurrection.

Thus for the different opinions. The true sense briefly is, that Christ

was taken and assumed into glory from the prison of the grave. Prison

is taken metaphorically for any distress, or it may be taken properly

for the prison of the grave, and that judgment and condemnation that

was passed upon him by God and men: by God, as our surety, condemning

him in our stead; by men, in an unjust and violent way. Thus, after

much traversing the variety of senses, I find this to be best and most

approved.

2. It followeth, Who shall declare his generation? The Seventy, and

Luke out of them, have it, te`n genea`n autou ti's diege'setai; Who

shall declare his generation?' Some apply this to his eternal

generation, as the fathers generally do,--as if the scandal of his

misery were excused by that: others to his incarnation, who can declare

it how he was begotten of the Virgin? But these are wide of the scope,

and the word will not bear it. Others refer it to the wickedness of

that age,--Who can tell it? Oh, the wickedness of such a generation,

who would put to death such an innocent person as the Messiah! Who can

declare the wickedness of the people of this generation? But that is

but arresting the place, and a harsh sense. Others more properly

interpret it thus: Who shall declare his generation? that is, the

numerousness of those converts that shall be gained to him, the race or

issue that shall come of the gospel? But this is the matter of another

verse, and such a thing is never expressed by dor or gene'a properly,

but by other words. The sense is, then, who shall declare his

generation? that is, his age or duration: dor is often for that, and

gene'a too: Acts xiii. 36, David, after he had served (gene'a) his age,

or his generation, he fell asleep.' The like in other places. So that

the meaning is, though he were a short time under distress and

judgment, some two or three days; yet, when he was taken from it, who

shall declare his generation? who shall be able to count the number of

his age, or the date of that time? You may easily count the number of a

man's age and the date of his generation: Ps. xc. 10, The days of our

years are threescore years and ten.' But who can tell those many

thousands of thousands of years, those endless ages that for ever

Christ shall live? You can tell David's or Jacob's generation, but can

you tell his? Theirs is soon reckoned, but who can find out a sum that

can reach eternity? Thus for this phrase.

3. It followeth, For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for,

or though he were cut off; that is, though he were by a violent death

cut off, yet he shall be taken thence and translated into glory, where

he shall have a long and lasting age. Or you may take the particle

causally, as we render it, for: here is a double reason, he was but cut

off as a slip, and it was not for his own sins; and therefore there is

reason why he should not miscarry under it: this will appear in the

exposition. He was cut off' is a metaphor taken from plants or trees,

that do not fall down of their own accord, but are slipped and plucked

off. The same metaphor is used, Dan. ix. 25, The Messiah is cut off,

but not for himself.' To which metaphor Christ himself seemeth to

allude, Luke xxiii. 31, For if they do these things in the green tree,

what shall be done in a dry?' The meaning is, if Christ himself be

taken off, who was cut off as a green tree, and not planted again,--was

taken from the land of the living; that is, from living and conversing

here upon earth: and it is so called, both by way of opposition to the

land of the dead, or the grave; and by a condescension of the Spirit of

God to our weakness, because we count that none live but those that are

before us. This phrase is often used: Ps. xxvii. 13, I had fainted

unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of

the living.' So Isa. xxxviii. 11, I shall not see the Lord, even the

Lord, in the land of the living.'

4. And for the transgression of my people was he stricken; or by the

transgression, by the wickedness of Israel. He bringeth in God speaking

it, as taking notice of their sin: Acts ii. 23, Him, being delivered by

the determinate counsel of God, have ye taken, and by wicked hands have

crucified and slain.' You may take both; it is like this may be the

scripture Paul meaneth when he saith, I Cor. xv. 3, Christ died for our

sins according to the scriptures;' either sense is good. The sum of all

is this, that though Jesus Christ was so cruelly and despitefully

handled for our sins, yet at length he was taken from all this

suffering, and reigneth for ever with God in glory.

Many points may be raised from these words; but having promised only to

hint at the main things in these following verses, I shall take notice

but of these few.

Doct. 1. That by the divine appointment there was a formal process

against Christ. He was made guilty, he was cast into prison, he was

condemned. Sin was translated upon him in the former verses. Here God

had him to prison, and let all his distresses come upon him; and so the

grave especially he was condemned to; there was judgment passed upon

him. And therefore, the next time you see your surety without sin; here

you see him as under your sin in misery and distress: Heb. ix. 28,

Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that

look for him he shall appear the second time without sin unto

salvation.'

What comfort is there for believers in this, to support and strengthen

their faith?

1. In that whatsoever should be done to them, is done to Christ in

their stead. It is comfort that Christ hath made full satisfaction,

that he hath been in prison and under judgment for our sakes. God will

not exact twice, of Christ and you too.

2. It yieldeth them instruction as well as comfort, not to think it

much if they be imprisoned, and be under judgment for Christ's sake.

Christ hath been so for theirs, and you may be glad you are conformed

to your head: Luke xxi. 12, Christ told the apostles, They shall lay

their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the

synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for

my name's sake.' So it may be with you; but remember he was taken from

prison and from judgment.

3. Christ had a long reign for a short death. Christ's glory was in the

midst of his sufferings, in his humiliation, that is, when most

humbled. Christ did not recover glory till in the prison of the grave.

We can easily count the time of his suffering, but his generation who

can declare? 2 Cor. iv. 17, This light affliction, which is but for a

moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of

glory.' An hyperbole, which is an expression greater than the truth,

will not declare the glory. Hyperboles of hyperboles are not high

enough; who can declare his generation?

4. Those that are cut off from the land of the living may live again to

glory. So the church, when buried as it were under its ruins, there

will be a resurrection; and therefore the glory of the churches is

called the first resurrection,' Rev. xx. Death is but a transplanting

to glory to the godly; they are but a slip taken off from an earthly

root, that God may set them in the field of glory. Alas! this life is

nothing to the age and generation that we shall have with Christ in

heaven; a man may die, and yet be saved from death.

5. All Christ's sufferings were from men or by men. If there be

anything shameful in the cross, blame the Jews for it, and yourselves

for it. Many blame the Jews, and are ready to fly in their faces; but

do you blame yourselves? It is hard to know which is meant by the

transgression of my people,' or for,' or of my people.' God would have

us reflect upon both. Christ, that died for the sins of men, was taken

away by the sins of men, that so he might at the same time discover his

personal innocency and assumed guilt.

6. Oppressed innocency will get clear again: Who shall declare his

generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the

transgression of my people.' It was not a just debt in regard of men,

and therefore not a lasting death; and it was not for any fault of his

own. It plainly hinteth the unexpected restitution of glory to the

people of God in their greatest humiliation; their judgment is taken

away: God can never come with help too late, but men can. In his

humiliation, in his judgment, Christ showeth the meaning of that

riddle, Though he kill me, yet I will trust in him.' There may be

victory in death; the matter is never past help with God: Jonas in the

whale's belly was recovered. We can never sink below hope and prayer.

Our interest thrives best many times when the case is dead and

desperate as to all appearance.

These things having been observed, I now come to the main things

intended in the text, and that is the glory of the resurrection, and

the duration and continuance of that glory.

The points are two:--

1. That the Lord Jesus was taken from prison and from judgment, i.e.,

he rose again out of the pit of distress, to which he was condemned for

our sakes.

2. That Christ being risen, liveth a numberless date of years, even for

ever with God in glory.

These two points, then, the resurrection of Christ, and the life of

Christ: the first is from that clause, He was taken from prison and

from judgment;' the other from that, Who can declare his generation?'

I begin with the first point, that the Lord Jesus was taken from prison

and from judgment, and rose out of the pit of distress, to which he was

condemned for our sakes. He was taken from prison and from judgment; he

did rise as Mediator, and could not choose but rise; he was not

suffered to miscarry in it. The scriptures testify abundantly that he

rose again: I Cor. xv. 3, 4, That he died for our sins, and rose again

the third day, according to the scriptures.' And in other places, that

he ought to rise again: Luke xxiv. 46, And thus it behoved Christ to

suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.' This Christ proveth

out of the scriptures.

Therefore I shall show you--(1.) Why he rose, by reasons reflecting

upon the efficient cause; (2.) Why he ought to rise, reflecting upon

the final causes and ends of God in Christ in it for our good.

First, I shall show you why he rose, giving you the reasons for it;

as--

1. His own prayer. Christ's prayers were all granted, but especially

those that were put forth with such vehemency and strong pouring out of

his soul to his Father. He prayed for it with a great deal of holy

fear, that he might not miscarry in the work. Therefore he was taken

from prison and from judgment The apostle saith, Heb. v. 7, He was

heard in that he feared; he offered up prayers and supplications, with

strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from

death.' He did not so much pray that he might not die, as that he might

be saved from death; that having taken so much guilt upon him, he might

not sink under it.

2. God's power was put forth upon his prayer to support him. He had a

Father to look after him, whose tenderness would not let him leave

Christ in the grave, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption. And

therefore the resurrection of Christ is applied to God the Father; as

here in the text, He was taken from prison and from judgment.' And Acts

ii. 24, Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death,

because it was not possible he should be holden of it.' He helped the

grave to disburden herself, easing it of its pangs and throes: Rom.

viii. 11, But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead

dwell in you,' &c. The apostle speaketh of a mighty power of God, that

is, of God the Father, which wrought in Christ when he raised him from

the dead, Eph. i. 20. God the Father put forth his power to take off

the pains of death and the chains of the grave.

3. There was the power of his own Godhead; he had in himself a divine

virtue to quicken his body. I distinguish this from the former, because

God did not only raise Christ, but he raised himself, so as his

resurrection might be a discovery of his Godhead. And therefore you

shall find in scripture, that he is not only said to be raised by the

power of God, but by himself, by his own person: Acts ii. 24, He loosed

the pains of death, because it was not possible he should be holden of

it.' The grave was to give up this hot morsel, as a man that hath

swallowed down a hot bit was not able to hold it. The scriptures do not

only ascribe the resurrection to God the Father, but to the Godhead of

the Son too: John x. 17, I lay down my life, that I may take it again.'

The words speak of Christ's taking up his life by his own power. He so

laid down his life, that he might re-assume it again by his own power.

It is said, 2 Cor. xiii. 4, that though he was crucified through

weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God; for we are weak in him,

but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.' And it is

very like that expression of St Peter, I Peter iii. 18, Put to death in

the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.' The apostle's scope in that

place of the Corinthians is to prove that Christ and Christians are

both alike in some respects: there is visible weakness, and inward

power; he died through visible weakness. That which you could see in

him was man's form, and so he was crucified; that which was not seen

was his divinity, through the power of which he liveth. His

resurrection was a glorious instance and manifestation of his own

Godhead.

Secondly, For what end Christ was raised. And here, that I may show

believers the fountain of their comfort, why it ought to be that Christ

should be raised from the dead, since all the comfort of the soul

dependeth upon his getting above the grave, and shaking the powers of

death, I will here a little refresh your spirits with the water of this

well-spring of salvation; I will draw it up and pour it forth in three

considerations. In regard of a moral necessity which I call

conveniency, the good that we attain by Christ's getting the upper hand

of the grave, and the confirmation of our souls in all the benefits of

his purchase; for without his resurrection they had been nothing to us.

1. Generally the resurrection is made to be the chiefest ground of

comfort to Christians in the scripture; and therefore you shall find in

scripture that this is made the great article: Rom. x. 9. If thou shalt

confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart

that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' Mark,

that is put as the main thing of Christianity, that God hath raised him

from the dead: 2 Tim. ii. 8, Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of

David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel.' Above all

truths we must clearly preach that, and press that as if it were the

life of all religion. Remember Christ is raised from the dead; and

therefore it was a usual salutation among the Christians, The Lord is

risen. The apostle maketh the triumph of faith chiefly to arise from

this, Christ's resurrection: Rom. viii. 34, Who is he that condemneth?

It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again.' If Christ

had not risen, there would be but poor comfort to believers: I Cor. xv.

14, If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith

is also vain.' All would be to no purpose without this great seal and

confirmation. It is a point of so great importance, that it is

generally made the corner-stone in religion, the main hinge upon which

gospel comfort hangs.

2. More particularly to show you the benefits of it.

[1.] All your spiritual enemies are subdued: Eph. iv. 8, When he

ascended up on high, he led captivity captive;' that is, those things

that usually captivate the spirits of Christians, they were forced to

set off the triumph of Christ's ascension; he seized upon the spoils at

his resurrection, and rode in triumph at his ascension to glory. Death

is unstinged; death shall be served as Haman, when it thinketh to hurt

believers, and shall honour them as he did Mordecai. You may die, but

you are saved from death: 1 Cor. xv. 55, O death, where is thy sting? O

grave, where is thy victory?' It followeth, Thanks be to God, who

giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' You can no more

be held of the grave than Christ could be holden thereby. Hell is

unarmed and subdued, and the powers of darkness triumphed over. Though

the devil mustereth temptations against you, you can see all conquered

by faith in Christ's resurrection: Your life is hid with Christ.' Then

for sin, that is subdued: Christ gave it its death-wound upon the

cross, and at his resurrection got above it. Then for the world,

remember what Christ says, John xvi. 33, Fear not, little flock.' I

have overcome the world;' that is, so conquered and triumphed over the

world that it shall not hurt them. As for the devil, he trode him

underfoot, and so shall Christians shortly: Rom. xvi. 20, The God of

peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly.'

[2.] All spiritual blessings are procured for us. The blessedness of a

Christian lieth in these three things: in pardon, grace, and glory; in

justification, sanctification, and glorification. And all these are

confirmed by Christ's being risen, and taken from prison and from

judgment.

(1.) For pardon or justification. If any one sin had remained

unsatisfied for, Christ could riot have risen; every sin must be

expiated with death: Rom. vi. 23, The wages of [every] sin is death;'

and Christ would fulfil every tittle of the law, Mat. v. 18. But seeing

he is got free, you may be sure he hath paid the wages of every sin: 1

Cor. xv. 17, If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, ye are yet in

your sins.' While the surety is in prison, it is a sign the debt is not

satisfied; but your surety is taken from prison and from judgment. Be

of good comfort, all is paid: Rom. iv. 25, Who was delivered for our

offences, and was raised again for our justification.' God had him to

prison for the debt of the creatures, and took him from prison and from

judgment for their comfort, and that they might be persuaded of his

satisfaction.

(2.) For the grace of sanctification; he rose that he might purchase

the Spirit to raise us from the death of sin to the life of grace: Rom.

vi. 4, That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of

the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' By the

same glory of the Father both is done, that is, by the same glorious

power that raised Jesus from the dead: Phil. iii. 10, the apostle

speaketh of the power of Christ's resurrection, that is, the virtue

that goeth out from it unto believers.

(3.) Glorification. Christ rose before us to open the way; and

therefore he is called the first-fruits of them that slept,' 1 Cor. xv.

20. Others rise as a single ear of corn, but Christ as the

first-fruits. The first-fruits were consecrated in lieu of all the

rest; so is Christ in your stead: Col. i. 18, Christ is called the

first-born from the dead;' that is, the chiefest, and one that rose for

us all,--the first that entered into heaven as a common person. There

was a resurrection of some before the glorification of Christ's body,

but he was the first-born that stood for all: Heb. vi. 20, Whither the

forerunner is for us entered.' Jesus Christ is our forerunner, his

resurrection doth make way for us to rise after him; he is our

harbinger that is gone before.

[3.] Consider what special thing there is in the resurrection of Christ

above the other acts of the mediatorship, since the scripture layeth so

much weight upon it. What is it that it contributes to the comfort of

Christians above his death? It will be necessary to inquire after that,

because the scripture speaketh so much of this circumstance, the

resurrection of Christ from the dead.

I answer--First, By way of confirmation: it confirmeth the heart in the

expectation of salvation by Christ. By this it appeareth that the whole

contrivance of salvation was a true thing; you have God's seal for it.

It therefore confirmeth the heart in two things:--(1.) The person of

Christ; and (2.) The office of Christ, upon which all hangeth.

1. The person of Christ. There can be no greater proof of his divinity

than the resurrection: 1 Peter i. 21, Who by him do believe in God,

that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith

and hope might be in God.' And, indeed, there our faith beginneth upon

Christ's being God; as Peter saith, Your faith is built on God.' Well,

then, here is God's seal to the heart, about the person of the Messiah:

Rom. i. 4, Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the

Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.' There the case

was plainly and mightily decided that he was so, so as no man could

contradict it: Truly this was the Son of God,' as the centurion cried.

All were forced to say so by this instance. So Acts xiii. 33, he is

said to be begotten of the Father.' He proveth it there to be at his

resurrection, that is, declarativ�; then it was evidently shown that he

was begotten of the Father. Well, then, though the mercies of pardon,

grace, and glory were merited by other acts of the mediatorship, yet

they are confirmed and sealed by this, because this establisheth the

soul in the ground of it--in the truth of the person of Christ.

2. It sealeth to us the truth of his office, that this was he that was

sealed to be Mediator. When the Jews taxed Christ for usurpation, he

would confirm his office to them by no other sign but the resurrection:

Mat. xii. 39, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign,

and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet

Jonas;' that is, that which answereth to the type of Jonas; and what

was that but his lying three days and three nights in the grave and

rising again? As if Christ had said, If you will have a miracle and a

seal from heaven, that is all that I will give you. So you shall see

upon another occasion, in John ii., when the Jews saw him

authoritatively purging the temple, and acting as an extraordinary

person, ver. 18, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest

these things?' What confirmation hast thou from heaven to be the

Messiah, that thou takest upon thee to reform the temple? Ver. 19,

Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three

days I will raise it up;' meaning the temple of his body,' ver. 21.

There was all the sign he would give them, viz., his resurrection; this

was the most proper confirmation of his office.

Secondly, There is something by way of evidence,--it is a clearing and

justifying of the merits of Christ. The benefits purchased by his death

are evidenced to us in his resurrection; God must not only be

satisfied, but it must be discovered to the world that God was fully

satisfied, or else we should remain under doubts and perplexities

still. Now the resurrection of Christ is the full discovery of that

satisfaction that is made by his death. This is that that the fallen

creature hath to show for it, that God was satisfied, even Christ's

resurrection. You know, among men, when they pay debts, they look that

the book be cancelled, and that they have an acquittance to show, if

they should be challenged that the debt is not paid. Now, what have you

to answer the challenge? What have you to show Satan when he impleadeth

you before God? Why, by Christ's resurrection you may even challenge

the challenger: Rom. viii. 34, Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ

that died, yea, rather, that is risen again.' Why should God let him

out of prison, if he had not paid the utmost farthing? He was taken

from prison and from judgment. If Christ had been still in the prison

of the grave, you must have looked for another surety that must make up

his defects and satisfy where he could not: If Christ be not risen, ye

are yet in your sins;' ye have nothing to show for your discharge. How

could ye have answered Satan then, if your surety had miscarried? Thus

by way of evidence.

Thirdly, Something by way of pledge to us. By Christ's resurrection God

giveth us a pawn and earnest, as it were, that we may expect the

raising of our own bodies. You may plead it to God, and you may argue

it for yourselves to God: Christ is raised, therefore raise me. And to

yourselves, Therefore shall I be raised, because Christ was raised.

Christ was acquitted from sins and received into glory: therefore,

Lord, for his sake acquit me from my sins. Or shall I say, this is a

pledge to us, that our persons shall be raised, justified, sanctified,

glorified, because our head is raised? The apostle thinketh it is a

good argument to prove the resurrection of our bodies by the

resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. xv.; and 1 Thes. iv. 14, For if we

believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in

Jesus will God bring with him.' The meaning is, that Christ's

resurrection doth not only manifest a possibility, but a necessity of

our rising with him. God hath in him given you an earnest of the

resurrection, so as through Christ you may humbly challenge it at his

hands--Lord, I believe thou wilt raise me to life everlasting. The

wicked rise by the general power of God, but Christians rise with

reference to Christ's resurrection; that was a pledge to them of

theirs: and, therefore, it is observable, that presently upon the

resurrection of Christ's body, there followed the resurrection of the

bodies of some of the saints, that it might not only be a pledge, but

that we might look upon it as a pledge to us: Mat. xxvii. 52, 53, And

the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose,

and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the

holy city, and appeared to many.' There the virtue wrought immediately,

that others of God's people might look for it, and the rest of Christ's

mystical body expect their turn; not only the head, but some of the

members rose too. Therefore, here is our comfort, because it is the

great pledge and earnest that God hath given to the saints, namely,

that, as it was done to Christ, so they may expect it shall be done to

them.

Fourthly, Something you may expect by way of influence. Every well of

salvation hath its proper stream, and everything in a believer's heart

hangs and depends upon some proportionable thing in Christ Jesus; our

death to sin upon his death, our life upon his life, our holiness upon

his holiness: John xvii. 19, For their sakes I sanctify myself, that

they may be sanctified through the truth.' For whatever Christ had in

himself as Mediator, he had it and did it for us. So that from these

special things there is special causal influence on the hearts of

believers. As from the resurrection of Christ our resurrection; from

his death, the death of sin to the life of grace, or to the life of

glory. There is causal influence from Christ's resurrection upon our

hearts, which is the donation of the Spirit of God upon this act of

Christ's resurrection, to raise us to grace and glory. And therefore we

are said, 1 Peter i. 3, to be begotten to a lively hope by the

resurrection of Jesus Christ.' Regeneration cometh from the virtue and

influence of it, that passeth into our hearts for the conquering of

sin, and begetting the new nature and the raising us to glory. But

there is another benefit you are to expect by way of influence from the

resurrection of Christ, even the gift of the Spirit, to conform you to

your head. Christ by his resurrection being made a fountain of

supernatural life, will^ send out vital influence. Wait for it, then;

he will renew and heal you, and he will carry on the work, to the

perfection of glory. Head and members must be conformable, as far as

the model of the creatures will permit. Therefore, as sure as Christ is

risen, you shall be raised with him to holiness here, and to heaven

hereafter. That you may wait for this influence--

1. Labour to get your union with Christ cleared to you. The passing out

of virtue and influence from Christ depends upon that; the head doth

not guide and act foreign members. Oh, say, then, if I were sure of my

union with Christ, I should have this rich comfort. As the woman said,

Mat. ix. 21, If I might but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be

made whole.' The least evidence of an interest and union with Christ

would fill us with wonderful comfort.

2. Value it. Think it worthy of the best of your endeavours, and your

greatest self-denial: Phil. iii. 10, That I may know him, and the power

of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made

conformable to his death.'

Now this appeareth to be from the resurrection of Christ, for these

three reasons:--From its influence--

1. Because this is the most proportionable and suitable act in the

creatures; and I take it for a spiritual principle that every act of

grace hath a necessary dependence upon that work of Christ that is most

suit able to it. Observe it, Christians, faith is mightily helped when

you know that special well-head to which you must repair for the

refreshment of your spirit in every exigence. It is not enough to know

in the general that Christ must do all for you, and that he is the

fountain of all mercies; but you must know particularly what is the

spring of your comfort on such and such a needful occasion. In times of

knowledge God will have our thoughts more explicit; and if you observe

it, you will find that general and indistinct considerations do not

work so effectually to the stablishing of the spirit. God would have

you to see the provision he hath made for every need. Christ died for

sin that you might die to sin; and Christ rose to glory that you might

rise to grace and glory. The dependence and looking up of the creature

must be to the most suitable act and work of the Messiah. Whole Christ

carrieth in himself the complete work of our salvation, and the several

acts and conditions of Christ are proportioned to the several acts and

conditions of salvation.

2. Because the same power that raised Christ raiseth us from death to

life; and therefore clearly such influence is from the resurrection of

Christ. This is evidenced in many places of scripture: Col. ii. 12, You

are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath

raised him from the dead.' It is the same operation of God. The meaning

of that place is, that the life of faith was created in our souls by

the same almighty efficacy of God by which Jesus Christ was raised from

the dead. For the apostle proveth three things there: That whoever is

in Christ is risen from death to life; and that this rising is by

faith; and that this faith is wrought by the same power that raised

Jesus from the dead. See another place, Eph. i. 19, 20, And what is the

exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to

the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he

raised him from the dead.' It was the same power, because it was the

same power that procured it for us. God raised him up, that he might be

a fountain and root of all supernatural life to us, that the power

might work in his as well as him. So Rom. viii. 11, If the Spirit of

him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised

Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his

Spirit which dwelleth in you.' Mark, it is the same Spirit. The power

of the Spirit is put forth to raise Christ, and the power of the Spirit

is put forth to raise you. This is not done by the consideration of

Christ's resurrection, but by the power of the Spirit accompanying it.

It is the Spirit that doth effectually apply this raising and begetting

power.

3. Because the Spirit worketh always with reference to this act and

work of Christ. It raiseth you with respect to Christ's resurrection;

and that is the meaning of these phrases which do abound in scripture,

that couple the soul and Christ together in all his works, as crucified

with him, raised with him. For the latter, take these places: Eph. ii.

5, Even when we were dead in sins hath he quickened us together with

Christ, and hath raised us up together.' So Col. ii. 13, So you, being

dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he

quickened together with him;' so Col. iii. 1, If ye be risen with

Christ, seek the things which are above.' Divers such kinds of

expressions there are in the word, which make out the soul's sharing

with Christ in the virtue of these works. The Spirit revealeth to them

that they are not only to be raised with Christ, but that they are

raised, and so make it a powerful argument to heavenliness, or any

other part of the new creature. This is done already in the root and

mystical notion, and therefore it should be done in the effectual

application. I say, the Spirit revealeth to the soul the resurrection

of Christ, and that he is our head, and the fountain of our life; and

therefore we should live and be conformed to our head. And by such

considerations the Spirit leaveth a great virtue and force upon the

soul, which is called the power of the resurrection.' And thus I have a

little opened this difficult matter to you. Take but one place more and

I have done: Rom. vi. 10, 11, For in that he died, he died unto sin

once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.' There are Christ's

acts. Now in the next verse you shall see how the Spirit maketh the

soul to share in them: Likewise reckon ye also your selves to be dead

indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

Dead by the death of Christ, but alive by the life of Christ. The

Spirit cometh to the heart, and revealeth this to it. Lo, this is done

for you in Christ, and so bringeth the soul by the same efficacy to a

likeness to Christ.

Use 1. Is consolation. Here is comfort for those that have an interest

in Christ. Believers, know the ground of your privileges. Christ is

risen, and thereby declared mightily to be the Son of God. So shall you

be declared mightily to be the sons of God at your resurrection: Ps.

xxxvii. 5, Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he

shall bring it to pass.' Oh, what comfort is there for their spirits in

that word, Christ is risen.' It was the comfortable message Christ sent

to Peter, when he was ready to faint under the sadness of his own

apprehensions, Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is risen, and

goeth before you into Galilee.' Mark xvi. 7--Go to Peter, and tell him

by name. O poor Peter! he is weeping and ready to break his heart; go

and comfort him, be sure to tell him I am risen. Christians, here is

comfort for the saddest believer. Among the primitive Christians their

usual salutation was, The Lord is risen; as if that were as much as

wishing them all peace and grace.

But how shall we do to draw out these comforts?

Ans. Act faith, which bringeth in the virtues of Christ upon the soul.

But how must we act faith in this matter of the resurrection of Christ?

It consists in reasoning and waiting. There is something you must

collect by way of inference, and something you must expect by way of

influence.

First, Set faith a-work, or arguing by way of inference. You must

collect somewhat that you may extract the quintessence of it. As a

surety, as a common person, and as a pattern of providence and church

dispensations, in all these respects you may fetch comfort from

Christ's resurrection. I shall a little clear these three

considerations of Christ, though the two first be somewhat common among

divines.

1. As a surety, and one that undertook for us; that is clear, because

Christ is called the surety of a better testament.' Heb. vii. 22. Now

your surety is risen, then draw out the comfort thus: Surely sin is

satisfied, for the debt is paid. A man is never the richer for gold in

the mine till it be digged out; no more is a man the better for

comforts in the lump; dig them out by holy reasoning. Say then, Christ,

that undertook all, he is got free again; surely then I am discharged,

I have something to show to God. Go and urge it to the Lord Why didst

thou suffer Christ to rise again, if thou wilt charge poor creatures

with their guilt? And urge it to Satan too Dost thou condemn me, and

tell me what I have done, and wherein so often I have sinned?--Why,

Jesus Christ is risen. As Paul: Rom viii. 34, Who is he that

condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again.'

Surely the whole business is accomplished by Christ. Thus dwell upon

such thoughts; only take heed you rest not in your own reasonings--look

for the success of all from the Spirit. O Lord, didst thou not let

thine only-begotten and well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, go free, after

he had been in the prison and in the grave? Did not he undertake for

us, and hast thou discharged him and not us? He is our surety, he hath

paid our debt for us. Therefore reason with your souls as David

reasoned with his soul: Ps. xlii. 11, Why art thou cast down, O my

soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I

shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.'

2. As a common person, Christ may be said to be all of us; for as Adam,

in a sense, was all mankind, so Christ had all the elect in his own

person, and so represents them: so that what he did we may, in some

sense, be said to have done. Thus, a burgess in parliament, that

represents all the town or corporation that sendeth him, his act is

their act: it is grounded upon what the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xv. 22,

As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive.' As Adam was

a common person representing all mankind, so Christ all the elect.

Therefore the apostle saith, Rom. vi. 11, Reckon ye also yourselves

dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our

Lord.' You must do two things:--

[1.] Interest yourselves in the acts of your common person. Reason

thus--If we are united to Christ, then we shall share in all his

purchased benefits: I am crucified with Christ.' Gal. ii. 20; and I am

risen with Christ. You are instated by virtue of your union in all

Christ's acts: Christ was raised, therefore I shall rise; Christ was

taken to glory, therefore I shall be so. Urge it to God--O Lord, did I

not rise out of the dust in Christ? Lord, didst thou not take me out of

the devil's power when thou tookest Christ out of the grave?

[2.] You must reason from this privilege against present distress--Is

it the evil of sin? Rom. vi. 2, How shall we that are dead to sin live

any longer therein?' Am not I dead to sin in Christ, and alive to this

grace in Christ? Then reason from your privileges; I am above this

cross, for Christ is, and shall I sink under it? I am in this glory

already, as united to Christ, who is there, and shall I despair of it?

Is not my head there, and will the head be severed from the rest of the

members in the mystical body?

3. As a pattern of Providence: for God meant to copy out all his

dispensations to his people in the life of Christ. There is not a

providence happeneth to the church or to believers but there is

something therein conformable to the life of Christ. For look, as all

dispensations typed out Christ, as the children of Israel's going out

of Egypt did, for which see that of Hosea, I called my Son out of

Egypt.' Hosea xi. 1, which is cited, Mat. ii. 15, Out of Egypt I called

my Son;' and as Jonas, being three days and three nights in the whale's

belly, did; so Christ is the type of all providences after him. There

is no misery but some passage of Christ's life is parallel to it. Out

of all these considerations you may fetch a great deal of comfort.

Reason then against all the depths of misery into which you may be

cast; I shall get free, for Christ got free; I see the success in the

story of Christ's life. Is it the depth of inward misery? Ps. xviii. 5,

The sorrows of hell compassed me about, and the snares of death

compassed me.' So they did Christ, yet he got free of them, as the

apostle saith, Heb. xii. 2, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher

of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the

cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the

throne of God.' Is it outward misery? None could have more distress

upon him than Christ, yet he was taken from distress and judgment. Is

it death? Christ died and rose again. Either God will preserve you from

the evil, or he will order it so that it shall not hold you. Christ

could not be holden of death when it seized upon him. Is it reproaches?

It may be you are buried in the scorn of the world, and crowded under

disrespects and abasures--so was Christ before you.

We now come to the second considerable circumstance in the text, and

that is the life of Christ: Who shall declare his generation?' As

Christ saith, I am the resurrection and the life,' that is, the cause

of both; for Christ did not only rise, and not only live, but he was

the resurrection and the life. He rose as a resurrection, and he liveth

as a life. And therefore all our spiritual rising and living is from

his rising and living. But having spoken of his resurrection, it will

be necessary to inquire into his life.

Doct. That Christ, being risen, liveth a numberless term of years, even

for ever, with God in glory.

Who shall declare his generation? That is so long that it cannot be

reckoned. Those that have the best skill in numbers cannot rise high

enough to reach his age. By what sum will you express eternity?

Thousands of thousand thousands can scarce be admitted to be a shadow

of it: Heb. vii. 3, Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life;'

which is to prove, not that Christ as God should live for ever, but

Christ as Mediator, as God-man, under which notion he is considered

here.

1. Because at his resurrection he was cleared from sin, and so was no

more liable to death. The apostle saith, Rom. v. 12, that death entered

by sin.' It did so upon Christ as well as upon us when he took our

guilt: 1 Peter iv. 1, He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased

from sin,' being cleared at his resurrection. When he ceased from

suffering he ceased from sin. Therefore the apostle saith, 1 Tim. iii.

16, He was justified in the Spirit,' and manifested to the world in the

flesh; that is, they saw him, but because of his miser able appearance,

they could judge nothing but that he was a sinner; but when his Godhead

came to be discovered at his resurrection, then he was justified in the

Spirit. Therefore now he is no more liable to death. Christ was not

justified, neither by God nor men, till that time. Now he is raised, he

is exempt from it, as the apostle urgeth, Rom. vi. 9, Christ, being

raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over

him.' Death can lord it no more over Christ, as it seemed to do for a

while; but now Christ hath destroyed death: Rev. i. 18: I am he that

liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have

the keys of hell and death.' Death and hell thought to make sure of

Christ, and to have him under lock and key, as it were; but he could

not be holden by them. But now Christ hath the power of death and hell,

so that none goeth there but whom he pleaseth. Amen; it is very certain

it is so. This is the first reason; having fully cleared the debt

wherein he stood engaged to divine justice, he is no more liable to

death.

2. That he might become a principle and fountain of life to us.

Whatever Christ hath as Mediator, he hath it for us. He lived for us

upon earth, and he died for us; and he liveth for ever for us in

heaven: 1 Thes. v. 10, Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep,

we should live together with him.' His life of glory is our life, as

well as his life of grace; and therefore he is said to be the

Resurrection and the Life:' 1 John v. 11, 12, And this is the record,

that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He

that hath the Son hath life;' that is, the testimony of God's bounty,

eternal life, which is by virtue of his life. And so Christ is said to

have life in himself: John v. 26, For as the Father hath life in

himself, so he hath given to the Son to have life in himself;' that is,

to have an original fountain of life. No creature in the scripture

notion hath life in itself.

3. That he might perform all the other acts of the mediatorship, and so

be doing something continually in heaven for the elect of God, that he

may apply the merit of his sufferings, death, and resurrection. Past

acts would not satisfy the spirit; they are more immediately for the

comfort of those that have some evidence of their right in Christ. The

soul saith, Here is much done, but what was this to me? This was done

for those that have interest in Christ, as his sufferings, dying, and

resurrection. Ay! but Christ liveth; there is something a-doing

still--there is something a-negotiating in heaven for you. Therefore,

he not only negotiated for you by the past acts of his life upon earth,

his death, burial, and resurrection, but he yet liveth to be doing for

you. His office required this: Heb. vii. 16, Who is made not after the

law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.'

The meaning is, the Levitical priests were by the law of carnal rites

for a while, but Christ for ever. As a judicious divine observeth,

present acts do most satisfy such doubtful spirits. Christ's life in

heaven is for the effectual application of his merit, and other the

great offices of the mediatorship.

But what doth Christ in heaven for us?

1. He intercedes for us: Heb. vii. 25, Wherefore he is able also to

save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever

liveth to make intercession for us.' That is the end of his life, to

beseech the Father for such as come to him; he intercedeth for the

application of his merit. Christ is a continual remembrancer in heaven,

as it were, to God the Father; he is praying that you may believe; he

is our soul's solicitor, as it were, to appear and plead our cause in

heaven for us: Heb. ix. 24, he is said to appear in the presence of God

for us,' as our agent in heaven. He proveth the matter, he prayeth for

what thou prayest for, and liveth to appear before God for you in all

your straits.

2. That he may seize upon his kingdom, and administer it to the

destruction of his adversaries. Christ's life is their death: Ps. cx.

1, The Lord said unto nay Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make

thine enemies thy footstool.' Christ must live, that they may fall and

be under the feet of Christ. So the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xv. 25, For

he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.' At the

time of his ascension Christ was solemnly inaugurated into the regal

office, that, so he might destroy his adversaries: Rev. xvii. 14, The

Lamb shall overcome.' It is Christ shall fight against them. Isa.

lviii. 8, Thy righteousness shall go before thee.' That which is

comfort to God's people, is terror to the adversaries; if they could

make sure work of him, their business were at an end; but Christ is

alive to destroy their persons, and blast their designs. Some of the

people of God may fall before them, and all visible supplies may be

dead, as Sarah's womb; but the Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock, and

let the God of my salvation be exalted.'

3. That he may dispense all necessary supplies to the needs of his

servants: Eph. iv. 10, When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts to

men;' that is, all necessary supplies for his servants. As a fountain

of living waters continually feedeth the stream, so you have a living

Christ who will continually supply the streams of grace;. he knoweth

your needs, and can supply them. And therefore the apostle maketh the

main business of salvation to hang upon the life of Christ: Rom. v. 10,

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled by the death of his Son,

much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life;' that is, can

we want anything necessary to salvation, that have a living Christ to

go to? You may be sure, if by his death he could bring you into such a

glorious estate, now he is alive he will not be wanting to you.

Use 1. Is information. Learn hence divers truths:--

1. What is the fountain of spiritual life, to wit, the life of Christ;

and, therefore, it is called the life of God, and the life of Christ,

in many places of scripture: Alienated from the life of God.' Eph. iv.

18; It is God and Christ that liveth, and liveth in us, Eph. iii. 17;

and Col. iii. 3, Your life is hid with Christ in God,' and Christ that

liveth in me.' Gal. ii. 20. Again, When Christ, who is our life, shall

appear.' Col. iii. 4. As things are hid in their causes, flowers in

their root, till their appearance at spring, so the glory of spiritual

life is hid in its cause and fountain.

2. That true believers cannot wholly fall away. Christ liveth for ever,

and, therefore, they shall live for ever; the life of Christ cannot

wholly be abolished in them. When you can dig up the spring and

fountain, then grace may wither, and you may be lost in a seducement

and a temptation, but now you are kept by the power of an endless life.

The perpetuity of the saints, if it had no other ground but this, would

remain unshaken; therefore, it is said, We are preserved in Jesus

Christ,' Jude 1. Christ's life is their life, and Christ's life is such

a numberless age, that none can count it.

3. That Christ is a fit object for worship and service. Every being is

the more noble, the more life it hath in it; the life of things is the

commendation of them: Eccles. ix. 4, A living dog is better than a dead

lion;' better, that is, more noble. Now, since Christ hath the noblest

and the highest being, he liveth for ever. The scriptures often call

upon us to trust in the living God: Ps. xlii. 2, My soul thirsteth for

the living God.' Who would go to the dead cistern, and leave the living

fountain? Alas! what is a man the better for a dead idol? All the

satisfaction of the spirit lieth in the life of him whom we worship.

Now Christ is not only living, but living for ever. Your hopes in him

will not run waste. A prince, whose breath is in his nostrils, may

uphold his favourites during his life, but upon his death they may be

brought from the crown of their excellency to the dust of scorn and

ignominy; but Jesus Christ never dieth. As Bathsheba said to David, 1

Kings i. 21, When my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, I and

my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.' All their care and cost is

lost; but it cannot be so with Jesus Christ; he liveth to make you

everlastingly happy.

Use 2. Is for the discovery of hypocrites, that pretend to Christ, but

live as if Christ were in the grave still, as if he were a dead Christ,

as if there were no life nor virtue in him.

But how shall we know what is the life of Christ? I answer--By three

things: there will be freeness, and there will be power, and there will

be likeness to Christ.

1. There will be freeness towards God. The heart is sweetly drawn out

to comply with the mind of Christ. Christ doth not live in you, if

there be not a willingness in you to be like him. The Spirit of Christ

supplieth the place of a law in such a soul: Rom. viii. 2, For the law

of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of

sin and death.' Outward letters and the rule could not make him free,

and disentangle him from his corruptions, but the Spirit of the Lord

Jesus evangelising the law of God, did. The law is made gospel by the

Spirit in the life of Christ; it giveth the heart a sweet liberty and

freedom towards God. The tears of those that pray are sweeter than the

joys of the theatre.

2. There will be power, there will be something besides cold forms and

slight pretences; 2 Tim. iii. 5, Having a form of godliness, but

denying the power.' That which the apostle calleth the power and force

of godliness is a real impression and operation upon the heart; there

will be somewhat besides empty profession and barren speculation; there

will be somewhat that you may call power and mighty working,' as the

apostle calleth it everywhere. Now, when there is no working upon the

spirit answerable to knowledge or pretences, what a dead Christ do such

make him!

3. There will be likeness to Christ. Christ as surely liveth in

believers now, as he once lived upon the earth in his own person. And

you know three things were eminent in the person of Christ when on

earth:--Obedience to his Father: he often professeth that he came to do

the will of his Father: John iv. 34, My meat is to do the will of him

that sent me, and to finish his work.' But we drink in iniquity like

water; our meat and drink is to sin against the Father. That is the

meaning of that phrase before mentioned, Job xv. 16. Then for his

humility: Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' Mat. xi. 29.

He could have given the world another pattern: Learn of me, for I made

the world; I can do wonders. But Christ would teach this lesson, Not as

I am mighty, but meek: Phil, ii. 5, Let this mind be in you which was

also in Jesus Christ.' What was that? A humble mind, as you may see in

the context. And then usefulness: that was eminent in him; he went

about doing good. Laziness and selfishness were abhorred by him. If

Christ would make Christians more useful, he would still act according

to his old copy, and live over his life in their hearts again. Search

then; is the living God a dead thing to you?

Use 3. For reproof to the people of God, that do not draw out this life

of Christ. Believers, Christ should not only live in heaven, but he

should live in you also: Not I, but Christ that liveth in me,' Gal. ii.

20. Christians are to blame especially in their conflicts with sin, and

the difficulties of duty, and the hardships of the world, and they

faint under miseries, as if there were not a living Christ, whence they

might fetch comfort. A Christian should say, The Lord liveth, and

blessed be my Rock. You should make his power useful in your worst

condition; your lives should be nothing else but a discovery of the

life of Christ in yourselves: 2 Cor. iv. 10, the apostle saith that he

suffered terrible things with a courageous heart, That the life also of

Jesus might be manifested in our body.' Noble actings of grace hold

forth the life of Christ, as effects discover the cause. And by your

conversations it should appear there is one liveth in heaven.

Use 4. Is consolation in all conditions. Is it sin that is grievous to

you? doth it leave a wound upon the soul? There is one that liveth in

heaven; that prays for the binding up of your souls, and for the

healing of the wounded spirit; he is negotiating the matter with God

for you. Is it death? Christ liveth, though you die; and though you

were dead, yet shall you live: Hosea vi. 2, After two days he will

revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in

his sight.' Are friends dead? Remember your Friend in heaven liveth for

ever. Are your hopes dead as Sarah's womb and Abraham's body? Yet

Christ is alive still. Succours may miscarry, supports may fail,

violence may cut off your comforts; but no hand of iniquity can reach

Jesus Christ. He liveth for ever with God in glory.

Use 5. Is exhortation to believers:--

1. To wait for the like privileges. Oh, who shall count your generation

when you shall come to share with Christ? You know the longings of

Christ's heart towards you, and that you shall behold his glory: John

xvii. 24, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be

where I am, that they may behold my glory.' You are to enjoy the same

endless life of bliss and glory. Oh, groan and wait for the consolation

of the saints in heaven. For the present you have rich privileges, but

alas! this is nothing: It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we

know when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him

as he is,' 1 John iii. 2.

2. Possess your souls of this life of Christ, and by faith see

yourselves in him: Rom. vi. 10, Reckon ye also yourselves dead indeed

unto sin, but alive unto God.' Dead first in his death, then raised in

his resurrection, and at last glorified in his glory. All these acts of

the Mediator must pass out into your souls; first I was dead to the

law, dead to sin, dead to the curse; but then, shall live and die no

more.

3. Strive to be conformed to your head. He is to die no more; do not

you die any more in sin. There is in every action of Christ influence

and matter of imitation: influence, of which you must possess

yourselves; but matter of imitation is that to which you must be

conformed. Oh, strive to keep in the same condition with your dear Lord

and Saviour. If death hath no more dominion over him, let not sin reign

in your mortal bodies,' Rom. vi. 12. From the same enforcement the

apostle urgeth it; and indeed for a motive you can have no better than

what the subject offereth. Christ would not only suffer for you for a

time, but lives for your sake for ever. Christ spendeth all his time to

do you good.

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THE NINTH VERSE.

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death;

because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

THE prophet goeth on with the account of Christ's sufferings, and

showeth that he should at length be humbled to the grave, and brought

thither in a most ignominious manner. Yet, however, there was no cause

why the Jews should stumble at it, and dash the foot of their faith

against this rock, for God had made provision ample enough against this

offence and scandal. Even his grave, that seemed to obscure his glory,

did in some measure illustrate it: He made his grave with the wicked,

and with the rich in his death, because,' &c.

Here are in this verse, as in many of the former, two parts

considerable:--

1. The Jews' scandal: he made his grave with the wicked.

2. The prophet's defence, which you have--

[1.] By the circumstances which made for the glory of Christ: and with

the rich in his death.

[2.] By asserting his innocency--

(1.) In respect of open and gross sins: he hath done no violence.

(2.) In respect of secret and hidden sins: neither was any deceit found

in his mouth. All these parts will more plainly appear in the

explication. There are no verses have been so severally expounded as

this and the former. I should perplex your thoughts too much to give

you the differences. Some distinct senses there are: I shall only give

you what I conceive to be the positive and plain sense, by going over

the phrases.

And he made. There may be a question to whom this he must be referred,

for the number being so often changed, we can have no relief from the

context. There are three persons spoken of in the chapter: God the

Father, God the Son, and the Jews. If this he be applied to God the

Father, then the sense is, he dispensed and ordered it so by his

providence that his grave should be appointed among the wicked; and so

it points at the divine decrees, which implied that Christ should be

executed as an offender, and be buried in an ignominious manner, as

other offenders are, for aught could be discerned at first. This

suiteth with the Seventy, who bring in God the Father speaking this

clause, though they read the sentence a little otherwise than we do:

do'so tou`s ponerou`s, &c., I will give the wicked for his grave.' Or

it may be referred to God the Son,--his patience, who submitted so, as

it seemed to hold forth nothing but as if he were to have had the

burial of an ordinary malefactor, he submitting to it till a further

declaration of God's pleasure; a man could have guessed nothing else.

Or, he made, may be referred to the people of the Jews; they did as

much as in them lay that Christ should have the burial of a wicked man:

He made,' that is, by their ordination. You may take either or all very

commodiously. It followeth, and with the rich in his death.' There is a

great deal ado about what is meant by rich. Some understand the term,

as Calvin, equivalent with the wicked; because riches puff up men's

minds and dispose them to injury and violence. Junius understands

Pilate; others have different apprehensions of the place. I shall take

liberty to recede from them; for by this phrase, the rich in his

death.' I understand Joseph of Arimathea; and the meaning I conceive

thus, that though at his crucifixion his grave was intended to be with

ordinary malefactors, yet God ordered it so that he should be

honourably interred by a rich person, Joseph of Arimathea: With the

rich in his death,' that is, after his death. And my reasons for this

interpretation are two:--

1. Because the word for rich, aasir, in the Hebrew, is in the singular

number, and so noteth some eminent rich man that had to do about the

grave and sepulchre of Christ; and that was Joseph of Arimathea.

2. Because the evangelist Matthew seemeth, as with a finger, to point

to this place when he saith, Mat. xxvii. 57, When the evening was come,

there was a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was

Jesus' disciple, and he went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus.'

And besides, the place is most sweetly and without wresting opened.

And, indeed, the following words yield us a twofold reason:--

[1.] Because God would right his innocency in the midst of calumnies

and reproaches. God would not have an innocent buried among

malefactors; and, therefore, by the care of Joseph and Nicodemus, he

would have it testified to the world that there were some thought him

innocent and worthy of an honourable burial.

[2.] It may well be to show the suitableness of it. He would have a new

kind of man laid in a new grave, in which no man was ever laid. It

could be said of no man but Christ that no iniquity and guile was found

in him; and therefore he was put in a sepulchre in which no man was

laid. For now God began to honour Christ because he had done no

violence. In Peter, it is, Who did no sin;' for indeed the word must be

taken so generally, anomi'as. It is meant, no gross fact could be

charged upon him; neither was there deceit in his mouth; that is, he

was guilty of no secret evil: for no guile in the mouth argueth there

was none in the heart--there being a swift intercourse between the

heart and the tongue: James iii. 2, If any man offend not in word, the

same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body.'

Thus for the phrases. The sum of all is this, that though the Messiah

was taken away by a shameful death, and therefore likely to be looked

upon as an eminent instance of divine wrath and vengeance, yet the Lord

provided for his glory in the midst of this ignominy, by procuring such

a sepulchre and burial for him as might set out not only his innocency

but his honour; for he indeed was without fault and blame.

There is not much to be observed out of this verse, yet that which is,

is very comfortable, and therefore in the general take these notes.

1. There is a sweet harmony and accord between the Old and New

Testament; they agree in the least things. Isaiah saith, He made his

grave with the rich;' and Matthew saith, a rich man of Arimathea came

and begged his body.' So in other things you may observe there is an

agreement in those things which a man would judge to be of least

consequence.

Note 2. That every passage of Christ's life is considerable; as this

concerning the account of his burial. A man would have thought it had

not been so worthy of observation, and yet the prophet speaketh of it

as an eminent circumstance, and you shall see much use may be made of

it by and by. So, for Christ's name, Mat. i. 23, They shall call his

name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us.' So the

offering for him a pair of turtle-doves and two young pigeons. Man

would easily overlook these things, yet the Holy Ghost thought them

worthy the noting. Oh, study Christ's life more; there is no waste

passage in it. But what benefit is there in the text? I shall not here

give you doctrines, as I did from the other verses, but direct you, for

your comfort, to look upon Christ under a threefold notion, viz., as

our surety, as a pattern of providence, and as a great example.

1. As a surety; so there are two clauses that afford comfort to

believers:--

[1.] That he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich is

death.' That expression, He made his grave with the wicked,' holdeth

forth the payment of the debt, and full evidence of his satisfaction.

Your surety suffered in your stead. Cursed is every one that continueth

not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.'

And the Lord Christ was accursed to redeem us from the curse of the

law. But I shall chiefly take notice of this circumstance, And with the

rich in his death.' After Christ had once died, God began to honour

him: full satisfaction being made to God, and the reproach and shame

due to sins taken away; after death he had an honourable interment. Of

all people, the Jews did most look to burials. It was a great

threatening that they should die unburied: Prov. xxx. 17, The eye that

mocketh at his father, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and

the young eagles shall eat it;' alluding to the shameful death and

burial of the disobedient son. And again, Ps. lxxix. 3, There should be

none to bury him.' And Jer. xxii. 19, He shall be buried with the

burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.'

But now Christ had not only a decent but an honourable burial. Well,

then, Christians, here is encouragement for your faith. Christ was

honoured as soon as he died: the work is ended--the last act of his

humiliation was the first step to his exaltation, and there began his

triumph and glory. Joseph and Nicodemus, two of his devout followers,

they celebrate his funerals, and bury him with such solemnities as are

due to persons of the greatest honour. Well, then, conclude in faith,

that by Christ's death, shame, and sufferings, sin is done away.

Christians were wont to solemnise their funerals with psalms of

thanksgiving. You may remember Christ's funeral with rejoicing and

giving of thanks: there you have the first intimation that the work was

finished, sins were satisfied for, shame and reproach began to vanish.

O you redeemed of the Lord, go forth and rejoice. God beginneth to take

off the ignominy of Christ's death, and thereby your ignominy and your

shame. So that now, In him we have boldness and access with confidence

by the faith of him.' Eph. iii. 12; that is, you may freely have

communion and social commerce with God, your shame being gone; God hath

branded sin with shame. Adam hid himself; the captains and great men

called to the mountains to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb, they

could not endure the sight of God. Guilt maketh a fallen countenance,

and causeth a shyness of God. Now you may lift up your heads, your

shame is taken away.

[2.] From that clause, Because he had done no violence, neither was any

deceit in his mouth.' Your surety was a pure person he had no guilt of

his own to satisfy for, and so it yieldeth not only an encouragement to

faith, but an endearment of love to Christ. All these sufferings were

for you, there is nothing that can argue a need for himself to do it.

The scriptures everywhere urge and testify this: 1 John iii. 5, And ye

know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no

sin.' All his sufferings were for some cause: there was nothing to

occasion them in himself, it must therefore be for our sins: 1 Peter

iii. 18, For Christ hath also once suffered for sin, the just for the

unjust, that he might bring us to God.' It was for sins he suffered,

and therefore certainly for ours, for he had none of his own. Urge it

then upon your hearts, both as an encouragement to faith and an

endearment to love. It was a pure Christ that suffered, and therefore

certainly for such an impure wretch as I am the just for the unjust.

Reason thus: Surely God is just; Christ undergoing so great sufferings,

and yet possessed of great purity, certainly died for great sinners.

2. As a pattern of providence. God meant to copy out all dispensations

in the life of Christ. Learn then:--

[1.] That we must not always look upon the face of providence and eye

present appearances. He made his grave with the wicked, and with the

rich in his death.' A man would have thought that Christ should have

had an ignominious burial, and that none would have contributed to his

glory; but the rich man begged his body from the cross, and God turns

his grave into his glory. Oh, do not look to present appearance; you

know not what a mercy may be couched under the frowns of providence.

John ii. 7, Christ calleth for water-pots when he meant to give them

wine; and John xi. 6, when he meant to restore Lazarus from the dead by

a miracle, he would not vouchsafe to go and see him; he abode still two

days in the same place. When God designed to honour Christ with a

funeral, he meant to order it so that the Jews looked for nothing else

but the burial of an ass. Thus God many times seems to hide himself,

and when we seek for him, he is not to be found: Eccles. xi. 4, He that

observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds

shall not reap.' If you look always upon the face of outward things,

the heart will be discouraged with the louring of Providence.

[2.] Learn what reason you have to wait upon God when things are at the

worst. There was no appearance for Christ till things came to the

worst. Joseph begged his body when dead upon the cross: He was with the

rich in his death;' Job xiii. 15, Though he slay me, yet will I trust

in him.' God can of a sudden turn things, and disappoint the devices

and counsels of wicked men, even when they think all is sure. Therefore

wait upon God, and see what event he will give to things. When the Jews

thought every one would be ashamed of Christ, up start Joseph and

Nicodemus, and boldly begged his body. There was death first before God

would do him honour.

3. Look upon him as the great example; so there is benefit in the last

clause: For he had done no violence, neither was there deceit in his

mouth.' This is your pattern: 1 Peter ii. 21, 22, Because Christ also

suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps,

who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.' Oh that we could

write after this fair copy that Christ hath set us, that we might be

holy as he was holy in all manner of conversation,' 1 Peter i. 15, in

every turning of our lives. I would not that you should lose the

benefit of this instruction for want of making it particular. I shall

set home this pattern by the two words of the text, violence and

deceit. None of this was found in Christ.

[1.] Violence. Take heed of that. There is violence in the spirit,

manifested by wrath, revenge, boisterousness of passion, affection. Oh,

what an unbecoming thing is it for men to deliver themselves over to

the sway of their own passions! James i. 20, The wrath of man worketh

not the righteousness of God.' The meaning is, such a heart is not fit

to serve God; it will not reach righteousness. God must have always

service proportionate. God, that is a spirit, must be served in spirit

and in truth; the God of peace with peace, with a peaceable, calm

spirit: 1 Tim. ii. 8, Lifting up holy hands without wrath and

doubting.' Then there is violence in the tongue, showed in bitterness,

reviling, reproaches. This was far from Christ; he did no violence.

This becometh the sons of the world rather than the sons of God. Surely

such wolfish dispositions do ill become them that are related to the

Lamb, the Lamb slain for the sins of the world. Where is your warrant

for this in the life of Christ? Gal. v. 15, If ye bite and devour one

another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another.' You learn it of

the wolf or the old dragon, not of the Lamb. The apostle useth such a

word as implieth such bitterness as is brutish. Then in practice, by

oppression, invading of another's right and property. There was no such

thing in Christ. He would not intrench upon the magistrate's office:

John viii. 11, Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.' Not in

respect of guilt, for he saith, Sin no more.' But the meaning is, he

would not meddle with her punishment; it was none of his office, and

therefore he would not in the least manner encroach upon another's

right. Learn of Christ, who did no violence.

[2.] There was no deceit found in his mouth. Take heed also of that. Be

like Christ. It is said of Nathanael, John i. 47, Behold an Israelite

indeed, in whom there is no guile.' Why an Israelite indeed? Because,

like old Israel, like old Jacob; for it is said of him, Gen. xxv. 27,

Jacob was a plain man, and dwelt in tents.' So here; we are Christians

indeed when without guile, when we are like Christ, for no deceit was

found in him. There is deceit in heart, which the scripture calleth

guile of spirit: Ps. xxxii. 2, Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord

imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' Take

heed of this deceitful heart. We must take heed we drive not on a

self-design in all our respects to God and men; and when we pretend to

zeal in worship, that it is not to serve ourselves of it. Rev. xiv. 5,

it is said of the Lamb's followers, that in their mouth was found no

guile;' they are without fault before the throne of God, Heb. iv. 12.

Wait upon the word, for that is a divider between soul and spirit, and

of the joints and mar row, and is a discerner of the thoughts and

intention of the heart;' that is, between fairness of pretences, and

vileness of affection and baseness of intents. And there is deceit in

the mouth when men dissemble for advantage. You did not learn this of

Jesus Christ. As Doeg glavered upon David, to tell Saul of it: Ps.

cxx.3, What shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?' Though he told

the truth, yet he flattered with David, that he might observe his

carriage, and relate it to Saul: Ps. lii. 4, Thou lovest all devouring

words, O thou deceitful tongue.' Then for practice, many give out

specious pretences, as if they were what indeed they are not. Be what

you would be accounted to be. It is hypocrisy that overacts to the

world. We know counterfeit gold because it looketh so yellow: 2 Sam.

xv. 6, Absalom stole hearts of the men of Israel by flattery, and fair

but false pretences. But we should eye our pattern. That is true

religion, to imitate him whom we worship.

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THE TENTH VERSE.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when

thou shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he

shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in

his hand.

THE prophet is still dealing with the Jews' scandals. Unbelief will

easily take up any pretence to justify itself. And therefore when there

was so much ground for their prejudice against Christ, as such meanness

and so many sufferings, these vain pleas could not easily be removed

out of their minds; and that is the reason why he speaketh to it again

in this verse, that he might further discover their folly, because they

would suffer their thoughts to stay in the outward appearance of

things, not considering how God bringeth about many times his greatest

designs in a riddle and mystery, and wraps up the good and salvation of

his people under a veil of contradictions. God the Father is the

wronged party, and he that hath to do with pardon: Rom. iii. 26, He is

the justifier of them that believe in Jesus.' The prophet telleth them

in this verse that Christ should live by dying, gain by his bruises and

sufferings;. that which was likely to disaffect the world against him,

should draw them into his obedience. Where the work of the Lord seemed

to miscarry, there it should prosper in his hands. The great

expectation was that the Lord should bruise the head of the serpent;

yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Christ. Look to the design of God,

and you shall see sufferings are not matter of scandal, but admiration.

It is no good rule to measure the in tents of God by the looks and face

of things. Whilst you look only to the outward meanness and sufferings

of Christ, you overlook the design of God in him. It pleased the Lord

to bruise him; he hath put him to grief,' &c. The words contain divers

arguments and defences against the scandals taken up against Christ by

the Jews.

1. The will of God: it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him

to grief; that is the cause of his sufferings.

2. The nature of his suffering: when thou shalt make his soul an

offering for sin.

3. The fruits of his suffering, and they are three:--

[1.] The propagation of his spiritual seed: he shall see his seed.

!2.] The prolongation of his life: he shall prolong his days.

[3.] The promulgation of the will of God in his hands: the pleasure of

the Lord shall prosper in his hands. This will be clear to you by going

over the phrases.

Tremellius has it, Delectatus est Dominus, the Lord delighted to bruise

him. The Seventy, to mend the harshness of the phrase, render it, It

pleased the Lord to cleanse him;' but that is a mistake of the word,

which among the Chaldees signifieth to cleanse; and there is no reason

why we should fear to say that the Lord designed to subject his Son to

bruisings and to grief, since the great comfort of Christians dependeth

upon it. That these things did not happen by chance, or against the

will of God, as something that he did not care for, or would abhor. The

Lord's pleasure was fulfilled in all these sufferings, though these

wicked men that brought them upon Christ had other intentions. And that

decision of Lombard and other school men is very derogatory to the

truth of the gospel and the comfort of believers, when they say, God

would only discover the virtues of Christ, and the fruits of his

sufferings, and the malice of the Jews; as if the sufferings of Christ

were beside God's intention and design. But the acts of their malice

are ascribed to the ordination of God: It pleased the Lord to bruise

him and to put him to grief.' And suit able to this, it is very

observable in the New Testament, that those words which imply their

malice do also imply God's appointment. Pilate delivered him, Judas

delivered him, and God delivered him: Mat. xxvii. 2, pare'doken, And

delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.' And then it is said of

Pilate, in the 26th verse, that he loosed or released Barabbas,'

pare'doken, and delivered Christ to be crucified. And Judas delivered

him: Mat. xxvi. 15, I will deliver him to you.' And Christ, speaking of

Judas, says, John xix. 11, Therefore he that delivered me unto thee

hath the greater sin.' And the same word is used of God's disposal of

Christ, Rom. viii. 32, He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up

for us all.' And again, of the Jews, Acts iii. 13, pare'dokkate, Whom

ye delivered up.' The priests for envy, Judas for gain, the people in

blind zeal, and Pilate to keep up his esteem among the Jews, but God to

make out his own ends for the salvation of his people. And always

delivered or betrayed is expressed by the same word, which is the

rather to be noted, because the scriptures, riot in one place only, but

in many, use the same action and expression. And therefore, without any

stain or blot upon divine justice, we may say, The Lord delighted to

bruise him and to put him to grief;' for he had a great hand in all

that was done to Christ. It followeth:--

When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin;' or, as it is more

properly in the margin, When his soul shall make an offering for sin:

this clause being to be referred to God the Son; for the Lord Christ

was not unwillingly subjected to bruises and griefs, but voluntarily

submitted himself to the pleasure of his Father's will, and gave

himself to die for us: Gal. ii. 20, He made his soul (ascham), sin,' as

it is in the Hebrew, it being a usual property of scripture-phrase to

call the sin-offering sin. Thus it is said, 2 Cor. v. 21, For he hath

made him to be sin for us;' that is, a sin-offering. And thus you may

understand that of the apostle, Rom. viii. 3, God sending his own Son

in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the

flesh.' By a sin-offering, which was Christ, he abolished and took away

sin. I should pass over this phrase, but that I cannot choose but note

to you the conditionality of this expression, When he shall make his

soul an offering for sin.' Erab some read it--if thou wilt do thus and

thus. It implieth the covenant between God and Christ. There is not

only a covenant between God and believers, but between God and Christ;

as I shall show more fully hereafter, when I observe the abundant

usefulness of that consideration. But it followeth in the text:--

He shall see his seed. This is the third reason why the death of Christ

should not be accounted infamous and ignominious to him. The meaning

is, he shall beget to himself a great many children by the immortal

seed of the word and the power of his Spirit, which are called his

seed; and it is said he shall see them, he shall live to see how the

word is propagated throughout all ages. I conceive in this expression

the prophet alludeth to the desire of the Hebrew fathers, who were for

living so long as they might see a numerous issue come from their

loins. And therefore it is spoken of as a very desirable blessing: Ps.

cxxviii. 6, Thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon

Israel.' Or, if you will, this expression may refer to Isaac, who,

though God commanded to be offered, yet he promised that his seed

should be multiplied as the stars of heaven and the sand on the

sea-shore;' and all this upon his death. That which seemed to cut off

other men's hopes should increase Christ's. As he saith himself, John

xii. 24, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it

abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' So Christ

by his death, like the root in the ground, perisheth, that he may bring

forth fruit. But it is added:--

He shall prolong his days; that is, he shall live for ever. Some refer

it to his seed,--he shall prolong the days of his seed: so the Seventy.

But probably it is to be referred to Christ, though the comfort also

belongeth to the faithful; their days shall be prolonged in the life of

Christ, and they shall be eternal in his eternity.

The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands; that is, the will

of the Lord. The will of the Lord for your redemption, justification,

sanctification, the conversion of the world, the collection of a

church, whatever you may call the will of God. Any design of his shall

prosper in the hand of Christ; anything in the grand design of

reconciliation; that is, by his strength, or by his ministry and

dispensation: both these are called a hand in scripture; as it is said,

Num. xxxvi. 13, God published the law by the hand of Moses; These are

the commandments and judgments which the Lord commanded by the hand of

Moses unto the children of Israel.' So prosper in his hand;' that is,

by his ministry and dispensation.

Thus I have gone through the phrases. I have been the larger, because I

shall a little stay upon this text. I do not find a verse in the

scriptures that doth yield more consolation and comfort to Christians

than this doth. Here is the Father's ordination, the Son's voluntary

susception, God's covenant with Christ; Christ is a sacrifice for sin.

Here is the promulgation of the gospel, the life of Christ, and the

pleasure of the Lord. Oh, what a heap of sweetness is here, if we had

the skill to draw out the comfort of it!

I begin with the first: Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath

put him to grief.' The point is, that all the sufferings of Jesus

Christ were laid on him by the ordination and appointment of God the

Father.

It was the Lord bruised him, and put him to grief; that is, it was by

the Lord's appointment and decree. This appears by scripture, which

asserts--

1. The choice of Christ's person, and the designation and deputation of

him to the office of Mediator. As Isa. xlii. 1, Behold my servant whom

I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit

upon him.' God would show election in Christ first: the cause of his

appearing in our salvation was God's choice: John vi. 27, Him hath God

the Father sealed;' that is, expressly appointed, marked out for such a

design. So it is set forth, Rom. iii. 25, Whom God hath set forth to be

a propitiation for our sins.' So 1 Peter i. 20, Who verily was

fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in

these last times for you.' The plot of the gospel was long since drawn

in heaven, and lay hid in God's breast, till he was pleased to copy out

his eternal thoughts, and give the world a draught of them.

2. The bestowing the person of Christ upon us, so that he was made

ours, as it were; which is expressed in scripture by God's sending his

Son: John iii. 16, God so loved the world that he gave his

only-begotten Son.' He disposed of his person, to be handled so as

might make most for your good. And, therefore, in other places he is

said to send his Son: 1 John iv. 10, He sent his Son to be the

propitiation for our sins.' God despatched him on that great errand.

And in this sense is the apostle's phrase, Rom. viii. 32, He spared not

his own Son.' He would not dismiss him from serving his design, though

it rendered him liable to wrath and sufferings. Gave, sent, would not

spare; all these words imply the execution of the decree according to

the design of God.

3. The determining of all the sufferings of Christ; not a sorrow, but

God had it in his thoughts before all worlds. Every bruise and stroke

was a further discovery of his eternal counsel: Acts ii. 23, Him, being

delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have

taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' Mark it,

horismene boule kai prognosei. There was an express counsel for that,

even the greatest mischief their wickedness could execute upon Christ;

they had other thoughts than to conform to God's will, yet they did but

discover it, and draw it out to the world: Luke xxii. 22, The Son of

man goeth as it was determined.' Which checketh our laziness, that we

do no more consider the several actions of Christ, they being all

appointed and ordered in much counsel by the Father: Acts iv. 27, 28,

Of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both

Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel,

were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel

determined before to be done.' What Herod and the Jews, and Pontius

Pilate and the Gentiles did, was all that God would have to be done.

Every particular was conceived and devised in the decree of God, and so

necessary to be fulfilled; For who hath resisted his will?' Rom. ix.

19. God will cause the decree to bring forth, and the world shall see

what is conceived in the womb of his counsels.

4. There are some expressions which seem to imply as if there were more

than a bare knowledge and permission in this great affair, as if there

were some kind of action in Christ's sufferings. As here, It pleased

the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief;' Zech. xiii. 7, Awake,

O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow,

saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be

scattered.' God is said to awake and stir up the sword against Christ,

which implieth more than a bare suffering, some kind of efficiency and

concurrent act of God to the bruising and grief of Christ. For that

place is meant of Christ, my shepherd and my fellow; there is no

shepherd that is God's fellow but Christ. Besides, Christ applieth it

to himself: Mat. xxvi. 31, For it is written, I will smite the

shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.' It will be

worthy the inquiring, then, what acts of God, what efficiency there was

from him towards the sufferings of Christ?

1. Thus far God concurred, by a withdrawing of his presence and the

sight of his favour; so God might be said to put him to grief indeed,

for so Christ complaineth, Mat. xxvii. 46, My God, my God, why hast

thou forsaken me?' That was the greatest torment that could be upon

Christ's spirit. His humanity would not have been sensible of all the

other sorrows, if there were not a suspension of that joy and comfort

which otherwise he might have taken in the union of the Godhead. I say,

in this sense God may be said to put him to grief, by the withdrawing

of his love and presence of grace from his apprehension.

2. By sustaining the wicked instruments in their natures, beings, and

actings, whilst they were drawing out their spite and violence against

Christ: Acts xvii. 28, In him we live, and move, and have our beings.'

It is by his concurrence the action is brought forth. God could have

blasted the hand of violence, blown them all into nothing, even in the

heat of their fury against his Son; but the Lord upheld them in their

beings and actings. As Christ said to Pilate, John xix. 11, Thou

couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from

above.' If there were not some leave and concession from heaven, they

could do nothing. God can suspend the actions of the creature at his

pleasure, as he did the fire from burning when the three children were

in it. And therefore so far God concurred to the supporting of the

creature in acts of violence and sin against Christ: men have not a

power of themselves, separate from a providential assistance, to

operate or exercise any power in them. Though God doth not take away

their power, yet if he doth not co operate with their power, nothing

will be done; as the beasts stood still when the wheels stood still,

Ezek. i. 21. When God stands still, all second causes are silent, and

move not at that time. And though he does not dissolve their beings, he

can suspend their motion, if he will not work with them. There is his

concurrence to the action, though not to the pravity and wickedness of

it. I conceive that is dangerous and unsafe to say.

3. By serving his love and glory by their wickedness, that bruised and

afflicted Christ. God would not have permitted it if he did not know

how to make good use of it, and how he might reduce it by his goodness

and wisdom to his glory. So far he would uphold them in their actings

as to serve his purposes of salvation, and to cause his pleasure to

prosper. It pleased the Lord to bruise Christ, that he might bruise the

serpent. His aim was at his head, though Christ's heel was bruised in

the enterprise: Gen. iii. 15, It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt

bruise his heel.' God doth make sin itself to turn to his own glory. As

Gregory said of Adam's fall, it was foelix culpa, because it made way

for such a Redeemer as Christ, because it made way for his redemption;

as the apostle said, Rom. iii. 5, Our unrighteousness commendeth the

righteousness of God.' And such efficiency there was about evil, though

not of evil, that God might bring good out of it, and dispose of it for

the advantage of his own counsels and intents. And so he may be said to

awake the sword against the shepherd that was his fellow, as justly

pursuing the effect of his own decrees.

The reasons of this point are:--

1. Because all things fall under his decrees and the care of his

providence, and therefore certainly this matter of Christ does. See

that place, Eph. i. 11, he worketh all things after the counsel of his

own will;' the meaning is, there is nothing done in the world but God

may be said to work it; he doth it by counsel and by the counsel of his

own will, in a wise order and freely, as God pleaseth and as he seeth

best. God's will and counsel is the ground of all things. Mark the

generality of the expression, all things; nothing so low and frivolous

but God's will taketh cognisance of it; nothing so wicked but God will

order and dispose it for good: Mat. x. 29, Not a sparrow shall fall

upon the ground without your Father; and every hair of your head is

numbered.' Nothing so sinful as Judas's act and Pilate's, yet it was

determined; God's hand and counsel intended it. Whatever is done is

done in reference to some foregoing decree.

2. Because this was the special design and contrivance of heaven to

bring forth Christ into the world; all other dispensations looked this

way. Adam's fall, God's providence through so many ages, did but tend

to help on this great birth, and therefore this design of Christ is

called by the apostle, Eph. iii. 10, The manifold wisdom of God.' All

that variety and intermixture of providences was but in pursuance of

his design: 1 Tim. iii. 16, Without controversy great is the mystery of

godliness, God manifest in the flesh.' This was the great contrivance,

the masterpiece of heaven, that discovered most of God to the

creatures. It was much when God made man after his own image and

likeness, the wonder of nature; yet it was more when God made himself

after our image. That is a wonder indeed. The apostle would have it

carried above all exception by all Christians. Therefore, it was

especially in heaven designed by God.

Object. How is the creature to blame, then, for smiting and bruising of

Christ? Or if to blame, how is God clear? It was by his ordination and

appointment.

Ans. 1. For the creatures' blame; they are faulty:--

[1.] Because God's secret thoughts and intents are not their rule.

Hidden things belong to God; and it is he that worketh according to the

counsel of his own will. You must look to the counsel of his word.

Though God got a great deal of glory, yet that was no thanks to them

that crucified Christ; for because they crucified him, the wrath of God

came upon them to the uttermost, to their ruin and desolation, 1 Thes.

ii. 16.

[2.] They had other ends, though God turned it for good: Acts ii., With

wicked hands ye have taken, and crucified, and slain;' Isa. x. 7,

Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is

in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few,' Judas's end was

gain, Pilate's to please the people, the high priests' to wreak their

malice; but God had other ends in it, the salvation of fallen man.

[3.] God's decrees did not compel them to evil; it implieth things will

be, though it doth not effect them--there is no necessity of constraint

and compulsion, though there be of infallibility. God taketh not

liberty from the creatures, nor contingency from the second causes;

they act their own way, though God turneth it to his own ends; they

were carried to it by their wickedness. This is the plain decision of

the matter.

2. For the justifying of God when he judgeth. His justice cannot be

impeached, because he infuseth no evil, enforceth to no evil, only

ordaineth what shall be; his goodness cannot be impeached for suffering

things which he can turn to such advantage for his own glory and the

creature's good. And, therefore, as the sun shineth upon a dung hill

without having his beams polluted by it, so God's ordination taketh in

the sin of the creatures without any blemish to itself. God's decrees

are immanent in himself, working nothing that is evil in the creatures.

Other things might be said, but I would not perplex the matter.

APPLICATION.

Use 1. It serveth to give check to curiosity. Men are bold in their

inquiries, and cavil at such dispensations. Though you cannot see the

reason of them, yet rest in God's appointment: It pleased the Father to

bruise him.' You shall find in scripture this is made to be the last

result of all difficulty, the pleasure and will of God: Col. i. 19, It

pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.' If you would

know the reason why the second person should be chosen, and enriched

with the fulness of the Godhead, it pleased the Father. So for God's

liberty in dispensing mercies to babes, passing by wise men: Mat. xi.

26, Even so, Father, because it pleaseth thee.'

Use 2. Is consolation to believers. Here is ample encouragement for

your faith: every grain in the life of Christ should be weighed. Now

this is a material consideration, that he was ordained by God the

Father.

1. That the offended party beginneth first to think of a remedy: 1 John

iv. 19, He loved us first.' Certainly it is a great relief and support

to our thoughts; God thinketh of a pardon before we could think of the

sin. It pleased the Father to take the sufferings of Christ into his

eternal thoughts. Oh, then, when you have offended the Father, think

you have a Christ to present to him, one that he thought of before all

worlds.

2. Here is encouragement. Christ is a sacrifice of the Father's

ordaining. He was pleased to bruise him. Therefore, rejoice and triumph

in believing. You have found him who is acceptable to God the Father.

This is the great inquiry of men, how to appease God. When they are

filled with fears, and a sense of divine wrath, what would they give to

redeem their souls from guilt? You shall see the offers of the creature

are very large: Micah vi. 6, 7, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,

and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with

burnt-offerings and calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with

thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my

first-born for my transgression, and the fruit of my body for the sin

of my soul?' Thus, you see, they bid high. Oh, this will be your

disposition when you are scorched with God's wrath. Anything for a

pardon, for a testimony of his love. How shall you please him? Though

he will not accept of thy first-born, yet he will of his own Son, whom

himself hath given thee. It is not the creature's shift, but the Lord's

appointment. You may be sure here is somewhat will please the Father;

you have it from heaven: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased.' But God will have all believers know it. Oh, say with joy

then, Job xxxiii. 20, I have found a ransom.' God will say so too: it

was his ordination for reconciliation.

3. Here is comfort against sins of deliberation. It may be you have

catered for your lusts, and devised wickedness upon your beds. It is

sad when so much of your hearts hath gone out to the ways of sin. Sins

of counsel and premeditation do most sadly wound the Spirit; but here

is your balm and comfort. Christ was the result of God's eternal

thoughts. The Lord was devising the remedy as well as we the sin.

Use 3. Is information. It informeth us of divers things.

1. The greatness of God's love: John iii. 16, God so loved the world,

that he gave his only-begotten Son.' Christ himself speaketh of it with

admiration. So loved! as if there were not an expression great enough

to show how much: 1 John iv. 10, Herein is love, not that we loved God,

but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our

sins.' If you speak of love, this is love indeed. When Abraham offered

Isaac, and would part with his son, how doth the Lord make him promises

upon it? Oh, then, consider what it was for God, of all persons, to

choose the second person in the Godhead, his Son, and to give him up

for you--to determine so great sufferings against him, to awaken the

sword against the shepherd his fellow--and all for your sakes. Consider

of it in your thoughts, and let these thoughts of God be sweet and

endearing to you. He was not bound to it; you could oblige him by no

merits, by no satisfaction you could make him,--only it pleased him.

Oh, study this his love, the dying love of our dear Redeemer.

2. The ancientness of God's love in Christ. The oldness of love is the

commendation of it; therefore God saith, Isa. liv. 8, With an

everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.' His pleasure in Christ

was conceived before all worlds. Christ manifested in time was the

effect of an eternal love. You shall see the scriptures voucheth the

ancientness of the promise often: Titus i. 2, In hope of eternal life,

which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.' A promise

that went before all time.

3. It teacheth us to bless God the Father for giving and appointing of

Jesus Christ. It is good to look what endearment every person hath upon

our spirits, that so we may keep them up in our thoughts as a

proportioned object for our worship and respects. Here is the great

endearment:--The election of the Father caused the donation of the Son:

Eph. i. 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.'

Bless him not only as your creator and preserver, but as the God and

Father of Christ.

4. It teacheth us not to look upon the face of things, but upon God's

counsel and intents in them. The foulest acts that ever were in God's

design may serve most holy purposes. Providence is like a double-faced

picture--a monster and a woman: Gen. xlv. 5, God sent me before you to

preserve life.' So in all that befalleth you, or what others do to you

out of ill ends, God may work good out of it.

I come now to the second argument--why Christ's death should not be

looked upon as infamous and ignominious to him; and that is taken from

the manner of his sufferings: When thou shalt make his soul an offering

for sin;' or When his soul shall make an offering for sin.' I shall

take notice--

1. Of the form or manner of it.

2. The matter, or what is contained in it.

1. For the form or manner of it. It seemeth to be conditional and

federal, that when Christ would do thus and thus, God would perform his

part to him, and he should enjoy such and such privileges. The point

is--

Doct. That the business of man's salvation was transacted by way of

covenant between God and Christ.

Here is the form of it, that in case Christ would make his soul an

offering for sin, he should see his seed, and prolong his days, and the

pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands. That this point may

be fully made out to you, I shall use this method:--

1. Show how it may appear that there was such a covenant and formality

of agreement between God and Christ.

2. What this covenant is, and the several ways whereby it doth appear

in scripture.

1. I shall show how it may appear there was such a covenant.

[1.] By such titles given to Christ as do infer it, because he is the

effect or result of it; as Mal. iii. 1, I will send the angel (or

messenger) of the covenant, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye

delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.' This him

whom by covenant I have designed to such an office, him whom by virtue

of the compact and agreement I have made with him, I shall send to you.

So you shall see he is called a covenant: Isa. xlii. 6, And give thee

for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;' Isa. xlix.

8, And give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth.'

Because of the eternal agreement between God and Christ, he is said to

be a covenant; that is, the foundation of a covenant between God and

believers. His being given for a covenant, is to be a means to redeem

and reconcile them.

[2.] By the words that passed between God and Christ, that are recorded

in scripture. It is very observable that the scripture, for the

relieving of our thoughts and apprehensions, does make all the passages

and debates between God and Christ to pass by words: so in this

business: Ps. cx., Thou art my Son, sit thou at my right hand;' Ps. ii.

8, Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,

and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' But to this

affair in hand, you shall see how God breaketh the matter to him: Ps.

lxxxix. 19, Thou spakest in vision to the Holy One, and saidst, I have

laid help upon one that is mighty, and have exalted one chosen out of

the people.' Thou speakest in a mystical way to thy Christ; God

revealeth himself to his Holy One, and said thus, Lo, the creatures are

weak and miserable, never able to recover themselves into my favour,

but thou art mighty; therefore I shall lay this charge upon you, to

help them. And thereupon you shall see Christ's answer: Ps. xl. 7, 8,

Lo, I come; in the volume of thy book it is written of me, I delight to

do thy will, O my God.' Christ accepted of it, and agreed to the terms,

and was willing to do, and conform to the pleasure of God the Father

for poor sinners. So in this place, if he will do thus and thus, then

he shall see his seed, and prolong his days, and the pleasure of the

Lord shall prosper in his hands.

[3.] It appeareth by the carriage of Christ. The scripture showeth

everywhere that it was according to the covenant God made with him: he

undertook to do all things according to the will of the Father: John

iv. 34, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish

his work;' and therefore he would punctually keep to the laws of the

covenant. And accordingly he is said to look up to God the Father for

the accomplishment of his promise to him: John x. 18, This commandment

I received of my Father, that I should lay down my life: I have agreed

to it. John xii. 49, For I have not spoken of myself, but the Father

that sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I

should speak: according to the instructions he received from God, and

the tenor of his commission; he would not vary from it a tittle. And he

goeth to the Father, and urgeth it to him: John xvii. 4, I have

glorified thee upon earth, and have finished the work which thou gavest

me to do.' He did all that he was bound to do. So in many other places.

2. What this covenant is. I shall here show you the whole draught of

this transaction. To a covenant there belong four things--two on the

part of the proposer, and two on the part of the undertaker; and so in

this covenant you will find the scriptures fully discovering these four

things--two on God's part, and two on Christ's. On God's part, there is

the work proposed and the encouragements promised. And then, on

Christ's part, the work is undertaken, and the terms and promises

expected to be fulfilled.

[1.] To begin with that which is God the Father's part, who being the

first in order of persons, is the first covenanter. In the motioning of

a thing, something is required and something promised.

(1.) See what is required then, and what charge is given to Christ.

Help is laid upon the shoulders of Christ. It may be referred to two

heads:--

(1st) He was to do something by way of merit and impetration, that so

he might satisfy the creatures' engagement, and merit the favour of God

for them, which they had forfeited; and there were divers steps in

this. He was to divest himself of his glory, to strip himself of all

appearances of the Godhead. And therefore he is said to he employed as

an instrument and servant in the execution of God's decrees. Hence it

is said, Isa. liii. 2, He shall grow up before him as a tender plant,

and as a root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness.'

Before him; that is, before God the Father: ver. 11, By his knowledge

shall my righteous servant justify many:' Isa. xlii. 1, Behold my

servant, whom I uphold.' To this end he was to take a body: Heb. x. 5,

A body hast thou prepared me.' And to take flesh of a woman; and

therefore it is said, Gal. iv. 4, God sent forth his Son, made of a

woman, made under the law.' He was to take an office of service and

obedience, and then to work all our works for us. It is said he was

made under the law, subjected to the first covenant of works. He was to

be holy, and harmless, and undefiled, to be exercised with divers

sufferings, reproaches, and injuries; therefore called a man of

sorrows,' Isa. liii. 3. And it became God in this regard to make the

captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings. Then at length to

humble himself to the very death, and in great consternation and

agonies to lay down his life, and to pour out his soul as an offering

for sin: and all by the command of the Father; that is, by the charge

laid upon him by God. And thus far the merit. He left his glory, taking

our nature, our works, our debts upon himself, and subjected himself to

the wrath of God the Father, that he might make an atonement for the

sins of the world, sufficient for all mankind.

(2dly.) God gave him something touching the application of his merit.

God gave in the names of divers persons, and bade him have a care over

them. Therefore it is said, John x. 3, He calleth his own sheep by

name.' He hath such a special care over them, as if every distinct name

were given unto him, and there were a charge committed to him to have a

care of that soul. And the elect of the Father are said to be given to

Christ: John xvii. 6, Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.' Now

what was he to do to them, i.e., to those of the world whom God had

chosen as his? He was to enlighten them; he was to bring them into

covenant with himself by enlightening them. God saith of Christ, Isa.

xlii. 6, I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to

the Gentiles;' that is, to shine in upon them in the darkness of their

natural estate, to bring them home to himself: John vi. 37, All that

the Father giveth me shall come to me: and them that come to me I will

in no wise cast out.' And the reason is given in the next verse; it is

the will of my Father.' And then he was to comfort them by the glad

tidings of salvation: Isa. lxi. 1, The Lord hath anointed me to preach

good tidings to the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the

broken-hearted, to proclaim comfort to all that mourn, to proclaim

liberty to the captives, and the opening the prison to them that are

bound.' And after this to bear with their weakness and waywardness; for

that is a part of his charge: Isa. xlii. 3, A bruised reed shall he not

break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.' Lovingly to bear with

the ignorance and weaknesses of his children, and supply all their

defects by his Spirit and strength: Isa, xl. 11, He shall feed his

flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and

carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.' He

shall have a special and certain care of his tender flock. Besides,

where they want strength, he shall lend his own strength, and so

sweetly lead and guide them by his counsel, till he has brought them to

his glory, that is in his commission and charge: John vi. 40, And this

is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and

believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at

the last day.' This is the Father's charge, who doth as it were say

thus to his Son, If you will engage yourself to me, here is the work

you are to do; you must leave your glory and become my servant; I have

fitted a body for you, and you shall fulfil the law, and live in

meanness and misery, and then yield up yourself to an accursed death,

that so you may merit my favour for these persons whose names I give

you: and then you shall oblige yourself to enlighten and quicken them

by your Spirit, that their bondage may be removed: and then you shall

cherish them, and comfort them, and support them, especially the weak

ones among them, until you have perfected them, and brought them to

glory. This is the sum, and this was the will of the Father, and the

charge given to Christ: so that whatsoever Christ acted as Mediator, he

acteth as God's servant.

2. Now, the work being proposed, God promiseth what he should expect by

way of encouragement and reward for it; and that is this, that in case

Christ will undertake all this, he shall not want help, he shall have

the Spirit: Isa. lxi. 1, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;' and that

he should have the Spirit without measure, not by drops, as the

creatures have. And that he should have all countenance; God would not

forget his relation in the meanness of his disguise: I will be to him a

Father, and he shall be to me a Son,' Heb. i. 5. And because empty

relations are nothing worth, God would not only be a Father in title,

but dispense all fatherly care and respects to him, so that though he

meet with opposition and discouragements, he should be borne up against

the brunt of them: Isa. xlii. 4, He shall not fail nor be discouraged,

till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for

his law.' He shall still have the best. His judgments and law shall be

set up; and sorry, impotent men shall but express their malice; they

shall not wreak and satisfy it, for the Lord will be with him: Isa.

xlii. 4, He shall not fail nor be discouraged;' the meaning is, he will

mightily come in for his assistance. And then, after all this, he shall

be full of success and triumph: He shall see his seed,' and God's

pleasure shall thrive in his hands. He shall have anything, a kingdom

that knoweth no end and no limits: Ps. ii. 8, Ask of me, and I will

give thee the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of

the earth for a possession.' He shall have power over his adversaries

to use them at pleasure, to dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel is

shattered into pieces by an iron mace. Alas! what is an earthen vessel

to an iron mace? And then the bowing and stooping of all creatures

before him: Phil. ii. 9, 10, Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and

given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bow.' God hath promised not only to break the

stoutest back, but to bow the stiffest knee; and wherefore? because he

undertook this work by covenant. And then, after all this, an entrance

into glory: Luke xxiv. 26, Ought not Christ to have suffered these

things, and to enter into glory?' So was he thus engaged to do by

covenant. And besides, Christ was encouraged by promises not only to

his person, but for his people. As a sufficiency of grace: Col. i. 19,

It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell.' And also a

power to justify them: By his knowledge shall my righteous servant

justify many.' To sanctify, enlighten, and glorify them: All things are

delivered me of my Father,' Mat. xi. 27. So that you see what God would

do for Christ, in case he should take that burden and charge upon him.

Thus you see the matter proposed by God the Father.

Secondly, Now you shall see that this is accepted by God the Son; the

work is undertaken with reference to those terms.

1. The work is undertaken. God the Son, being equal to the Father,

could not have been commanded and overruled to any service without a

voluntary susception and concurrence of his own; and therefore, upon

this discovery of the will of God, Christ sweetly concurred and

consented to it: Ps. xl. 7, 8, Lo, I come; in the volume of thy book it

is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God.' And he professeth

in another place, John iv. 34, My meat is to do the will of him that

sent me, and to finish his work.' It was a gladsome thing to him, as

the hours of repast are to an ordinary man. As for the impetration, God

would have him lay aside his glory. And it is said, Phil. ii. 7, And

made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant,

and was made in the likeness of men,' incarnate; He was found in

fashion of a man.' It was his Father's will that he should endure

reproaches and injuries: Isa. l. 5, 6, The Lord hath opened mine ear,

and I was not rebellious, neither turned away my back: I gave my back

to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid

not my face from shame and spitting.' Christ offered himself to all

these indignities, being bound to it. He would not be rebellious

against his Father's motion. Then to do our works; therefore he is said

to be obedient. And then to pay our debts; and therefore he is said to

be obedient to the death of the cross, Phil. ii. 7. Then for the

application of the merit; he inviteth the weary, Mat. xi. 28. He

enlighteneth the blind, dispossesseth Satan, sets the captive free,

Mark v. 18. Pitieth the faint: Luke xv. 5, And when he had found it, he

layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.' He bringeth home the weary upon

his own shoulders, and at length bringeth them to glory: John vi. 40,

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the

Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise

him at the last day.'

2. Christ looketh for the donation, and the accomplishment of God's

terms upon it. As for help and assistance: Isa. l. 9, Behold, the Lord

will help me.' So Isa. xlix. 5, And my God shall be my strength.' It is

spoken of Christ in many places. And Isa. xlix. 7, Thus saith the Lord,

the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to

him whom the nations abhor, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and

arise, and princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is

faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.' He

comforts himself with the promises of success and glory, that though

the nations should despise it, yet kings should see it, and rulers

worship him. The apostle, quoting a prophecy of Christ, saith in his

person, Heb. ii. 13, I will put my trust in him;' that is, for his

seed; Behold I and the children which God hath given me.' So for his

people: the Spirit is called the promise of the Father, Luke xxiv. 49,

And, behold, I send the promise of the Father unto you,' that is, the

Spirit which my Father hath promised, he will give you. And he pleadeth

for his own glory upon this ground, because he had submitted to God's

terms: John xvii. 5, And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own

self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was.' So for his

people, ver. 24, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me

be with me where I am, and that they may behold my glory which thou

hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.'

Thou didst promise this glory to me, and to them in me, in the

everlasting covenant. And thus I have given you a taste of this matter.

The reasons are these:--

First, That God might found another covenant upon it; therefore God

would make a covenant with his Son before he would make a covenant with

his creatures; for indeed Christ's covenant is the foundation of

another covenant. Unless he had been bound to Christ by this, the other

would not have been sure, if God had not obliged Christ to the

oversight of it. That this reasoning may be looked upon as the more

cogent, do but eye the several differences between both these

covenants.

1. This was made with Christ; he is the only federate or person in

covenant with God: but now, in the other, Christ is indeed a main

federate, the prime federate or chiefest person in covenant, but not

the only federate. That he is the prime federate is clear: Gal. iii.

16, To Abraham and his seed were the promises; but he saith not seeds,

as of many, but to thy seed, as to one, which is Christ;' that is,

Christ mystical; the whole church, head and members, are called Christ

in scripture: 1 Cor. xii. 12, For as the body is one, and hath many

members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one

body, so also is Christ.' It is true, the promises are mainly pitched

upon his person, but from him descend to the rest: for the covenant is

not made with Christ only, as appeareth, Heb. viii. 8, I will make a

covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah.' It is made

with all believers. This is made to Christ mystically, whereas the

other we speak of now is made to Christ personally.

2. This made with Christ is a covenant of works in the very formality

of it, and obliged him to subject himself to a covenant of works, to

fulfil perfect obedience for the creatures, and to satisfy for the

debts of the creatures, and to buy out their peace by the price of his

own blood; but now the covenant made with believers is a covenant of

grace. God dealt with Christ in justice, that he might deal with us in

mercy: Rom. iii. 24, Being justified freely by his grace, through the

redemption that is in Jesus Christ.' God dealeth with us freely, though

he satisfied his justice upon Jesus Christ. The yoke of the old

covenant is not upon the neck of believers, because the stroke of it is

Upon the back of Christ.

3. This covenant made with Christ is eternal, before all worlds; the

other, the covenant of grace, is made with us in time, and we enter

into it in time. I confess in itself it is very old, ever since the

first promise dropped from God's mouth: Gen. iii. 15, The seed of the

woman shall bruise the serpent's head, and thou shall bruise his heel.'

Though since that it hath been renewed, and we come to have share in it

at conversion, yet I say it is very old, ever since the fall; however

it is not so old as the covenant with Christ, that was before all time:

Titus i. 2, In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie,

promised before the world began,' that is, to Jesus Christ. Before any

succession of time Christ received promises for you, and undertook to

bestow eternal life upon believers: 2 Tim. i. 9, it is said, According

to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before

the world began;' that is, it was given to Christ for us. And this it

may be is the meaning of that, Heb. xiii. 20, that Jesus Christ is the

great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting

covenant;' the blood appointed to be shed to be the everlasting

covenant between God and him.

Second reason, That Christ might be inaugurated into his office with

the more solemnity, and greater endearment to the creatures. That which

is done by a covenant is done more solemnly and surely; you have not

only a decree and purpose, and promise and types, but the discovery of

a covenant: Ps. cx. 4, The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent; thou

art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.' There you have

God's oath for Christ's priesthood, which noteth an irreversible

sentence. Though the creatures play fast and loose with him, yet God

thinketh himself never enough bound to them. And, therefore, he would

tie himself in such ways as are most solemn and obliging amongst men,

as by oaths and covenants. He would fain stablish the hearts of

sinners, and make things certain to them; and, therefore, he giveth

this account of his eternal transactions for your good, they were

ordered by way of covenant.

Third reason, This is a way that yieldeth mush comfort and satisfaction

to the people of God. This is the most comfortable representation of

Jesus Christ that can be made to you, and that for two reasons:--

1. You have a double engagement upon God; he is engaged to Christ, and

he is engaged to you. Oh, that is it that makes all sure to our souls,

that God was engaged to Christ first! If God had only dealt with

particular persons, the business had been in danger of miscarrying. In

the covenant of works the burden lay upon every one's person; if thou

do this, thou shalt live: Gal. iii. 10, Cursed is every one that

continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law

to do them.' But now there is a covenant made with Christ: indeed God

hath taken every one's person into covenant, but God hath given Christ

the oversight of it; he hath founded a covenant upon a covenant. The

covenant was made to him before it was made to you. Nay, in the

covenant made with you, it is made with one seed, which is Christ:

there to Christ mystical, here to Christ personal; still Christ is

taken in with you, and therefore the business is more sure and

satisfying: 2 Cor. v. 19, God was in Christ reconciling the world to

himself.' There is great comfort that he would transact the matter with

Christ before he would meddle and deal with the world.

2. You have double promises; the very promises that are made to

Christ's person, they are your promises as well as Christ's, so far as

they are compatible with your state and condition. Your Mediator will

be nothing but what you shall have the benefit of; nay, it is very

observable that we have glory not only by virtue of the promises made

to ourselves, but by virtue of the promises made to Christ; that we

should have glory, as Christ prays, John xvii. 23, 24, And the glory

which thou gavest me I have given them. Father, I will that they also

whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my

glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me from the foundation

of the world.' God promised to be his God and Father, and therefore you

may be as confident he will be yours as if the promise had been

directed to your persons. For Christ reasons thus, John xx. 17, Go to

my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to

my God and your God.' He hath engaged himself to be mine, therefore

yours; you are what I am. So that besides the promises directed to

sinners, you have Christ's personal promises so far as they concern

your state. So you shall see God promised to acquit Christ from all the

sins he should take upon him, and to free him from the reproaches that

should be cast upon his person, because of his miserable appearance in

the world: Isa. l. 7, 8, For the Lord God will help me; therefore I

shall not be confounded. He is near that justifieth me; who shall

contend with me?' If all the world count me a sinner, God will justify

me. As the apostle applieth it to believers, Rom. viii. 33, Who shall

lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth.'

God dealt with Christ as the first believer: if Christ had the Spirit

put upon him, you shall have the Spirit by virtue of the first promise:

Isa. xlii. 1, I have put my Spirit upon him; and he shall bring forth

judgment to the Gentiles.' Isa. xliv. 3, I will pour my Spirit upon thy

seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.'

Use 1. Is exhortation by way of inference to two duties:--

1. If there be such a covenant, meditate upon it. Oh, it is the most

comfortable subject that you can spend your thoughts upon! Consider the

form of it, that the divine decrees were laid in the way of a covenant,

and that God and Christ should article one with another. You may fetch

a great deal of comfort and support for your faith out of this.

[1.] It occasioned God and Christ to become both believers, and to

trust one another; and Christ is a believer to this day: Heb. x. 13,

From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.' God

promised Christ, and Christ promised God, and they took each other's

word for the salvation of all the world. Oh, what an encouragement is

it to believe when you have such high patterns! If you will not believe

God upon his oath, believe him upon his engagement to Christ. It is an

honour to be a believer, because God and Christ were both believers: as

great personages among men are an honour to the society and fellowship

into which they come. You may fetch a reason hence; they trusted one

another, and shall not I trust them both? Now you have a willing God

and an able Saviour, and they both in covenant with you. Christ would

not let go the assurance that he had of God's love by this covenant in

his agonies: Mat. xxvii. 46, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken

me?' Though there were a suspension of the discovery of love, yet he

could say my God, my God. Oh, why should not we believe now, and

silence all doubts? Who would not believe God with his surety?

[2.] Consider the manifold engagements that are upon God. God is bound

to Christ, and God is bound to you; the heart should not be loose in

believing when God is thus bound. You have his purpose, his promise,

his oath, both covenants. Is it not a high affront put upon God to

distrust him now? God was angry with Sarah for laughing, when she had

but a bare promise, Gen. xviii. 13. Certainly, then, he has just cause

to be angry with you for unbelieving, when he hath so deeply engaged

himself to you. Num. xxiii. 19, it is said, Hath he said, and shall he

not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' So I may

say much more, Hath he not sworn, hath he not covenanted, and will he

not make good his engagement to Christ?

[3.] Here is comfort against the sense of our unworthiness: you are

vile wretches, you can expect nothing; but consider, Christ is not

unworthy: God made the promises to him; he hath the oversight of the

covenant of grace: God hath a bond, a covenant with him; and though you

have given him occasion to break with you, yet he will not break with

his own Son. Jesus Christ did not fail in his undertaking with God, but

fulfilled the will of his heavenly Father, even to a tittle. Therefore

God will make good his word to Jesus Christ for you, though humble and

vile in yourselves. No matter though you be base in your own eyes;

consider the truth of God plighted to his Son, who was not unfaithful.

[4.] Against fears of apostasy. Oh, you shall not keep faithful with

God! Why, consider God doth not deal first with you as with particular

persons, but with Jesus Christ. The covenant is not committed to the

indeterminate freedom of your wills, and the wanderings of your hearts,

but to the care of Jesus Christ; and there is no breach likely to be on

Christ's part. It is a dishonour to God to think we are out of favour

upon every offence. In the state of innocency we had perfect peace, but

it was such an estate as was capable of enmity, because the covenant

was made with ourselves; but now it is made with Christ, that is a firm

foundation. If we were still left to our own free will, it were not

certain that any should be saved.

2. The matter of the covenant; this yields ground of comfort also. Do

but consider what Christ was bound to, or what God promised Christ. Do

you struggle with unbelief, and you cannot tell how to settle upon any

comfort? If you belong to Christ, God hath given him a charge to look

after your souls, you shall not perish; Christ is bound to apply the

virtue of his sufferings, as well as to merit by them. Are you feeble?

God hath provided a place for you in Christ's bosom. Christ's shoulders

are for lambs that cannot go of their own feet. Do you want knowledge?

It is one of the things given Christ in charge: He shall be a light to

the Gentiles.' Do you want freedom and liberty towards God? Christ is

to preach freedom to the captives. Still study the covenant between God

and Christ, and you shall see the Lord Jesus received a charge to

supply your wants. Is a nation stubborn and averse from Christ? Is it

not said, He shall set judgment in the earth, that the isles shall wait

for his law'? Is there opposition against Christ, his glory, and

servants? Is it not said, He shall not fail, nor be broken in

judgment'? Alas! these adversaries can do nothing; like angry bees,

they may sting, but they leave their life behind them. God will still

uphold the hand and head of Christ. This is the first part to meditate

on.

2. If there were a covenant made with Christ, oh, then, get an interest

in him, and be united to him, that so you may come within the compass

of his care and commission. Everything belongeth to you according to

your interest in Christ: 2 Cor. i. 20, The promises are in him yea, and

in him amen.' Still a man's hope is in the covenant of grace: and you

shall see Christ hath all to do in the covenant of grace.

[1.] In this covenant between God and Christ he is only federate; he

hath taken the whole business upon himself, to discharge you out of the

covenant of works, to destroy the powers of hell, to bring you into

favour with God. We cannot do it with our prayers and tears: Hosea

xiii. 14, I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem

them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy

destruction.' Christ undertook this when God the Father and Christ

entered into a formal, solemn compact, for so the apostle explaineth

it, 1 Cor. xv. 55.

[2.] In the covenant of grace made with believers, Christ is every way

concerned in it: he taketh several relations upon himself, which seem

otherwise to be contradistinct.

(1.) He is called the testator or author of the covenant: Heb. ix. 16,

For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the

death of the testator.' It was built upon his purchase, confirmed by

his death. He undertook to make up all controversies that might fall

out between God and us; and so the whole is ascribed to him; therefore

he is said to be the author and finisher of our faith,' Heb. xii. 2.

Our faith is built upon that covenant, and peace with Christ is surely

ordained for us. We are said to be his people: Mat. i. 21, And he shall

save his people from their sins.' And therefore there are many promises

in scripture that pass in the name of Christ. Some what he will do to

us, which shows him to be joint-author together with God in the

covenant; he, being heir with his father, is heir to the promises. So

that you see there is no likelihood of right to the covenant but by

union with Jesus Christ. It is his covenant as well as the Father's.

(2.) He is called the Mediator of the covenant: Heb. xii. 24, And to

Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant.' He is the middle person that

goeth betwixt God and us, to make up all breaches that may be on our

default; he mediates with the Father when he is provoked by our sin,

and mediates with us by his Spirit, to bring us upon our knees before

God. The old covenant needed no mediator, for God and man were not

fallen out; but now they are so, and therefore Christ is the fittest

person to mediate; for partaking of the nature of both parties, he is

the fittest person to come between them.

(3.) He is called the surety of the covenant: Heb. vii. 22, By so much

was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.' One that is to see it

performed on both sides, so as God will challenge Christ for our part,

and you may challenge God for Christ's part. He is to see all wrought

in us which God hath required; to see that the Spirit writes the law in

our hearts, and inclines us to obedience; and then to see that we yield

up that obedience, and that God be satisfied. He is to do all our works

for us, and all our works in us; so that God calleth upon Christ, and

we call upon Christ. All is done in him, and therefore God calleth him

his witness, Isa. lv. 4, Ye are my witnesses, and my servant whom I

have chosen.' Isa. xliii. 10. He is my chief witness, that I am

faithful, and true, and able. Christ will undertake for him, and he

will undertake for you, for you need a surety most.

(4.) In the covenant of grace Christ is the prime federate; the

promises are mainly pitched upon him, and he receiveth them for all his

brethren. He is mainly intended: Gen. iii. 15, I will put enmity

between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall

bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' Mark, the covenant is

made to all in general, but so as it reflects upon Christ especially.

There is an enmity between all the holy seed and the serpent's, all the

spawn of Satan, though chiefly Christ be concerned in it, as if the

whole seed were Christ's. And in the covenant renewed with Abraham, the

promises are mainly pitched upon Christ, or else the expressions would

not agree; for he it is that stands as the prime federate, to receive

the promises for all his brethren: Gen. xii. 3, In thee shall all the

families of the earth be blessed.' The covenant of works was made with

Adam and all mankind, and Adam received it for all his race: so does

Christ. Well, then, you see the necessity and benefit of union with

Christ, that you may be entitled to his care as he is the only

federate, that you may receive his bequests and legacies as testator

and ordainer of the covenant, that he may mediate for you, and go to

God for you; and as he is Mediator, he may undertake for you; and as a

surety he may bestow blessings upon you, as your head, as the chiefest

of the body that is called Christ.

3. To love God. You have the greatest experience of the love of the

Godhead that possibly you could have, that there should be a covenant

between the persons of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy

Spirit, that they would mutually engage one another for your good. It

is the highest endearment you could have from them, that God should

ordain you his Son to carry on the work of your salvation; therefore

engage and give up yourselves to God again: seeing the Lord should

devise such a way, and Christ effect it, give up your selves by

covenant to God.

But I come now to the matter, or to handle the words absolutely, and

not considered under that conditional and federate form: When thou

shalt make his soul an offering for sin,' or, as it is in the Hebrew,

When he shall make his soul sin (ascham), the sin or the

trespass-offering. His soul, that is, himself: What is a man profited

if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' Mat. xvi. 26;

that is, himself, body and soul. So his soul, that is himself, shall he

make an offering for sin. His whole man was offered up. He could not

sacrifice his divinity. The apostle Peter saith, He suffered in the

flesh.'

Doct. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was the only true satisfactory and

expiatory sacrifice for sin.

1. Because it was of God's own ordaining. God will be pleased with

nothing but what he appoints. Foolish man would fain give laws to

heaven, and think to please God with what liketh himself best either in

worship or in sacrifices; as if God would be enticed by their own lure.

Christ is the only ascham: God requireth not ten thou sand rivers of

oil; and all things else are nothing to God's will. Christ was of his

own appointment, and therefore expiatory: Rom. iii. 25, Whom God hath

set forth to be a propitiation;' 1 John iv. 10, God hath sent his Son

to be a propitiation for our sins.' It is not expiatory, if God, the

party offended, did not accept of Christ: Eph. v. 2, He gave himself

for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour;'

that is, for an acceptable sacrifice: all other sacrifices were an

abomination to this.

2. Other sacrifices were but types of this, they could not make the

comers to them perfect, as the apostle proveth, Heb. ix. 9. There was

expiation, but not real, except Christ was eyed in them. They could not

make him that did the service perfect, as appertaining to the

conscience: that is, they could not satisfy the conscience. The sin was

not forgiven through their worthiness, they could not have any solid

ground that justice was satisfied; this is a thing that naturally

troubleth a man, how to satisfy justice, and to appease the revengeful

deity. Naturally there is such a sense in guilty man, and that was the

reason why they would have somewhat above sacrifices, because still

there was something that stuck with them, that this was not enough. And

therefore they in Micah added their first-born, Micah vi.; 2 Chron.

xxxiii. 6, And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the

valley of the son of Hinnom.' There was somewhat that caused parents to

be so unnatural besides the example of the heathens. And truly it was

because their consciences were not perfect. They had not the good

answer that Peter speaketh of, they could not be persuaded God was

appeased by the killing of a beast.

3. No other thing could be satisfactory and expiatory besides the

sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The prophet Isaiah bringeth in God as

saying, He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no

intercessor, therefore his arm brought salvation.' Man could have had

no other person to interpose for him. Therefore Christ, who is the arm

of the Lord, he brought salvation to him. All the angels in heaven were

not able to lay down a valuable consideration; there was no

intercessor, no intervener, none that could come between man and wrath.

No creature can stand before infinite wrath to countermand it; man was

not able, nor all his tears available. The law taketh no notice of

sorrow for sin. It is true, the creature was easily inclined to think

of merit in that which is dolorous and costly; but it is but a vain

thought, the law is satisfied only through full and complete obedience.

Your prayers would not do. Christ doth not barely pray to God, but

offer himself also. His entreaties alone would not have been

sufficient: Heb. ix. 22, Without shedding of blood there is no

remission.'

4. Christ sacrificing of himself complied with God's design, which is

double:--

[1.] To discover the glory of the Trinity, his love to the souls of

men, and the Spirit's efficacy. These things would not have been drawn

out for the creatures' benefit, had it not been for this design. The

Father is glorified in being the contriver, the Son in being the

Mediator, the Spirit as the applier and settler of comfort in the

hearts of Christians. This was a high honour to Christ, next to that

personal glory that he had with the Father before all worlds. When

Christ was about to die, he saith, John xiii. 31, Now is the Son of man

glorified, and God is glorified in him.' The Son especially; and not

him alone, but the whole Godhead; the Spirit is glorified in your sense

and experience of him.

[2.] To magnify his justice and displeasure against sin: Rom. iii. 25,

God set out Christ to declare his righteousness in the remission of

sin.' God would have us be reconciled, not only by way of entreaties,

but satisfaction. You can as well stand before the seat of judgment as

the throne of grace, if God forgives sinners. God's justice is more

glorified in punishing sin in Christ, than if all the world had been

lost for sin. This appears by the impartialness of it, that God should

not spare his own Son; but the merit of it is full, here is room for

acceptation through the worth of his person that did all. If men had

been damned, God would be glorifying his justice, but never be said to

be glorified. It is more to the creditor to have his debt paid at once,

than always a-paying. Ten thousand pounds is a long time a-paying by a

poor man in shillings, but a rich man layeth it down in a little time,

and pays all.

Use 1. Then disclaim other satisfactions, your tears, your duties, your

repentance; do not think to please God with these. Alas! you will never

know when the work is done fully. Men make their way to God easy

through these. Naturally we trust in our works and duties; these are

rather fruits than causes. Look higher than your prayers and tears, to

Jesus Christ.

I^now come to the third reason why the death and sufferings of Christ

are not ignominious to him; and it is drawn from the fruits of his

sufferings, which are three:--

The first is a propagation of his spiritual seed: He shall see his

seed.' By seed, usually the scripture meaneth posterity; he shall see

his holy posterity; that is, those that are begotten to Christ by the

word. Observe here two things:--

1. That believers are the seed of Christ.

2. That Christ shall live to see his seed.

Doct. That believers are Christ's seed.

By purchase and covenant he hath obtained it of the Father, that you

should be his generation and his posterity. The whole world in some

sense is God's offspring, Acts xvii. 28. The apostle quoteth it out of

a poet--tou gar kai` ge'nos esme`n; but the special seed, the spiritual

seed, that is appointed to God the Son. Eph. iii. 15, it is said of the

Lord Jesus, Of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named.'

Saints militant and triumphant are named from him. As the parents give

the name to their posterity--as Jacob to Joseph's sons, and Zacharias

to John the Baptist--so Christ to believers. It is just here as it was

with Abraham: Gen. xxi. 12, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.' Abraham

had another son, but that should not be counted his race; not in

Ishmael, but in Isaac. So here; every son of Adam is the son of God,

Luke iii. 38, but in Christ shall thy seed be called. Men cannot be

God's sons, but by being Christ's seed. You have no spiritual right to

God's fatherhood out of him.

Object. But you will say, How are believers Christ's seed, since it is

said everywhere that we are born of God, and especially it is said, 1

John iii. 1, Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon

us, that we should be called the sons of God'? And in other places it

seemeth we are the Spirit's seed: John iii. 5, Except a man be born of

water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' And

we are said to be born of the Spirit;' 1 Cor. iv. 15, Yet have ye not

many fathers, for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the

gospel.' My answer shall be in these reasons:--

1. By reason of the gift of the Father, who made over all dispensations

and all relations to the Son: John v. 22, He hath committed all

judgment to the Son.' So All things are delivered to me of my Father,'

Mat. xi. 25. So that quickening, life, and all cometh from the Son; and

God the Father worketh nothing in us but in reference to the Lord

Christ; and he hath given over all his interest and relations to

Christ: John xvii. 6, Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.' They

were God's sons, but he made them over to Christ, so that all the

relation that we have to God the Father is through the Son; he is our

Father, as he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we come to

have interest in the love of the Father by the love of the Son: for it

is said, John i. 12, As many as received him, to them gave he power to

become the sons of God.' It is Christ gave us that power and

prerogative. So Gal. iv. 5, That we that were under the law might

receive the adoption of sons.' So that you see, through the gift of the

Father, we are Christ's seed. He worketh nothing in us, and doth own us

no further than we belong to the Son: for, as he is Christ's Father, so

he is our Father; and as his seed, we are God's sons born to him.

2. Because the Lord Christ did so much to purchase them and gain us for

his seed.

[1.] He died for them. Christ, like Rachel, dieth, that he may bring

forth. Perit dum parit--he perisheth that he may bring forth. You are

Benonis, the children of his sorrows: John xii. 24, Except a corn of

wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it

bringeth forth much fruit,' not else. Isaac had not a promise of

increase and a numerous issue till he was ready to be offered. When in

this chapter the prophet had spoken of the sufferings of Christ, he

comes to say, Isa. liv. 1, Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear;

break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail

with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children

of the married wife, saith the Lord.' Christ liveth to make you

fruitful: Heb. ii. 10, To bring many sons to glory, the captain of

their salvation was made perfect through sufferings.' God would not

have his birth exempt from the fate and lot of all bearings; even

Christ did bring forth in sorrows.

[2.] Because he sendeth forth power and efficacy to beget them.

(1.) He provideth the word, and blesseth it with power and efficacy; as

you may see, 1 Peter i. 23, Being born again, not of corruptible seed,

but of incorruptible, by the word of God that liveth and abideth for

ever;' and in the 25th verse you see what word, to wit, The word which

by the gospel is preached unto you,' the word preached in Christ's

name, this word begets us. Therefore ministers are said to be

instruments in the hand of Christ, as he is pleased to bless their

endeavours. It is said in Ps. cx. 3, From the womb of the morning thou

hast the dew of thy youth.' The meaning is, that believers should be

born to Christ like dewdrops in the morning of the first dawning of

heavenly light: 1 Cor. iv. 15, For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you

through the gospel.' Others were but schoolmasters; he was their father

in Christ. God provideth nurses and subordinate parents, to whom he

conveyeth his own honour. It is by Christ's blessing upon their care

and ministry.

(2.) By his Spirit. It is Christ's Spirit that bringeth you to be new

creatures. He worketh so as he may glorify Christ. The efficiency of

the Spirit is the seed of Christ. Therefore it is said of one that is

born of God, 1 John iii. 9, that his seed remaineth in him.' The power

of the Spirit is a seed by which we are made new creatures, Titus iii.

6, The renewing of the Holy Ghost is shed on us abundantly, through

Jesus Christ, our Saviour.' The true virtue is from the Spirit shed on

us through Christ Jesus. All that are new creatures are begotten by his

word, actuated and quickened by his Spirit, and therefore they are

called his seed.

3. The next reason is, because all that is done to believers is to form

the image of Christ upon them: Gal. iv. 19, My little children, of whom

I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you.' The work of

conversion is but the stamping and drawing out the lineaments of Christ

upon the soul. So it is said, Rom. viii. 29, summo'rphous tes eiko'nos,

Whom he did foreknow, he also predestinated to be conformed to the

image of his Son.' God intended us to be his seed, because the new

creature is most like him. The acts of Christianity are expressed by

our being planted into the likeness of his death and resurrection,'

Rom. vi. 5. The acts that pass forth into the soul for the subduing of

sin, for quickening of grace; it is a planting and forming Christ's

image and likeness: and the whole carriage that passeth from us, it is

through the Spirit, it is but a discovery of Christ's life. Therefore,

the seed, likeness, form, and features are an argument of parentage:

children are but the parents multiplied, and new set forth to the

world.

To apply it.

Use 1. Is a word to the careless world. Look to it whose seed you are.

There are divers seeds in the world.

1. There are some that are only the offspring of God in a large sense,

have no other claim but by the first Adam. Ignorant men look upon

themselves under no other notion than that of God's creatures. Oh!

consider your happiness lieth in your relation unto God through Christ.

You shall see the main encouragement to prayer, or any address to him,

is when you can come and call him Father. God is sweet to you when you

can call upon him as sons and daughters. But, alas! what a sad thing is

it when men have no other title to God but their creation! Isa. xxvii.

11, He that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed

them will show them no favour.' Ignorant people say, God that made them

shall save them. No; such an interest and claim to God will not avail

you; he that made them will not save them; God will reckon his seed in

Isaac, that is, in Christ. There is no privilege in claiming by

Ishmael.

2. There are some that are yet worse, by the virulence and bitterness,

and rage of heart against the ways of God; they are possessed with an

opposite seed--the seed of the serpent: Gen. iii. 15, I will put enmity

between thy seed and her seed.' There is a seed that is full of envy

and enmity against the people and ways of God: Mat. iii. 7, O

generation of vipers!' the very spawn and seed of vipers.

3. There is the holy seed, against whom all the powers of darkness are

armed: Rev. xii. 17, And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went

to war with the remnant of her seed, which kept the commandments of

God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.' The generation of men

that worshipped God in Jesus Christ, those are they that are hated by

the world, and yet they are the pillars of the earth, Isa. vi. 13.

Therefore, look to yourselves whose seed you are. If the Spirit of

Christ hath not been shed out upon you, to new form you through the

word; if you are not formed more and more into the image of the Lord

Jesus, you are none of his seed. Consider who is your root; your fall

lieth in this. God doth not deal with single men, but with the common

root and author of the whole seed. Adam was a miscarrying root, but

Christ is not.

Use 2. Here is a word to the seed of Jesus Christ, to believers. You

may say indeed, Ps. c. 4, It is he that made us, and not we ourselves;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.' You are of the Lord's

making, and therefore of the Lord's keeping. The seed of Jesus Christ

are preserved in him. The whole work of Christ is the workmanship of

God in Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 10. Therefore, look up to him. Children's

dependence is upon the parents, and yours is upon the supplies of

Christ, for your heavenly Father knoweth what he hath made. Here is--

1. Direction to you to whom to look for increase of grace. It is the

rule of nature, all things are nourished by those things by which they

are begotten. God maketh the next causes to be the conveyances of

support to his creatures. God begetteth you by his Spirit, actuating

and quickening the word, and so he keepeth you: 1 Peter ii. 2, As

new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow

thereby.'

2. Exhortation to press you to conform to Jesus Christ. You are his

seed, and therefore it is an engagement to likeness: children are to

bear and show forth the image and likeness of their parents. Christ

makes imitation an argument of parentage: John viii. 37, I know that ye

are Abraham's seed, but ye seek to kill me.' A degenerate offspring are

a shame to their ancestors. They were children of God, that came of an

ancient royal family, but yet were unworthy of their extraction, I

Chron. iv. 22, Who had dominion in Moab and Jashubilehem: and these are

ancient things.' Base powers came of them that preferred sordid

drudgery work to the king of Babylon before working in the temple. What

doth it avail to speak of the ancient honour of our family when we are

degenerated from it? Oh, take heed you be not a stain to Jesus Christ.

You came of a noble seed, the whole family of God is named of him.

Ishmael came of Abraham; but cast out the bondwoman and her son.' God

will have no bond slaves to inherit this honour. To be enslaved to sin,

and to pretend sonship by Christ, will provoke to a casting out.

Children, unless degenerate, will hold out the honour of their parents,

and walk in the high steps of their ancestors; and so must you show

from whose loins and life you came by a worthy walking before God.

Use 3. Here is a word of consolation. A great deal of comfort it is to

be of the seed of Christ; as--

1. Consider what an honour is done you. By this you have a title and

claim to the whole Godhead: He gave you power to become the sons of

God.' You belong to his care, being the seed of Christ. As some living

fathers among the emperors did make their children co partners with

them in their dignity, so are you sharers with Christ in all his

privileges: Rom. viii. 17, And if children, then heirs of God, and

joint-heirs with Christ.' Our Saviour saith, John xx. 17, I ascend to

my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' As if you were

in the same rank with Christ. And therefore it is said, Heb. ii. 11, He

is not ashamed to call them brethren.' Christ doth not think it a

disgrace to him that they should be invested in his honours and

privileges.

2. This relation engageth affection.

[1.] It engageth Christ's delight to Christians. As parents' joy is in

their seed, so is Christ's in your thriving and welfare. God hath made

love naturally descending and running down to them that come from us.

Christ is brought in as a type of Isaiah, Heb. ii. 13, rejoicing over

his children: Behold I and the children which thou hast given me.'

Believers are a pleasure and glory to him. To look upon the

numerousness of the saints is a pleasant sight to Christ; as to a

father to see the increase of his loins: Isa. lxii. 4, For the Lord

delighteth in thee.' Christ rejoiceth over his seed. It is promised as

a privilege that he should see his seed, implying it should be a

delight to Christ. And what a comfort is this, that we should be

Christ's joy! Therefore Paul saith, Phil. i. 8, God is my record how

greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ;' that is,

as the bowels of Jesus Christ did yearn after you, with such like

bowels do I yearn for you.

[2.] It engageth Christ's care of you. He shall see his seed; and you

are his seed, and therefore he will look after you. He watcheth these

great births, that they may not miscarry; and is as it were bound that

we may lack nothing. All his care is about his seed: Cant. ii. 17,

Christ walketh in the gardens to look after the green figs and tender

grapes, that he may apply himself to them. The apostle saith, he is

worse than an infidel that provideth not for his own;' not only beneath

grace, but beneath nature. And certainly Christ will have a more tender

regard to his own seed. The greatest expression of love that Christ

would have spoken to Peter was to feed his lambs, John xxi. 15. We may

look to him for provisions: Isa. xlix. 15, Can a woman forget her

sucking child? She may, but I will not forget thee.' Men, by debauching

their spirits, may wear out the impressions of natural affections, but

Christ cannot forget his own seed: The foundation of the Lord standeth

sure.'

I come now to the second point.

Doct. That Christ shall see his seed, or an increase of the faithful

through his word and Spirit. It noteth two things:--

First, The life of Christ. Many leave seed that do not see it, being

snatched from their children and comforts as soon as they grow into any

hopes: but Christ's seeing his seed implieth he should live to see it

propagated throughout all successions of time.

First observation, That the seed of Christ have a living parent: He

shall see his seed.' God's children can never be orphans. We say by

many that their parents died too soon for them, because they were but

young, and exposed to the hazards and uncertainties of the world. But

believers cannot be left as orphans: John xiv. 18, I will not leave you

comfortless; I will come to you again.'

Well, then, to apply it: Lay up this comfort, though Christ be ascended

and gone out of your sight, yet he seeth his seed, he liveth to take

care for you. You have not his corporeal presence, but you have the

presence of his Spirit to direct you: John xvi. 7, It is expedient for

you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come

to you.' Christ cannot die too soon; his absence in the flesh is

abundantly recompensed and made up in the Spirit. That more generally

and more particularly is the comfort that you have by the life of

Christ as you are his seed: and therefore I shall not handle it at

large.

1. You may be sure you are still an object working upon his affections.

The sight of things worketh more vehemently upon us than the conceit of

them. Imagination hath a great force upon the spirit, but not so great

as the senses, as tasting, seeing, and the like. As you shall see in

impure love: Gen. xxxix. 7, she cast her eyes upon Joseph, and said,

Lie with me;' Mat. v. 28, Lusting cometh by looking. So in pure

affection love is enkindled by the presence of the object. You may

discern the workings of nature in these instances. As you shall see in

another case; when God would stir up or provoke the rage of his

justice, it is said, And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was

corrupt.' It is spoken after the manner of man. It is true of the man

Christ Jesus, who, looking upon us, and seeing our state and case, is

the more touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Heb. iv. 15. It

is said in Mat. xiv. 14, Christ saw a great multitude, and was moved

with compassion towards them. Christ's eye presented objects to his

pity; therefore the prophet speaketh to Christ: Isa. lxiii. 15, Look

down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and

thy glory.' Christ shall see his seed; not only know their state by

imagination, but live to look into their particular wants: Though

Abraham be ignorant of us,' yet Christ liveth to see the several states

of his seed.

2. You may be sure that he is able to give you a constant and

sufficient supply. Parents, that only leave a portion, cannot provide

against all hazards. Christ doth not only leave you a portion, and so

let you shift for yourselves, but you are still under his eye and care:

Rev. ii. 2, I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience.' That

was the ground of Christ's pity to her: he ever seeth his seed. It was

the prodigal's comfort, that though he had spent all, yet still his

father was living: Luke xv. 17, There is bread enough in my father's

house.' God doth not give us a stock of grace, and leave us to our

selves; we are still in the family, and under the Father's eye and

care. You have a parent that liveth for ever, that dispenseth his grace

to you, and teacheth you how you may manage it without impair and loss.

A father, whilst living, will not put the whole out of his own hands;

it is best that our stock is still in Christ's keeping.

Secondly, He shall see his seed, noteth the increase that is implied in

the phrase seed put indefinitely: it is put for a multitude, such a

seed as is worth looking after. Observe then--

Second observation, That Jesus Christ hath a plenteous seed and

numerous offspring. In the exposition I showed you it is plural, He

shall see his seeds.' It is parallel with that, He shall see his

children's children.' A seed propagated through many successions of

ages. This appeareth by the promises made to the types of Christ; as--

1. To several of the patriarchs, &c., viz., Isaac, Ham, Jacob, David,

whose posterity was a shadow of it: Jer. xxxii. 22, As the host of

heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured, so

will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that

minister unto me.' Great shall be the number of those that are grafted

into Christ, and made kings and priests to him. So to Abraham: Gen.

xxviii. 14, And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou

shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and

to the south; and in thee and thy seed shall all the families of the

earth be blessed.' It is meant principally of the holy and spiritual

seed: Gen. xxxii. 12, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as

the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.' Balaam

says, Num. xxiii. 10, Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number

of the fourth part of Israel?' It is meant of Jacob's sons that are

propagated; and it is meant of Israel's sons among the Gentiles

principally, though not with exclusion of the other: Hosea i. 10, Yet

the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea,

which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall be said to them, Ye

are the sons of the living God;' which is applied by the apostle to the

church among the Gentiles.

2. To the church: Isa. liv. 1,2,' Sing, O barren, thou that didst not

bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not

travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the

children of the married wife. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let

them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not,

lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.' It is said, the land

should grow too little: Isa. xlix. 19, The land shall be too narrow by

reason of the inhabitants;' Isa. lx. 8, Who are these that fly as a

cloud, and as the doves to the windows?' Doves fly in flocks, so that

they even darken the air.

3. To Christ; as here, that he should see his seed: Ps. ii. 8, Ask of

me, and I will give the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utter

most parts of the earth for thy possession;' Rev. vii. 9, After this I

beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all

nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the

throne, and before the Lamb.'

Use 1. Be not discouraged at the church's paucity and fewness. Men say

they are popular, and go against the whole world: Gen. xix. 9, This one

fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge.' Elijah was

zealous alone. Do not be discouraged. A grain of mustard-seed will grow

into a tree, Mat. xiii. A little flock may increase, so that you must

stretch forth the curtains, and strengthen the stakes. The little stone

hewed out of the mountain filled the whole earth, Dan. ii. 35; and Job

viii. 7, Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should

greatly increase.'

2. Wait and pray for the increase of it, for the coming in of the

fulness of the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 25. Pray that the waters of the

sanctuary may go out to the former and latter sea, Zech. xiv. 8.

We are now come to the second fruit of the sufferings of Christ: He

shall prolong his days;' that is, though he die, the term of his life

shall never be the shorter for it; he shall live for ever. Some apply

this to the seed of Christ before mentioned; as if the sense were, He

shall prolong the days of his seed. And the Seventy favour this sense

in their translation, for they render this clause with the former, He

shall see his seed to be long-lived.' I confess the result is the same;

for if Christ be long-lived, we shall be long-lived; our life and glory

hang upon his life and glory. But I conceive this phrase more expressly

and properly doth concern Christ himself. The point is then--

Doct. That the days of the Lord Jesus Christ were not shortened by his

dying, but rather prolonged and lengthened out to eternity.

I cannot give you the full discussion, having spoken much concerning it

upon that place which I shall now quote as the proof of it: Isa. liii.

8, Who shall declare his generation?' that is, who can count the number

of his age and duration? The reason is--

Because, after suffering, Christ was to return to the glory of his God

head: Luke xxiv. 26, Ought not Christ to have suffered these things,

and to enter into his glory?' He was to put off meanness and death;

these things could have no more dominion over him. He returned to all

the other glories, and therefore to the glory of his immortality. And

hence the apostle saith of our Lord Christ, l Tim. vi. 16, Who only

hath immortality, dwelling in the light;' that is, in opposition to the

creatures. He only hath it to dispose of it, and in himself; for

otherwise we are immortal in our souls; but it is only by his benefit

and promise, and as we live in his life. Well, then, you see the reason

is, because Christ is in possession of glory and immortality.

Use 1. It maketh for the comfort of believers: your Saviour liveth for

ever. As the second person in the Trinity, he is immutably glorious;

and as the Mediator, he hath eternity made over by grant and covenant

to him. It is for your comfort divers ways; besides what I have spoken

to before, take these:--

1. If Christ be eternal, then his love is eternal, his care and his

mercy are eternal, his kingdom is eternal: Isa. ix. 6, 7, Of the

increase of his government and peace there is no end.' Everything in

Christ is prolonged to you. As you find Christ to you now, so he will

be to you for ever. It is true, there may be some withdrawings of love

and grace as to our apprehensions. And so Job saith, Job xxx. 21, Thou

art become cruel to me.' Saints may think they have lost God and lost

grace, when it is only through the weakness of their own apprehensions;

there may be a different appearance of Christ to the creature, but his

heart is the same to them still; like children, that think the sun doth

not give light but when they see it breaking out in glory. There is

light for you in Christ, though you cannot see it through the darkness

that is upon your spirits.

2. Here is relief against all our enemies. Is it the shortness of life?

Ps. cii. 11, 12, My days are like a shadow that declineth, and I am

withered like grass; but thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever.' It may

be you are assaulted with weaknesses, you carry about you a sickly,

crazy, body that is ready at every turn to drop into the grave. This is

a trouble to you: God having placed in the creature naturally a desire

of immortality, the vanity and perishableness of their being is a

trouble to them. But consider, Christ is long-lived, and therefore your

glory shall not be left in the dust, nor God's holy ones left to

corruption and rottenness. Christ's life was not shortened by his

death, but prolonged; so shall yours be that have an interest in him.

Oh, see that your lives are made long in the prolongation of Christ's

life; for as the body liveth in the life of the soul, so shall we live

in the life of Christ. See how the church draweth out this comfort

everywhere: Hab. i. 12, Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God,

my Holy One? We shall not die.' We cannot perish if we have an interest

in one that is everlasting: Ps. cii. 27, 28, Thy years shall have no

end; therefore the children of thy servants shall continue, and their

seed shall be established before thee.' It is taken for a good

consequence, that if God continueth, the saints shall continue: Thy

years have no end, therefore their seed shall be established.' What a

privilege is this, that creatures that are in their own nature but of a

day's standing, as it were, should have their lives prolonged to the

continuance of their Maker!

3. This will support and settle the heart in doubtful times, in days of

misery and violence. Your hearts are ready to be overcome, to see the

thriving of wicked men; and you know not