

Monergism

The Sinner's Sanctuary

Being Forty Sermons on the Eighth Chapter of Romans

HUGH BINNING

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by Hugh Binning

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I

Rom. 8:1.—There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

There are three things which concur to make man miserable,—sin, condemnation, and affliction. Every one may observe, "that man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward;" that his days here are few and evil;—"he possesses months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed for him," Job 5:6, 7; 7:3. "He is of few days and full of trouble," Job 14:1. Heathens have had many meditations of the misery of man's life; and in this have outstripped the most part of Christians. We recount, amongst our miseries, only some afflictions and troubles, as poverty, sickness, reproach, banishment, and such like. They again have numbered even those natural necessities of men amongst his miseries,—to be continually turned about, in such a circle of eating, drinking, and sleeping. What burden should it be to an immortal spirit to roll about perpetually that wheel! We make more of the body than of the soul. They have accounted this body a burden to the soul. They placed posterity, honour, pleasure, and such things, which men pour out their souls upon, amongst the greatest miseries of men, as vanity in themselves, and vexation, both in the enjoying and losing of them; but, alas! they knew not the fountain of all this misery,—sin; and the accomplishment of this misery,—condemnation. They thought trouble came out of the ground and dust, either by a natural necessity, or by chance; but the word of God discovereth unto us the ground of it, and the end of it. The ground

and beginning of it was man's defection from God, and walking according to the flesh; and from this head have all the calamities and streams of miseries in the world issued. It hath not only redounded to men, but even to the whole creation, and subjected it to vanity, ver. 20 of this chapter. Not only shalt thou, O man, (saith the Lord to Adam) eat thy meat in sorrow, but thy curse is upon the ground also, and thou who wast immortal, shalt return to that dust which thou magnifiedst above thy soul, Gen. 3:17. But the end of it is suitable to the beginning. The beginning had all the evil of sin in it, and the end hath all the evil of punishment in it. These streams of this life's misery, they run into an infinite, boundless, and bottomless ocean of eternal wrath. If thou live according to the flesh, thou shalt die: it is not only death here, but eternal death after this. The miseries then of this present life, are not a proportionable punishment of sin; they are but an earnest given of that great sum, which is to be paid in the day of accounts; and that is condemnation, "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." Now, as the law discovers the perfect misery of mankind, so the gospel hath brought to light a perfect remedy of all this misery. Jesus Christ was manifested to take away sin, and therefore his name is Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins." This is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Judgment was by one unto condemnation of all, but now "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" so these two evils are removed, which indeed have all evil in them. He takes away the curse of the law, being made under it; and then he takes away the sin against the law by his holy Spirit. He hath a twofold virtue, for he came by blood and water, 1 John 5:6, 7,—by blood, to cleanse away the guilt of sin; and by water, to purify us from sin itself. But in the meantime, there are many afflictions and miseries upon us, common to men: why are not these removed by Christ? I say, the evil of them is taken away, though themselves remain. Death is not taken away, but the sting of death is

removed. Death, afflictions, and all, are overcome by Jesus Christ, and so made his servants to do us good. The evil of them is God's wrath and sin, and these are removed by Jesus Christ. Now they would be taken away indeed, if it were not good they remained, for "all things work together for the good of those that love God," ver. 28. So then we have a most complete deliverance in extent, but not in degree. Sin remains in us, but not in dominion and power. Wrath sometimes kindles because of sin, but it cannot encrease to everlasting burnings. Afflictions and miseries may change their name, and be called instructions and trials,—good, and not evil: but Christ hath reserved the full and perfect delivery till another day, which is therefore called "the day of complete redemption," and then all sin, all wrath, all misery shall have an end, and "be swallowed up of life and immortality," ver. 23.

This is the sum of the gospel; and this is the substance of this chapter. There is a threefold consolation answerable to our threefold evils: "there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ." Here is a blessed message to condemned lost sinners, who have that sentence within their breasts, ver. 1. This was the end of Christ's coming and dying, that he might deliver us from sin as well as death, and the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us; and therefore he hath given the holy Spirit, and dwells in us by the Spirit, to quicken us who are "dead in sins and trespasses." O what consolation will this be to souls, that look upon the body of death within them, as the greatest misery, and do groan with Paul, "O miserable man that I am!" &c., Rom. 7:24. This is held forth to ver. 17. But because there are many grounds of heaviness and sadness in this world, therefore the gospel opposes unto all these, both our expectation which we have of that blessed hope to come, whereof we are so sure, that nothing can frustrate us of it, and also the help we get in the meantime of the Spirit to bear our infirmities, and to bring all things

about for good to us, ver. 28. And from all this the believer in Jesus Christ hath ground of triumph and boasting before the perfect victory,—even as Paul doth in the name of believers, from ver. 31 to the end. Upon these considerations, he that cried out not long ago, "O miserable man, who shall deliver me?" doth now cry out, "who shall condemn me?" The distressed wrestler becomes a victorious triumpher; the beaten soldier becomes more than a conqueror. Oh, that your hearts could be persuaded to hearken to this joyful sound!—to embrace Jesus Christ for grace and salvation; how quickly would a song of triumph in him swallow up all your present complaints and lamentations!

All the complaints amongst men may be reduced to one of these three. I hear the most part bemoaning themselves thus; alas for the miseries of this life, this evil world! alas for poverty, for contempt, for sickness! Oh! miserable man that I am, who will take this disease away? Who will shew me any good thing? Psal. 4 any temporal good? But if ye knew and considered your latter end, ye would cry out more; ye would refuse to be comforted, though these miseries were removed. But I hear some bemoaning themselves more sadly,—they have heard the law, and the sentence of condemnation is within them. The law hath entered and killed them. Oh! "what shall I do to be saved?" "Who will deliver me from the wrath to come?" What is all present afflictions and miseries in respect of eternity? Yet there is one moan and lamentation beyond all these, when the soul finds the sentence of absolution in Jesus Christ, and gets its eyes opened to see that body of death and sin within, that perfect man of sin diffused throughout all the members. Then it bemoans itself with Paul—"O miserable man, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom. 7:24. I am delivered from the condemnation of the law, but what comfort is it, as long as sin is so powerful in me? Nay, this makes me

often suspect my delivery from wrath and the curse, seeing sin itself is not taken away.

Now, if you could be persuaded to hearken to Jesus Christ, and embrace this gospel, O what abundant consolation should ye have! What a perfect answer to all your complaints? They would be swallowed up in such a triumph as Paul's is here. This would discover unto you a perfect remedy of sin and misery, that ye should complain no more; or at least, no more as those without hope. You shall never have a remedy of your temporal miseries, unless ye begin at eternal, to prevent them. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you." Seek first to flee from the wrath to come, and ye shall escape it; and beside, the evil of time afflictions shall be removed. First remove the greatest complaints of sin and condemnation, and how easy is it to answer all the lamentations of this life, and make you rejoice in the midst of them!

You have in this verse three things of great importance to consider,—the great and gracious privilege, the true nature, and the special property of a Christian. The privilege is one of the greatest in the world, because it is of eternal consequence, and soul concernment; the nature is most divine,—he is one that is in Jesus Christ, and implanted in him by faith; his distinguishing property is noble, suitable to his nature and privileges,—he walks not as the world, according to his base flesh, but according to the Spirit. All these three are of one latitude,—none of them reaches further than another. That rich privilege and sweet property concentrates and meets together in one man, even in the man who is in Jesus Christ. Whoever enters into Jesus Christ, and abideth in him, he meets with these two, justification and sanctification; these are no where else, and they are there together.

If ye knew the nature and properties of a Christian, ye would fall in love with these for themselves; but if these for your own sakes will not allure you, consider this incomparable privilege that he hath beyond all others, that ye may fall in love with the nature of a Christian. Let this love of yourselves and your own well-being, pursue you into Jesus Christ, that ye may walk even as he walked; and I assure you, if ye were once in Christ Jesus, ye would love the very nature and walking of a Christian, no more for the absolution and salvation that accompanies it, but for its own sweetness and excellency beyond all other. Ye would, as the people of Samaria, no more believe for the report of your own necessity and misery, but ye would believe in Jesus Christ, and walk according to the Spirit, for their own testimony they have in your consciences. Ye would no more be allured only with the privileges of it to embrace Christianity, but you would think Christianity the greatest privilege, a reward unto itself. *Pietas ipsa sibi imerccs est*,—godliness is great gain in itself, though it had not such sweet consequents or companions. That you may know this privilege, consider the estate all men are into by nature. Paul expresses it in short, Rom. 5. "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all unto condemnation;" and the reason of this is, "by one man sin came upon all, and so death by sin, for death passed upon all, because all have sinned," ver. 18, 12. Lo, then, all men are under a sentence of condemnation once! This sentence is the curse of the law,—"*Cursed is every one that abideth not in all things commanded to do them.*" If you knew what this curse were, ye would indeed think it a privilege to be delivered from it. Sin is of an infinite deserving, because against an infinite God; it is an offence of an infinite majesty, and therefore the curse upon the sinner involves eternal punishment. O what weight is in that word, 2 Thess. 1:9, "Ye shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power!" If it were duly apprehended, it would weigh down a man's soul, and make it heavy unto death. This

condemnation includes both *damnum* el *pœnam*, *pœnam*, *damni* el *panam* *sensus*; and both are infinite in themselves, and eternal in their continuance. What an unpleasant and bitter life would one lead, that were born to a kingdom, and yet to be banished it and lose it? But what an incomparable loss is it, to fall from an heavenly kingdom, which heart cannot conceive, and that for ever? "In God's favour is life, and in his presence are rivers of pleasures for evermore." When your petty penny-losses do so much afflict your spirits, what would the due apprehension of so great a loss do? Would it not be death unto you, and worse than death, to be separated from this life; to be eternally banished from the presence of his glory? If there should be no more punishment but this only; if the wicked were to endure for ever on earth, and the godly, whom they despised and mocked, were translated to heaven, what torment would it be to your souls to think upon that blessedness which they enjoy above, and how foolishly ye have been put by it for a thing of no value? What would a rich man's advantages and gains be to him, when he considereth what an infinite loser he is? How he hath sold a kingdom for a dunghill? Now if there were any hope, that after some years his banishment from heaven might end, this might refresh him, but there is not one drop of such consolation. He is banished, and eternally banished, from that glorious life in the presence of God, which those do enjoy whom he despised. If a man were shut up all his life-time in a pit, never to see the light once more, would not this be torment enough to him? But when withal there is such pain joined with this loss; when all this time he is tormented within with a gnawing worm, and without with fire;—those senses that did so greedily hunt after satisfaction to themselves, are now as sensible in the feeling of pain and torment. And when this shall not make an end, but be eternal, O whose heart can consider it! It is the comfort and ease of bodily torments here, that they will end in death. Destruction destroys itself, in destroying the body; but here is an

immortal soul to feed upon, and at length the body shall be immortal. That destruction cannot quite destroy it, but shall be an everlasting destruction and living death.

This is the sentence that is once past against us all in the word of God, and not one jot of this word shall fall to the ground: heaven and earth may fail sooner. Ye would think it were an irrevocable decree, if all the nations in the earth, and angels above, convened to adjudge a man to death, did pass sentence upon him. Nay, but this word that is daily spoken to you, which passeth this sentence upon you all, is more certain: and this sentence of death must be executed, unless ye be under that blessed exception made here and elsewhere in the gospel. I beseech you, consider what it is to have such a judge condemning you. Would not any of you be afraid, if ye were under the sentence of a king? If that judgment were above your head, who of you would sit in peace and quietness? Who would not flee from the wrath of a king, that is like the roaring of a lion? But there is a sentence of the KING of kings and nations above your heads. Who would not fear thee, to whom it doth appertain, O King of nations? It is not a great man that can destroy the body, that is against thee; it is not he who hath power to kill thee, and he hath also a great desire so to do. This were indeed much; but it is the great and eternal JEHOVAH, "who lifts up his hand to heaven and swears he lives for ever,"—he is against thee. He who hath all power over body and soul, is against thee, and so is obliged to improve his omnipotency against thee; "he can kill both soul and body, and cast them into hell," and by virtue of this curse he will not spare thee, but pour out all the curses in this book. Thou wouldst be at no peace if thou wert declared rebel by the king and parliament; but alas! that is a small thing. They can but reach thy body, nay, neither can they always do that; thou mayest flee from them, but whither canst thou flee from him? Thou canst not go out of his dominions, for the earth is his, and the sea, and all

that therein is. Darkness cannot hide thee from him. He may spare long, because he can certainly overtake when he pleases; men may not, because they have no assurance of finding. I beseech you then, consider this. It is of soul consequence; and "what hath a man gained, if he gain the world, and lose his soul?" If the gainer be lost, what is gained? And it is of eternal consequence; and what are many thousand years to this? You can look beyond all these, and might comfort yourselves in hope; but you cannot see to the end of this. There is still more before than is past; nay, there is nothing past,—it is still as beginning.

O that ye would consider this curse of God that stands registrate upon us all? What effects had it on Christ, when he did bear it? It made his soul heavy to death:—it was a cup that he could scarcely drink. He that supported the frame of this world was almost near succumbing under the weight of this wrath. It made him sweat blood in the garden. He that could do all things, and speak all things, was put to this, "What shall I say?" When this condemnation was so terrible to him, who was that Mighty One upon whom all help was laid, what shall it be to you? No man's sorrow was ever like his, nor pain ever like his, if all the scattered torments were united in one; but because he was God he overcame, and came out from under it. But what do you think shall be the estate of those who shall endure that same torment?—and not for three days, or three years, or some thousands of years, but beyond imagination,—to all eternity?

I beseech you consider this condemnation which ye are adjudged unto, and do not lie under it. Do ye think ye can endure what Christ endured? Do ye think ye can bear wrath according to God's power and justice? And yet the judgment me upon all men to this condemnation. But, alas! who fears him according to his wrath? Who knows the power of his anger? Ye sleep secure, as if all matters were

past and over your head. We declare unto you in the Lord's name, that this condemnation is yet above you, because you have not judged yourselves. It is preached unto you that ye may flee from it; but since ye will not condemn yourselves, this righteous judge must condemn you.

Now, since it is so, that such a condemnatory sentence is passed on all men, what a privilege must it be, to be delivered from it,—to have that sentence repealed by some new act of God's mercy and favour? David proclaims him a blessed man, whose sins are forgiven and covered; and indeed he is blessed who escapes that pit of eternal misery, though there were no more. Though there were no title to an inheritance and kingdom above, to be delivered from that wrath to come upon the children of disobedience, this is more happiness than the enjoyment of all earthly delights. "What would a man give in exchange for his soul? Skin for skin, and all that a man hath he will give for his life." These riches and advantages, and pleasures that men spend their labour for, all these they will part with in such a hazard. The covetous man he will cast his coffers overboard ere he lose his life; the voluptuous man he will suffer pain and torment in cutting off a member, ere he die. But if men knew their souls, and what an immortality and eternity expects them, they would not only give skin for skin, and all that they have, for their soul, but their life also. Ye would chuse to die a thousand deaths to escape this eternal death. But "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. 16:26;—though he would give, yet what hath he to give? There are two things endear any privilege to us, and heighten the rate of it; and these two are eminent here. Is it not necessary to be, to live, and have a being? All men think so, when they will give all they have to redeem themselves. All other things are accidental to them, they are nearest to themselves; therefore all must go ere themselves go. But I say this is more necessary,—to be well eternally, than to be simply; to escape

this condemnation, than to have a being. And this shall be verified in the last day, when men shall cry for hills and mountains to fall on them, and save them from the wrath of the Lamb, Rev. 6:16. Men will chuse rather not to be, than to fall in that wrath. O how acceptable would a man's first nothing be to him in that great day of wrath! Who shall be able to stand in it?—when kings and princes, bond and free, great and small, shall desire mountains to grind them into powder, rather than to hear that sentence of condemnation, and yet shall not obtain it. O blessed are all they that trust in him, "when his wrath is kindled but a little," Psal. 2:12. Ye toil and vex yourselves, and spend your time about that body and life; but for as precious as they are to you now, ye would exchange them one day for immunity and freedom from this wrath and curse. How will that man think "his lines are fallen in pleasant places!" How will he despise the glory of earthly kingdoms, though all united in one! Who considers in his heart how all kings, all tongues and nations, must stand before the judgment-seat of God, and the books of his law be opened, to judge them by, as also the books of their consciences, to verify his accusation, and precipitate their own sentence? And then, in the open view of all the sons of Adam, and the angels, all secrets shall be brought out,—their accusation read as large as their life-time, and as many curses be pronounced against every one, as there be breaches of the law of God, whereof they are found guilty; and then all these will seek into corners, and cry for mountains, but there is no covering from his presence. What do ye think the man will think within himself who will stand before God, and be absolved in judgment by Jesus Christ, notwithstanding his provocations above many of them? What will a king then think of his crown and dominions, when he reflects on them? What will the poor persecuted Christian then think of all the glory and perfection of this world, when he looks back upon it? O know, poor foolish men, what madness is in venturing your souls for trifles! Ye run the hazard of all greatest things for a poor

moment's satisfaction. Ye will repent it too late, and become wise to judge yourselves fools, when there is no place to mend it.

But this privilege is no more necessary than it is precious. Your souls are now kept captive under that sentence of everlasting imprisonment. Ye are all prisoners, and know not of it. What will ye give in ransom for your souls? Your sins and iniquities have sold you to the righteous Judge of all the earth, as malefactors, and he hath passed a sentence of your perpetual imprisonment under Satan's custody in hell. Now what will you give to redeem your souls from that pit? How few know the worth of their souls!—And so they offer unto God some of their riches for them. Doth not many of you think ye have satisfied for sins, if ye pay a civil penalty to the judge? Many think their own tears and sorrow for sin may be a price to justice, at least if it be joined with amendment in time coming. And so men conceive their sins are pardoned, and their souls redeemed. But, alas! the redemption of the soul is precious, yea, it ceaseth for ever; all your substance will be utterly contemned, though ye offered it. How few of you would give so much for your souls! And yet though ye give it, it will not do it,—ye must pay the uttermost farthing, or nothing. Your sorrow and reformations will not complete the sum, no, nor begin it. "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take much soap, yet is thine iniquity marked with me,"—yet there is still condemnation for thee. Though all the world should convene about this matter, to find a ransom for man; suppose all the treasures of monarchs, the mines and bowels of the earth, the coffers of rich men, were searched; nay, that the earth, the sea, the heavens, and sun, and moon be prized at the highest;—join all the merits of angels above and men below, all their good actions and sufferings, yet the sum that amounts of all that addition, would not pay the least farthing of this debt. The earth would say, it is not in me; the heaven behoved to answer so; angels and men might say, we have heard of it, but it is

hid from all living. Where then is this redemption from the curse? Where shall a ransom be found? Indeed God hath found it; it is with him. He hath given his Son a ransom for many, and his blood is more precious than souls,—let be gold and silver. Is not this then a great privilege, that if all the kingdoms of the world were sold at the dearest, yet they could not buy it? What a jewel is this! What a pearl! Whoever of you have escaped this wrath, consider what is your advantage. O consider your dignity ye are advanced unto, that you may engage your hearts to him, to become his, and his wholly! for "you are bought with a price;" and are no more your own; he gave himself for you, and was made a curse to redeem you from the curse. O how should you walk as privileged men, as redeemed ones!

I beseech you all to call home your thoughts to consider and ponder on this sentence that is passed against us. There is now hope of delivery from it, if ye will take it home unto you; but if ye will still continue in the ways of sin, without returning, know this, that ye are but multiplying those curses, plating many cords of your iniquities, to bind you in everlasting chains. Ye are but digging a pit for your souls, ye that sweat in your sins, and travel in them, and will not embrace this ransom offered. The key and lock of that pit is eternal despair. O consider how quickly your pleasures and gains will end, and spare some of your thoughts from present things, to give them to eternity, that thread spun out for ever and ever;—the very length of the days of the Ancient of days, who hath no beginning of days nor end of time! Remember now of it, lest ye become as long miserable as God is blessed, and that is for ever.

All men would desire to have privileges beyond others, but there is one that carries it away from all the world, and that is the believer in Jesus Christ, who is said to be in Christ, implanted in him by faith, as a lively member of that body whereof Christ is the head. Christ Jesus

is the head of that body, the church; and this head communicates life unto all the members, for "he fills all in all." There is a mighty working power in the head, which diffuseth itself throughout the members, Eph. 1:19, 22, 23. There are many expressions of union between Christ and believers. There is no near conjunction among men, but this spiritual union of Christ with believers is represented to us under it. The foundation and the building have a near dependence, the corner-stone and the wall—these knit together; and "Christ Jesus is the foundation and the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building fitly joined together, groweth up into a holy temple," Eph. 2:20, 21. The head and members are near united, so is Christ and believers; they "grow up unto him," Eph. 4:15. Parents and children are almost one, so is Christ Jesus the everlasting Father, and he shews to the Father the children which he hath given him. We are his brethren, and he is not ashamed to call us so; but, which is more, we are one flesh with him. There is a marriage between Christ and the church, and this is the great mediation of the song of Solomon. "He is the vine-tree, and we are branches" planted in him. Nay, this union is so strict, that it is mutual, "I in them, and they in me." Christ dwelleth in us by faith, by making us to believe in him, and love him; we dwell in Christ by that same faith and love, by believing in him, and loving him. Christ Jesus is our house where we get all our furniture; he is our store-house and treasure, our place of strength and pleasure, a city of refuge, a strong tower and a pleasant river to refresh us. We again are his habitation where he dwelleth by his Spirit; we are his work-house, where he works all his curious pieces of the new creature, forming it unto the day of his espousals, the great day of redemption.

This gives us to understand what we once were. We may stand here and look back upon our former condition, and find matter both of delight and sorrow. We were once without Christ in the world, and if

without Christ, then "without God and hope in the world," Eph. 2:12. I wish this were engraven on the hearts of men, that they are born out of Christ Jesus; wild olives, growing up in the stock of degenerated Adam. He was once planted a noble vine, but how quickly turned he into a degenerated plant, and instead of grapes, brought forth wild grapes, and sour. We all grow upon an "olive tree that is wild by nature," Rom. 11:24. It grows out of the garden of God, in the barren wilderness, and is meet for nothing but to bring forth fruit unto death, to be cut down and cast into the fire. It is a tree which the Lord hath cursed,—never more fruit grow upon thee henceforth: this was the fatal sentence pronounced on Adam. O that you would know your condition by nature! how all your good inclinations, dispositions, and educations, cannot make your stock good, and your fruit good! "Ephraim is an empty vine,"—this is our name. Nay, but many think they bring forth fruit. Hath not heathens spread forth their branches, and brought forth many pleasant fruits of temporal patience, sobriety, magnanimity, prudence, and such like? Do not some civil men many acts of civility profitable to men? Doth not many a man pray, and read the Scriptures from his youth up? Yes, indeed, these are fruits, but for all that, he is an empty vine, for "he brings forth fruit to himself;" and so, as in the original, he is a vine emptying the fruit which it gives, Hos. 10:1. All these fruits are but to himself, and from himself; he knows not to direct those to God's glory, but to his own praise or advantage, to make them his ornament and he knows not his own emptiness, to seek all his furniture and sap from another. What were all these fair blossoms and fruits of heathens? Indeed they were more and better than any now upon the multitude of professed Christians: and yet these were but splendida peccata, shining sins. What is all your praying and fasting, but to yourselves, as the Lord charges the people, Zech. 7. "Do you fast at all to me?" No, "ye do it to yourselves." Here is the wildness and degenerateness of your natures. Either you bring forth

very bitter fruits, such as intemperance, avarice, contention, swearing, &c., or else fruits that have nothing but a fair skin, like apples of Sodom, that are beautiful on the tree, but, being handled, turn to ashes; so there is nothing of them from God, or to God. I think every man almost entertains this secret persuasion in his breast,—that his nature may be weak, yet it is not wicked; it may be helped with education, and care and diligence, and dressed till it please God, and profit others. Who is persuaded in heart that he is an enemy to God, and cannot be subject to God's law? Who believes that his "heart is desperately wicked?" Oh! it is indeed "deceitful above all things," and in this most deceitful, that it persuades you ye have a good heart to God. Will not profane men, whose hands are defiled, maintain the uprightness of their hearts? *Nemo nascitur bonus sed fit.* I beseech you once, consider that ye are born out of Christ Jesus. Ye conceive that ye are born and educated Christians;—ye have that name indeed from infancy, and are baptized. But I ask about the thing; baptism of water doth not implant you into Jesus Christ. Nay, it declares this much unto you, that by nature ye are far off from Jesus, and wholly defiled,—all your imaginations only evil. Now, I beseech you, how came the change? Or is there a change? Are not the most part of men the old men;—no new creatures? "He that is in Christ is a new creature," 2 Cor. 5:16. Ye have now Adam's nature, which ye had first. Ye have borne the image of the earthly, and are ye not such yet, who are still earthly? Think ye that ye can inherit the kingdom of God thus? Can ye pass over from a state of condemnation to a state of life and no condemnation, without a change? No, believe it, ye cannot inherit incorruption with flesh and blood, which ye were born with. Ye must be implanted in the second Adam, and bear his image, ere ye can say that ye are partakers of his blessings, 1 Cor. 15:47, 48, 49, &c. Now I may pose your consciences,—how many of you are changed? Are not the most part of you even such as ye were

from your childhood? Be not deceived; ye are yet strangers from the promises of God, and without this hope in the world.

II

Verse 1.—There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, &c.

All "the promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus;" they meet all in him, and from him are derived unto us. When man was in integrity, he was with God, and in God, and that immediately, without the intervention of a Mediator. But our falling from God hath made us without God; and the distance is so great, as Abraham speaks to the rich man, that "neither can those above go down to him, nor he come up to them." There is a gulf of separation between God and us, that there can be no meeting. And so we who are "without God, are without hope in the world," Eph. 2:12; no hope of any more access to God as before. The tree of life is compassed about with a flaming fire and a sword. God is become a consuming fire unto us, that none can come near these everlasting burnings, much less dwell with them. Since there can be no meeting so, God hath found out the way how sinners may come to him, and not be consumed. He will meet with us in Jesus Christ, that living temple, and this is the trysting-place. There was a necessity of this Mediator, to take up the difference, and make a bridge over that gulf of separation, for us to come to God; and this is his human nature, "the new and living way, the vail of his flesh. God is in Christ, therefore, reconciling the world to himself." All the light of consolation and salvation that is from God, is all embodied in this Sun of Righteousness. All the streams of grace and mercy run in the channel of his well beloved Son. It follows then, that

God is not to be found out of Jesus Christ; and whoever is "without Christ, is without God in the world." God is in Christ reconciling the world, and "there is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ;" but God out of Christ is condemning the world, and therefore condemnation is to all that are not in Christ. When all the sons of Adam were declared rebels, because of his and their own rebellion, the Lord hath appointed a city of refuge, that whosoever is pursued by the avenger of blood, may enter into it, and get protection and safety. Without is nothing but the sword of the avenger, justice reigning in all the world beside; within this city, justice may not enter to take out any into condemnation. And therefore those souls that flee for refuge, "to lay hold on the hope set before them" in Jesus Christ; justice may pursue them to the ports of this city, condemnation may follow them hard, till they enter in; but these may not enter into the ports [i.e. gates] of the city. What a miserable estate then are these souls in, that lie in their own natures, in the open fields without this city! How many foolish men apprehend no danger, but sport about the ports of the city of refuge, and will not enter in! O the avenger of blood shall be upon thee ere thou know; and if it find thee out of the city, woe unto thee! All thy prayers and entreaties will not prevail. Justice is blind and deaf,—cannot deal partially, or respect persons, cannot hear thy supplications. It is strange, that men are taken up with other petty inconsiderable things, and yet neglect to know what this is, to be in Jesus Christ, upon which their salvation depends.

Faith in Jesus Christ is the soul's flight into the city of refuge. Now none flieth but when they apprehend danger, or are pursued. This danger that a soul apprehends, is perishing and condemnation for ever. The pursuer is the law of God, and his justice; these have a sword in their hand, the curse of God, and the sentence of condemnation. God erects a tribunal in his word, wherein he judgeth

men. Whosoever he hath a purpose of good-will unto, he makes the law to enter into their consciences, that the offence may abound. He sends out some messenger of affliction, or conviction, to bring them before the judgment seat, and hear their accusation read unto them. There the soul stands trembling, and the conscience witnesseth and approveth all that the word challengeth of; so that the sinner's mouth is stopped, and can have no excuse to this accusation. Then the judge pronounces the sentence upon the guilty person, "Cursed is every one that abideth not in all things," &c. The soul cries, Guilty, O Lord, guilty, I deserve the curse indeed: Oh! "what shall I do to be saved?" Then the soul looks about on the right hand, and on the left hand, to seek some refuge, but there is none. Whither shall he go from him? He looks within himself, and beholds nothing within; but the accusing witnessing conscience becomes a tormenter. The fire is kindled within, which feeds upon the fuel of innumerable sins. Now the soul is almost overwhelmed, and spies if there be any place to fly from itself, and from that wrath, and behold the Lord discovers a city of refuge near hand, where no condemnation is, even Christ Jesus, who hath sustained the curse, that he might redeem us from it. The vision of peace is here, and thither the soul flies out of itself, and from justice, into that discovered righteousness of Christ's, and so the more that the offence abounded, now the more hath grace superabounded; so that "there is now no more condemnation" to him.

I beseech you consider this, and let it be written on the table of your hearts. There are two tribunals that God sits upon, one out of Christ Jesus, another in Christ Jesus. There is a throne of justice, where no sentence passes but pure unmixed justice, without any temperament of mercy; and this all men must once compear before. You know what a covenant of works God once made with us,—If thou do these things thou shalt live, if not, thou shalt die the death. According to

this we must once be judged, that justice suffer no prejudice. Therefore God speaks out of his law, upon this throne, the language of mount Sinai; he reads our charge unto us, and because all the world is guilty, therefore the sentence of death is once passed upon all. Now, whoever of you come before this tribunal to be judged, know that it is a subordinate court; there is a higher court of mercy and judgment, both justice and mercy mixed together. Though mercy be the predominant, justice and judgment is the habitation of it, but mercy and truth go before the judge's face, and come nearest sinners to give them access. And this you may appeal unto from that tribunal of justice. "But there is forgiveness with thee," &c. Psal. 130:4, 5. And whoever comes here, Christ Jesus sits on this throne to absolve him from that sentence. If you ask what equity is in it, is not this a prejudice to justice, and an abomination to the Lord, to justify the wicked and ungodly sinner? I say, it is no iniquity, because Jesus Christ hath paid the price for us, and was made a curse for our sins, that we might be the righteousness of God in him; and therefore it is just with God to forgive sins; to relax that sinner from the condemnation of the law, that flies into Jesus Christ. You may answer justice—I will not take this for God's last word, I hear that all final judgment is committed to the Son, that he may give life to whom he will; he calls me, and to him will I go, for he hath the words of eternal life; he will justify, and who shall condemn?

Now, if any man will not now arraign himself before the tribunal of God's justice; if he will not search his guiltiness till his mouth be stopped, and hear his sentence of condemnation read, and take with it,—that man cannot come to Jesus Christ, to be absolved, for he justifieth none but self-condemned and lost sinners. So your day is but yet coming, when you must answer to justice. The tribunal of mercy shall be removed, and Christ shall sit upon a throne of pure justice, to judge those who judged not themselves. Alas for your loss,

the most part of you! I pity you. You live in great peace and quietness without the ports of the city of refuge. We declare unto you in the Lord's name, you are under the curse of God: will you yet sit secure, and put the evil day far from you? Oh! rather trouble your peace for a season, with the consideration of your sins! Enter into judgment with yourselves till you see nothing but perishing in yourselves;—and there is no hazard, because salvation is brought near in the gospel. If you would not trouble yourselves so much as to judge yourselves, then you shall be judged when there is no Mediator to plead for you, none to appeal unto.

But whosoever take the sentence of condemnation unto them, and subscribe to the righteousness of the Lord's curse upon them, we do invite all such in the Lord's name, to come in hither, even to Jesus Christ. There is no condemnation to them that are in him. If you stand scrupulous, making many questions in such a matter of so great necessity, you wrong your own soul and dishonour him. Know this, that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Therefore thou condemned sinner mayest come to God in Christ. If you ask any warrant, we think there should be no such questioning, when you are in so great necessity. If a man were starving without a city, and it were told him there is plenty within, were he not a fool that would make any more business, but labour to enter in? This is enough to cross all your objections; you are in extreme necessity, and like to perish within yourself; "he is able to save to the utmost all that come to him." What would you more? Let there be then a closure between absolute necessity and sufficient ability to save. Will you yet stand disputing without the city, when the avenger of blood is above your head? If you will yet press for some more ground and warrant of believing,—then I will tell you all that I know is in the word for a ground of faith. You have great misery and necessity within you,—that you grant, and it is your complaint. Christ hath mercy and

sufficiency of grace in him; "he is able to save to the utmost,"—that you cannot deny. But I do add this third, he is also willing to save thee, whoever will be saved by him; nay, he is more willing than thou art. If you question this, I desire you but to consider the whole tenor of the gospel. How many invitations? How many persuasions? How many promises to those who come? Yea, how many commands, and that peremptory, to believe on him? Yea, how many threatenings against you, if you will not come to him to have life? Hath he given himself for the sins of the world, and will he not be willing that sinners partake of that he was at so much pains to purchase? Think you that Christ will be content his death should be in vain? And it should be in vain, if he did not welcome the worst sinners; yea, it should be in vain if he did not draw them to him, and make them willing. But besides this, he hath promised so absolutely and freely, and fully, as there should be no exception imaginable against it; "him that cometh, I will not in any case cast out," John 6:37. Why do you imagine any case where Christ hath made none? Why do you sin against your own souls? Oh, if I were in Christ, say you, I would be well! and oh, that he would welcome such a sinner! Christ answers thee in express terms; "whosoever will, let him take and drink freely." Thou declarest thy willingness in so speaking; and he declares his willingness in so promising. Nay, thy looking afar off on him, is a fruit of his willingness; "ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and loved you first." If ye will not yet believe this, look upon his command; "this is his command, that ye believe on the Son," 1 John 3:23. What warrant have ye to do any duty he commands? And why do ye more question this? Is not this his command? And is it not more peremptory, because a new command, and his last command? And when withal he boasts us into his Son, that ye may have life, oh, who should have the face to question any more his willingness! Other grounds than these I know none; and I think if any come to Christ, or pretend to come, on other grounds, he

comes not right. If the most holy man comes not in among ungodly sinners; if he does not walk upon the grounds of his own extreme necessity, and Christ's sufficiency, he cannot come to Jesus Christ. There is a conceit among people, which, if it were not so common as it is, I would not mention it, it is so ridiculous;—how can I come to Christ so unclean and so guilty, nothing but condemnation in me? If I were such and such, I would come to him. Alas! there can nothing be imagined more absurd, or contrary even to sense and reason. If thou wert such and such, as thou fanciest a desire to be, thou wouldst not come to Christ; thou neededst him not. That which thou pretendest as a reason why thou shouldst not come, is the great reason pressed in the gospel why thou shouldst come. What madness is this? I am so unclean, I will not come to the fountain to wash;—wherefore was the fountain opened, but for sin and uncleanness? And the more uncleanness, the more need, and the more need the more reason to come. Necessity is a great errand, and our errand is a sufficient warrant. I am pursued by the law, I have condemnation within me, and nothing but condemnation. Well then, come to Christ Jesus, the city of refuge, where no condemnation is. Wherefore was this city appointed, but for this end? I beseech you every one who useth those debates, and taketh a kind of delight in them, know what they mean, how they wrong your own souls; how they dishonour Christ, and so God the Father; nay, how foolish and ridiculous they are,—that if it were not your perplexity indeed, they deserved no answer, but a rebuke or silence. I have seen people take delight in moving objections against the truth, yea, and study earnestly how to object against any answers given from the truth. Alas, thou meddlest to thine own hurt; thou art upon a way which shall never yield thee any comfort, but keep thy soul from establishment, as a wave tossed up and down! If ye believe not, but dispute, ye shall not be established.

But I would speak a word to those that have believed that have fled for refuge to Christ. Oh! it concerns you most of all men to study to know this condemnation that ye are delivered from, that ye may be thankful, and may keep close within this city. I say, there is no man within the world should have more thoughts, more deep and earnest meditations on the curse and wrath of God, than those who are delivered from them through Christ; and my reason is, that ye may know how great a salvation ye have received, how great a condemnation ye have escaped, and may henceforth walk as those who are bought with a price. Your creation makes you not your own, but his, because he gave that being. But your redemption should make you twice more his, and not your own, because, when that being was worse than if it had not been at all, he made it over again. So ye are twice his: first, he made you with a word, but now he hath bought you with a price, and that a dear price,—his blood. Again, the keeping this curse always in your view and sight and application of it unto your sins, will make much employment for Christ. O how will ye often flee into that city! I think they are the greatest enemies of Jesus Christ, and his grace, who would have a believer have no more use of the law. I know not who can use the law if he do it not. I know not who can apply it unto Christ, the end of it, but he. Certainly he hath not only use of the commands as a rule of obedience, but the curse also, not to make him fear again unto bondage; no, no, but to make him see always the more necessity of Jesus Christ, that he may take up house in him, and dwell in him.

III

Verse 1.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It is difficult to determine which of these is the greatest privilege of a Christian,—that he is delivered from condemnation, or that he is made to walk according to the Spirit, and made a new creature; whether we owe more to Christ for our justification, or sanctification: For he is made both to us: but it is more necessary to conjoin them together, than to compare them with each other. The one is not more necessary—to be delivered from wrath, than the other, to walk according to the Spirit. I think it were an argument of a soul escaped from condemnation, to have the great stream and current of its affections and endeavours towards sanctification, not that they may be accepted of God, but because they are accepted of God. It is not said, there is nothing condemnable in those that are in Christ, but there is no condemnation to them. There is indeed a body of death, and law of sin within them, a nature defiled with original pollution, and many streams flowing from it, which the sprinkling of the blood of Christ in justification, doth not take away. "If any man say there is no sin in him, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him." But here is the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ;—that removes the curse where the sin is,—that takes away the condemnation where all worthy of condemnation is And thus the soul's justification is parallel to Christ's condemnation. There was in him nothing condemnable, no sin, no guile in his mouth; yet there was condemnation to him, because he was in stead and place of sinners. "Our iniquities were laid on him," not in him; "he who knew no sin was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." So then, the soul that fleeth into Jesus Christ's righteousness, though it have in it all that deserveth condemnation, yet there is no condemnation to it, because his righteousness is laid upon it, and Christ hath taken away the curse. The innocent Son of God was condemned, therefore are guilty sinners absolved. The curse was applied unto him who had no sin, but only was made sin, or sin laid on him, and therefore the sentence of absolution from the curse is applied unto them who have

no righteousness, but are made the righteousness of God by free and gracious imputation. This I speak, because of many unsavoury and unsound expressions in this loose generation, that there is no sin in the justified, that justification removes it close, as if it had never been at all. I say, as the condemnation of Jesus Christ did not blot out his innocency and holiness within him, but only justice considered him in that account as a transgressor, who yet was the holy and spotless Lamb of God in himself, so likewise the justification of a sinner before God. doth not remove or blot out the very corruption and defilement of our natures, but only scrapes out our names out of the roll of his debtors, as having satisfied in our cautioner, and considers us as righteous on that account before God. And this likewise I speak for your use, that ye may loathe and abhor yourselves, as much in yourselves, who are made clean by the blood of Jesus Christ, as if ye were not washen. Nay, so much the more ye ought to remember your own sins, which he doth not remember as debt any more; and to be ashamed and confounded because they are pardoned. It is ordinary for souls to look on themselves with an eye of more complacency in themselves, when they apprehend that God looks favourably on them. I do not think that any soul can duly consider the gracious aspect of God in Jesus Christ to them, but they will the more loathe themselves. But I find it ordinary, that slight and inconsiderate thoughts of pardon beget jolly conceits in men's hearts of themselves. And this is even the sin of God's children; something is abated of our self-abhorring, when we have peace and favour spoken unto us. But I beseech all who believe there is no condemnation for them, to consider there are all things worthy of it in them, yea, nothing but what deserves it; and therefore let that aspect of God beget self-loathing and self-detestation in you. The more you apprehend he is pleased with you, be ye the more displeased with yourselves, because it is not yourselves he is pleased with, but his own well-beloved Son. The day of redemption is coming, when there shall be no

condemnation, and nothing condemnable either. In heaven you shall be so, but while ye are here, this is the most important duty ye are called to,—to loathe yourselves, because of all your abominations, and because he is pacified towards you, Ezek. 16 at the close, and chap. 36:31; and 20:43, 44. There is a new and strange mortification now pleaded for by many, whose highest advancement consisteth in not feeling, or knowing, or confessing sin, but in being dead to the sense and conviction of the same. Alas! whither are these reforming times gone? Is not this the spirit of Antichrist? I confess it is a mortification of godliness, a crucifying of repentance and holiness, a crucifying of the new man; but it is a quickening of the old man in the lusts thereof, a living to sin. This is a part of that new (but falsely so called) gospel that is preached by some; which, if an angel would bring from heaven, we ought not to believe it. "Other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid" already, upon which the prophets and apostles are builded,—even Christ Jesus. Lord, give the Spirit to understand these mysteries already revealed; but save us from these new discoveries and lights. That which we have received is able to make us perfect to salvation.

Every one pretends a claim and right to this privilege of Christians, to be pardoned and absolved from condemnation, who doth not put it out of question, though in the mean time "their iniquities testify against them;" and their transgressions say in the heart of a godly man, that "there is no fear of God before their eyes." Therefore the apostle describes the man that is in Jesus Christ, to be such an one, "that walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,"—not only to guard against the presumptuous fancy of those that live in their sins, that pretend to hope for heaven, but to stir up every justified soul to a new manner of conversation, since they are in Jesus Christ. We would speak a word of two things from this: First, That the Scripture gives marks and characters of justified and reconciled persons, that

they may be known by, both to themselves and others. Next, That the Christian escaped condemnation, hath a new manner of walking, and is a new creature in Christ.

It might seem a strange thing, that this first were questioned in this generation, (if any the most clear and important truth could pass without scanning); the very tenor of the Scripture holds out so much of it. I wonder that any man that reads this chapter, or the epistles of James and John, should have any more doubt of it. "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commands." Is not this a conclusion of our state and condition, from the conformity of our walking to the will of God? What divine truth can we be sure of, if this be uncertain? When the beloved disciple, who knew how to preach Christ, asserts it in express terms, 1 John 5:13, "These things I have written unto you that believe, that ye may know that you have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." This very thing was the great scope and purpose of that evangelic and divine epistle.

I find that Antinomians confound this question, that they may have the more advantage in their darkness. The question is not concerning the grounds of a man's believing in Christ, but concerning our assurance, or knowledge of our believing. There is a great mistake in Christians' practice, in confounding these two. It makes Christians very unreasonable in their doubtings and exercises; therefore let us have this before our eyes,—faith, in its first and pure acting, is rather an adherence and cleaving of a lost soul to Christ, than an evidence of its interest in him, or of his everlasting love. You know all, that it is one thing to know a thing, or love a thing, and another thing to reflect upon it, and know that I know and love it. John did write to believers, that they might know they did believe, and believe yet more. These things then, are both separable, and the one is posterior to the other,—"after ye believed ye were sealed." The persuasion of

God's love and our interest in Christ, is the Spirit's seal set upon the soul. There is a mutual sealing here. The soul, by believing and trusting in Jesus Christ, "sets to its seal that God is true," as John speaks, John 3:33. When God speaks in his law, the soul receives that testimony of his justice and holiness, subscribes to the equity and righteousness of the sentence, by condemning itself. And when Christ speaks in the gospel, the soul seals that doctrine of free salvation, by approving and consenting with all its heart to the offer, subscribes to the way of salvation in Christ, and truth of his promises. And this is the truth of God and Christ sealed by the soul's believing. Then the Spirit of Jesus Christ afterward, when he pleaseth, irradiates and shines upon the soul, and discovers those things that are freely given, and witnesseth to the conscience of the believer, that he is a Son of God. Thus the Spirit seals the believer, and gives his testimony to his truth.

Now if we speak of the ground of the first, viz. of believing in Christ to salvation, I know none, but that which is common to sinners, and holden out in the gospel generally to all,—our sin and misery, and absolute necessity, and Christ's invitation of all to come, and receive his full and perfect salvation. I think a man should seek nothing in himself, whereupon to build his coming to Christ. Though it be true, no man can come to a Saviour, till he be convinced of sin and misery, yet no man should seek convictions as a warrant to come to Christ for salvation. He that is in earnest about this question, "how shall I be saved?"—I think he should not spend the time in reflecting on, and examination of himself, till he find something promising in himself; but from discovered sin and misery, pass straightway over to the grace and mercy of Christ, without any intervening search of something in himself to warrant him to come. There should be nothing before the eye of the soul but sin and misery and absolute necessity, compared with superabounding grace and righteousness

in Christ; and thus it singly devolves itself over upon Christ, and receives him as offered freely, "without money and without price." I know it is not possible that a soul can receive Christ till there be some preparatory convincing work of the law, to discover sin and misery. But I hold, that to look to any such preparation, and fetch an encouragement or motive therefrom, to believe in Christ, is really to give him a price for his free waters and wine;—it is to mix in together Christ and the law, in the point of our acceptation. And for souls to go about to seek preparations,—for a time resolving not at all to consider the promise of the gospel, till they have found them, and satisfaction in them, is nothing else "but to go about to establish their own righteousness being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ." And therefore many do corrupt the simplicity of the gospel by rigid exactions of preparations, and measures of them, and by making them conditions or restrictions of gospel commands and promises: as in this, "Come ye that are wearied." And from thence they seem to exclude persons not so qualified, from having a warrant to believe. Alas! it is a great mistake of these and such words. Certainly these are not set down on purpose to exclude any who will come,—for, "whoever will, let them come and take freely;" but rather to encourage such wearied and broken souls as conceive themselves to be the only persons excluded, and to declare unto us in some measure, the nature of true faith, that a soul must be beaten out of itself, ere it can come to Christ. Therefore I conclude, that not only is it a ridiculous and foolish conceit of many Christians that use to object against believing,—if I were as such and such a person, if I did love God, if I had these fruits of the Spirit, if I walked according to the Spirit, then I might believe. Alas! how directly opposite is this to the terms of the gospel! I say, if thou placest satisfaction in these, and from that ground, comest to Jesus Christ, then thou dost not come really,—thou dost indeed establish thine own righteousness. Doth any saint, though ever so holy, consider himself under such

notions of grace, when he comes to be justified? No indeed; but as an ungodly man rather, he must deny all that, though he had it. And besides, it is most unreasonable and incongruous, to seek the fruits before the tree be planted; and to refuse to plant the tree, till you can behold the fruits of it. But also, it is contrary to the free and comfortable doctrine of the gospel, for a soul to seek the discovery of any thing in itself but sin, before it apply to Jesus Christ. I say, there must be some sense of sin, otherwise it hath not rightly discovered sin; but a soul should not be at the pains to discover that sense of sin, and find it out, so as to make it a motive of believing in Christ. He ought to go straight forward, and not return as he goes. He must indeed examine himself,—not to find himself a sensible humble sinner, that so he may have ground of believing; but that he may find himself a lost perishing sinner, void of all grace and goodness, that he may find the more necessity of Jesus Christ. And thus I think the many contentions about preparations, or conditions preparatory to believing, may be reconciled.

Now if the question be, as it is indeed about the grounds of our assurance, and knowledge of our faith, certainly it is clear as the noon day, that as the good tree is known by the fruits thereof, and the fire by the heat thereof, so the indwelling of faith in the heart is known by its purifying of the heart and working by love. It makes a man a new creature, so that he and others may see the difference. Neither is this any derogation to the free grace of Christ, or any establishing of our own righteousness, except men be so afraid to establish their own righteousness, that they will have no holiness at all, but abandon it quite, for fear of trusting in it, which is a remedy worse than the disease, because I make it not a ground of my acceptation before God, but only a naked evidence of my believing in Christ, and being accepted of God. It being known that these have a necessary connection together in the Scriptures, and it being also

known that the one is more obvious and easy to be discerned than the other. Sure I am, the Lamb's book of life is a great mystery, and unless this be granted, I see not but every man's regeneration and change shall be as dark and hidden, as the hidden and secret decrees of God's election; for the Spirit may immediately reveal both the one and the other. Is it any derogation to the grace of Christ, to know what is freely given us? Doth it not rather commend his grace, when a soul looks upon itself, beautified with his comeliness, and adorned with his graces, and loathes itself in itself, and ascribes all the honour and praise to him? Is it not more injury to the fountain and fulness of grace in Christ, not to see the streams of it at all nor to consider them, than to behold the streams of grace that flow out of this fountain, as coming out of it? I think Christians may be ready to idolize their graces, and make them mediators, when they are known; but is this a good remedy of that evil, to abandon all sight and knowledge of the things freely given of God? Shall we not speak of the freeness of grace, because men's corruptions turn grace into carnal liberty, and wantonness? If these graces be in us, sure I am, it is no virtue to be ignorant of them, but rather a weakness and darkness. It must then be the light and grace of God to know them, and from thence to conclude that assurance of faith, which is not a forced, ungrounded persuasion, and strong fancy, without any discovered reason of it. Sure I am, the apostle's counsel is, to make our election sure, by making our calling sure. How shall any venture to look into those secrets of the Lamb's book of life, and read their name there? Undoubtedly they belong not to us,—they are a light inaccessible, that will confound and darken us more. Therefore, whoever would know their election, according to the Scriptures, must read the transcript and copy of the book of life, which is written in the hearts and souls of the elect. The thoughts of God are written in his works upon the spirits of men. His election hath a seal upon it,—"The Lord knoweth who are his; and who can break up this seal?

Who hath understood the mind of the Lord?" None can, until the Lord write over his thoughts in some characters of his Spirit, and of the new creature, in some lineaments and draughts of his own image, that it may be known they are "the epistle of Christ, not written with ink and paper, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone but in fleshly tables of the heart," 2 Cor. 3:3. Christ writes his everlasting thoughts of love, and good-will to us in this epistle; and that we may not think this doth extol the creature, and abase Christ, it is added, ver 5—"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." The seeing of grace in ourselves doth not prejudice the grace of God, unless we see it independent of the fountain, and behold not the true rise of it, that we may have no matter to glory of. It is not a safe way of beholding the sun, to look straight on it. It is too dazzling to our weak eyes,—you shall not well take it up so. But the best way is to look on it in water; then we shall more steadfastly behold it. God's everlasting love, and the redemption of Jesus Christ, is too glorious an object to behold with the eyes of flesh. Such objects certainly must astonish and strike the spirits of men with their transcendent brightness. Therefore we must look on the beams of this sun, as they are reflected in our hearts; and so behold the conformity of our souls, wrought by his Spirit, unto his will; and then we shall know the thoughts of his soul to us. If men shall at the first flight climb so high, as to be persuaded of God's eternal love, and Christ's purchase for them in particular, they can do no more, but scorch their wings, and melt the wax off them, till they fall down from that heaven of their ungrounded persuasion, into a pit of desperation. The Scripture way is to go downward once, that ye may go up. First go down in yourselves, and make your calling sure, and then you may rise up to God, and make your election sure. You must come by this circle; there is no passing by a direct line, and straight through, unless by the immediate revelation of the Spirit, which is not ordinary and constant, and so not to be pretended unto.

I confess, that sometimes the Spirit may intimate to the soul God's thoughts towards it, and its own state and condition, by an immediate overpowering testimony, that puts to silence all doubts and objections, that needs no other work or mark to evidence the sincerity and reality of it. That light of the Spirit shall be seen in its own light, and needs not that any witness of it. The Spirit of God sometimes may speak to a soul,—“Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee.” This may break into the soul as a beam darted from heaven, without reference to any work of the Spirit upon the heart, or word of Scripture, as a means or mean to apply it. But this is more extraordinary. The ordinary testimony of the Spirit is certainly conjoined with the testimony of our own consciences, Rom. 8:16, —“And our consciences bear witness of the work of the Spirit in us,” which the Spirit discovers to be according to the word. The Spirit makes known to us things that are freely given; but, “by comparing things spiritual with spiritual,” 1 Cor. 2:10, 13. The fruit and special work of the Holy Ghost in us, is the medium, and the Spirit's light irradiates and shines upon it, and makes the heart to see them clearly. For, though we be the children of light, yet our light hath so much darkness, as there must be a supervenient and accessory light of the Spirit, to discover that light unto us. Now what is all this to us? I fear that there be many ungrounded persuasions among us,—that many build on a sandy foundation, even a strong opinion that it is well with them, without any examination of their souls and conversations according to the word; and this certainly, when the tempest blows, cannot stand. Some teach, that no man should question whether he believe or not, but presently believe. I think none can believe too suddenly; it is always in season, *nunquam sera est fides nec pœnitentia*,—it is never late in respect of the promise; and it is never too early in respect of a man's case. But I cannot think any man can believe, till the Spirit have convinced him of his unbelief; and therefore I would think the most part of men nearer

faith in Jesus Christ, if they knew they wanted faith. Nay, it is a part of faith, and believing God in his word, and setting to our seal that God is true, for a man to take with his unbelief, and his natural inability, yea, averseness to it. I would think that those who could not believe in Christ, because they sought honour one of another, and went about to kill him, they had done well to have taken with that challenge of Christ's; and if men ought to take with their sin, they ought to search and try their sin, that they may find it out, to take with it. I wonder, since Antinomians make unbelief the only sin in the world, that they cannot endure the discovery and confession of it. It seems they do not think it so heinous a sin. I confess, no man should of purpose abstain from believing in Christ, till he find out, whether he hath believed or not; but whatever hath been, he is bound presently to act faith in Jesus Christ; to flee unto him, as a lost sinner, to a saving Mediator. But that every man is bound to persuade himself at the first, that God hath loved him, and Christ redeemed him, is the hope of the hypocrite,—like a spider's web, which, when leaned to, shall not stand. That man's expectation shall perish; he hath kindled sparks of his own,—a wild-fire, and walketh not in the true light of the word, and so must lie down in sorrow. Many of you deceive yourselves, and none can persuade you that ye do deceive yourselves, such is the strength of that delusion and dream. It is the great part of the heart's deceitfulness, to flatter itself in its own eyes; to make a man conceive well of himself and his heart. I beseech you, do not venture your soul's salvation on such groundless opinions; never to question the matter, is to leave it always uncertain. If you would judge yourselves according to the Scriptures, many of you have the marks and characters of those who are kept without the city, and are to have their part in the lake of fire. Is there no condemnation for you, who have never condemned yourselves? Certainly the more you are averse to condemn yourselves, this sticks the closer to you. You are not all in Christ; "all

are not Israel who are of Israel." Many (nay the most part) are but said [i.e. nominal] Christians; have no real union with Christ, or principle of life from him. The love you carry to yourselves, makes you easily believe well of yourselves; know, that self-love can blind the eyes, and make you apprehend that God loves you also. Nay, every one readily fancies that to be, which he desires to be. I beseech you, consider if you have any ground for your hopes and confidences, but such as those that will not bear out always. It would be no advantage to you, to have your hope shaken, that instead of a vain presumption, you may have the anchor of hope, which shall be fixed within the vail. I think one thing keeps men far from the kingdom of God,—because they know not that they believe not in him. We had gained much ground on yon by the word, if we could persuade you, that ye believe not, and have not believed from the womb. We might then say to you, as Christ to his disciples, "ye believe in God, believe also in me." Ye have given credit to God the judge and lawgiver, pronouncing a curse on you, and a sentence that ye have hearts desperately wicked,—now, believe also in me, the Redeemer. Ye have believed God in the law, in as far as ye have judged yourselves under sin and wrath; now, believe me in the gospel, that brings a ransom from wrath, and a remedy for sin. It is this very unbelief, that is the original of the world's perishing,—unbelief of the law. Ye do not consider ye are under the condemnation of it. Ye do not believe that ye have not yet fled to Jesus Christ to escape; and these two keep souls in a deep sleep, till judgment awake them.

But unto every one of you, I would give this direction: Let not examination of what you are, hinder you from that which is your chief duty, and his chief commandment,—to believe in him. I know many Christians are puzzled in the matter of their interest, and always wavering, because they are more taken up with that which is but a matter of comfort and joy, than that which is his greatest

honour and glory. I say, to consider the precious promises; to believe the excellency and virtue of Jesus Christ, and love him in your souls, and delight in him, is the weightiest matter of the gospel. To go out of yourselves daily into his fulness, to endeavour new discoveries of your own naughtiness, and his grace, this is the new and great commandment of the gospel. The obedience of it is the most essential part of a Christian walk. Now, again, to know that ye do believe, and to discern your interest in Christ, this is but a matter of comfort and of the second concernment. Therefore, I say, whenever ye cannot be clear in this, ye should be always exercised in the first. For it is that we are first called to; and if souls were more exercised that way, in the consideration and belief of the very general truths and promises of the gospel, I doubt not, but the light of these would clear up their particular interest in due time. "These things ye ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone." It is still safest to wave such a question of interest, when it is plunging, because it puts you off your special duty, and it is Satan's intent in it. It were better if ye do question, presently to believe and abide in him, till it were put out of question.

IV

Verse 1.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Christ is made to us of God, both righteousness and sanctification; and therefore, those who are in Christ, do not only escape condemnation, but they walk according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh. These two are the sum of the gospel. There is not a greater argument to holy walking than this,—there is no condemnation for you, neither is there a greater evidence of a soul

escaped condemnation, than walking according to the Spirit. We have spoken something in general of the evidence that may be had of a man's state, from his walking, and the Spirit's working in him; we would now speak of the conjunction of these two, and the influence that that privilege hath on this duty, and something of the nature of this description, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

In the creation of man, man was composed of soul and body. There was a right order, and subordination of these, suitable to their nature. In his soul he reached angels above,—in his body he was like the beasts below; and this part, his flesh, was a servant to the soul, that was acted and affected according to the desires and motives of the soul. Now sin entering, as it hath defaced all the beauty of the creation, as it hath misplaced man, and driven him out from that due line of subordination to God his Maker, for he would have been equal to God, so it hath perverted this beautiful order in men, and turned it just contrary,—hath made "the servant to ride on horses, and the prince to walk on foot." This is the just punishment of our first sin. Adam's soul was placed by creation under the sole command of its Creator, above all the creatures, and his own senses; but in one sin, he proudly exalted himself above God, and lamentably subjected himself below his senses, by hearkening to their persuasion. He saw it was good, and tasted it, and it was sweet, and so he ate of it. What a strange way was this! To be like God, he made himself unlike himself, liker the miserable beasts. Now, I say, this is the deserved punishment of man. His soul, that was a free prince, is made a bond-slave to the lust of his flesh; flesh hath gotten the throne, and keeps it, and lords it over the whole man. Now therefore it is, that the whole man unregenerate, is called flesh, as if he had no immortal Spirit, John 3:6, "that which is born of flesh, is flesh;" and this chap. ver. 8, here—a description of natural men, "they that are in the flesh;" because flesh is the predominant part that hath captivated a

man's reason and will. Nay, not only the grosser corruptions in a man, that have their use and seat in his flesh and body, are under that name;—but take the whole nature of man, that which is most excellent in him, his soul and spirit, his light and understanding, the most refined principles of his conversation,—all these are now but flesh. Nay, not only such natural gifts and illuminations, but even the light of the gospel, and law of God, that someway enters his soul, changeth the nature and name,—it is all but darkness and flesh in him, because the flesh hath a dominion over all that. The clouds and vapours that arise from the flesh, bemist and obscure all these; the corruptions of the soul are most strengthened in this sort, and most vented here. Sin is become connatural to the flesh, and so a man, by the flesh, is ensnared and subjected to sin. Christ comprehends all our prerogatives and endowments under this, John 1:13, "born not of flesh and blood;" and Matt. 16:17, "flesh and blood hath not revealed these things to thee." Even all the outwards of religion, and all the common privileges of Christians may be called so. What hath Abraham found according to the flesh? Rom. 4:1, Phil. 3:3;—which imports so much, that all those outward privileges, many illuminations, and reformations, may so far consist with the corruption of man's nature, may unite so with that, as to have one name with it. It is not all able to conquer our flesh, but our flesh rather subdues all that, and makes it serve itself, till a stronger than it come, even the Spirit, to subdue it, and cast it out of the house. Thus the image of God in man is defaced; nay, the very image and nature of man, as man, spoiled. The first creation,—sin hath marred and disordered it. Now, when this second creation, or regeneration comes, the creature is made new, and formed again by the powerful Spirit of Jesus Christ,—this change is made. Flesh is put out of the throne, as an usurper; the spirit and soul of a man is put in a throne above it, but is placed according to its due order, under a holy and spiritual law of God. And thus Jesus Christ is the repairer of the

breaches, and restorer of the ancient paths and old wastes, to dwell in. Now, the soul hath a new rule established to act according to, and new principles to act from. He whose course of walking was after the corrupt dictates and commands of his fleshly affections, and was of no higher strain, than his own sparks of nature, and acquired light would lead him to, now he hath a new rule established,—the Spirit speaking in the word to him, and pointing out the way to him. And there is a new principle, that Spirit leading him in all truth, and quickening him to walk in it. Now this is the soul's perfect liberty, to be from under the dominion of sin and lusts; and thus the Son makes free indeed by the free Spirit. The Son was made a servant, that we might be made free, "no more servants of sin in the lusts thereof:" and the Spirit of the Lord, where he comes, there is liberty; there the spirit and reasonable soul of a man is elevated into its first native dignity; there the base flesh is dethroned, and made to serve the spirit and soul in a man. Christ is indeed the greatest friend of men, as they are men. Sin made us beasts, Christ makes us men. Unbelievers are unreasonable men, *αλογοι*, brutish, yea, in a manner, beasts;—this is an ordinary compellation in Scripture. Faith makes a man reasonable,—it gives the saving and sanctified use of reason. It is a shame for any man to be a slave to his lusts and passions. It is the character of a beast upon him. He that is led by senses and affections, is degenerated from human nature; and yet such are all out of Christ. Sin reigns in them, and flesh reigns, and the principles of light and reason within are captivated, incarcerated within a corner of their minds. We see the generally received truths among men, that God is, that he is holy, and just, and good; that heaven and hell is. These are altogether ineffectual, and have no influence on men's conversations, no more than if they were not known, even because the truth is detained in unrighteousness. The corruptions of men's flesh are so rank, that they overgrow all this seed of truth, and choke it, as the thorns did the seed, Matt. 13:7.

Now, for you, who are called of Jesus Christ, O know what ye are called unto! It is a liberty indeed, a privilege indeed. Ye are no more debtors to the flesh;—Christ hath loosed that obligation of servitude to it. O let it be a shame unto you, who are Christians, to walk so any more, to be entangled any more in that yoke of bondage! "He that ruleth his spirit, is greater than the mighty, than he that taketh a city." Thus we are called to be more than conquerors. Others, when they conquer the world, are slaves to their own lusts; but let it be far from you to be so. Ye ought to conquer yourselves, which is more than to conquer the world. It is not only unbeseeming a Christian, to be led with passions and lusts, but it is below a man, if men were not now through sin below beasts. I beseech you, aspire unto, and hold fast the liberty Christ hath obtained for you. Be not fashioned any more according to former lusts. Know, ye are men,—that ye have reasonable and immortal spirits in you. Why will ye then walk as beasts? Understand, O brutish! and "ye fools, when will ye be wise?" But I say more, know, ye are Christians, and this is more than to be a man,—it is to be a divine man, one partaker of the divine nature, and who is to walk accordingly. Christians are called to a new manner of walking, and this walking is a fruit that comes out of the root of faith, whereby they are implanted in Christ. You see these agree well together, "those who are in Christ, walk not after the flesh," &c. Walking after the flesh is the common walk of the world, who are without God and without Christ; but Christ gives no latitude to such a walk. This is a new nature to be in Christ, and therefore, it must have new operations,—to walk after the Spirit. While we look upon the conversations of the most part of men, they may be a commentary to expound this part of the words, what it is to walk after the flesh. "The works of the flesh," saith the apostle, Gal. 5:19, "are manifest;"—and indeed they are manifest, because written in great letters on the outside of many in the visible church, that who runs may read them. Do but read that catalogue in Paul, and then

come and see them in congregations. It is not so doubtful and subtile a matter, to know that many are yet without the verge of Christ Jesus, without the city of refuge. You may see their mark on their brow. Is not drunkenness, which is so frequent, a palpable evidence of this:—your envyings, revilings, wrath, strife, seditions, fornications, and such like? O do not deceive yourselves! There is no room in Jesus Christ for such impurities and impieties. There is no toleration of sin within this city and kingdom. Sinners are indeed pardoned, yea, received and accepted; drunkards, unclean persons, &c., are not excluded from entering here,—but they must renounce these lusts, if they would stay here. Christ will not keep both,—he must either cast out the sin, or the sinner with it, if he will not part with it. I beseech you, know what ye walk after; the flesh is your leader, and whither will it lead you?—O! 'tis sad to think on it,—to perdition; ver. 8, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." Ye think flesh your great friend, ye do all ye can to satisfy and please it; and, O how pleasant is the satisfaction of your flesh to you! Ye think it liberty to follow it, and count it bonds and cords to be restrained. But, oh! know and consider, that flesh will lead you by the kingdom; that guide of your way, to which ye committed yourself, will lead you by heaven, Gal. 5:21. It is a blind guide; corruption and humour, and will have no eyes; no discerning of that pit of eternal misery. They choose the way that is best pathed and trodden,—that is easiest, and most walk into; and this certainly will lead you straight into this pit of darkness. Be called off this way, from following your blind lusts, and rather suffer them to be crucified. Be avenged on them for your two eyes that they have put out, and their treacherous dealing to you, in leading yon the high way to destruction. Come in to Jesus Christ, and ye shall get a new guide of the way,—"the Spirit that shall lead you in all truth," unto the blessed and eternal life. Christ is the way ye must walk in, and the life that we must go into at the end of our way, and the truth according to which we must walk. Now he hath

given his Spirit, the Comforter, to be our leader in this way, according to this rule and pattern unto that life. In a word, the Spirit shall lead you the straight way unto Christ. You shall begin in him, and end in him. He shall lead you from grace to glory. The Spirit that came down from heaven, shall lead you back to heaven. All your walk is within the compass of Christ,—out of him is no way to heaven.

But we must not take this so grossly, as if no other thing were a walking after the flesh, but the gross abominations amongst men, though even these will scrape a great number from being in Christ Jesus; but it must be further enlarged, to the motions and affections of the unrenewed spirit, and the common principles according to which men walk. And therefore the apostle, Col. 3, Gal. 5., nameth many things among the works of the flesh, and members of the old man, which I doubt whether many will account so of;—some natural passions that we account nothing of, because common, as anger, wrath, covetousness. What man is there amongst us, in whom some of these mentioned stir not? Many of your hearts and eyes are given to covetousness; your souls bow downward as your bodies do, and many times before your bodies. Is not the heart of men upon this world, and cannot rise above to a treasure in heaven? And therefore your callings, otherwise lawful, and all your pains and endeavours in them, hath this seal of the flesh stamped on them, and pass no otherwise with God. We see how rank the corruptions of men are, anger domineering in them, and leading them often captive. And this is counted a light matter, but it is not so in Scripture. How often is it branded with folly by the wise man! And this folly is even the natural fleshly corruption that men are born with; and in how many doth it rise up to the elevation of malice and hatred of others? And then it carries the image of the devil, rather than of human infirmity. And if we suppose a man not much given to any of these, yet what a spirit of pride and self-love is in every man, even those that carry the lowest

sail, and the meanest port among men,—those that are affable and courteous, and those that seem most condescending to inferiors and equals. Yet, alas! this evil is more deeply engraven on the spirit. If a man could but watch over his heart, and observe all the secret reflections of it, all the comparisons it makes, all the desires of applause and favour among men, all the surmises and stirrings of spirit upon any affront, O how would they discover diabolic pride! This sin is the more natural and inbred, for that it is our mother-sin that brought us down from our excellency. This weed grows upon a glass window, and upon a dunghill. It lodges in palaces and cottages. Nay, it will spring and grow out of a pretended humility, and low carriage. In a word, the ambitious designs of men, the large appetite of earthly things, the over-weening conceit of ourselves, and love to ourselves, the stirring of our affections, without observing a rule upon unlawful objects, or in an unlawful manner,—all these are common to men, and men walk after them. Every man hath some predominant or idol, that takes him most up. Some are finer and subtiler than others, some their pleasures and gains without, others their own gifts and parts within; but both are alike odious before God, and both gross flesh and corruption before him.

There are two errors among men concerning this spiritual walking,—the one is the doctrine of some in these days, the other is the practical error of many of us. Many pretending to some near and high discoveries, as to Christ and the Spirit, have fallen upon the most refined and spiritualized flesh, instead of the Spirit indeed. They separate the Spirit from the Word, and reckon the word and law of God, which was a lamp to David's feet, among the fleshly rudiments of the world. But if they speak not "according to the law and testimony," saith Isaiah, "it is because there is no light in them." Thus their new light is but an old darkness, that could not endure even the darker light of the prophets. If they speak not according to

the word, it is because there is no spirit in them. Is it not the Spirit the Comforter, which Christ promised to send to the apostles, and all that should believe in his name through their word? For that Spirit was "a Spirit of truth, that should lead into all truth." And lest men should father their own fancies and imaginations on the Spirit of God, Christ adds, "he shall bring all things to your remembrance,"—those things that Christ hath spoken, and we have here written. The holy apostle to the Colossians, chap. 3 when he reproves the works of the flesh, and declares they had put them off, commends unto them, in opposition to these, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching one another in psalms and spiritual songs, with grace in your hearts to the Lord," ver. 16,—the Spirit here, not casting out the word, but bringing it in plentifully, and sweetly agreeing with it. The Spirit that Christ sent, did not put men above ordinances, but above corruptions, and the body of death in them. It is a poor and easy victory to subdue grace and ordinances,—every slave of the devil doth that. I fear, as men and angels fell from their own dignity, by aspiring higher, so those that will not be content with the estate of Christ and his apostles, but soar up in a higher strain of spirit, and trample on that ministration as fleshly and carnal,—I fear they fall from Jesus Christ, and come into greater condemnation. It is true indeed, 2 Cor. 3:6, "the letter killeth," that is, the covenant of works preacheth now nothing but condemnation to men, but the Spirit of the gospel giveth life; nay, even the gospel separated from the Spirit of life in Jesus, is but a savour of death to souls. Shall we therefore separate the Spirit from the gospel and word, because the word alone cannot quicken us? David knew how to reconcile this,—"quicken me, O Lord, according to thy word," Psal. 119:25.—"Thy Spirit is good, lead me to the land of uprightness, and quicken me," Psal. 143:10, 11. The word was his rule and the Spirit applied his soul to the rule. The word holds out the present pattern we should be conformed unto. Now if there be no more, a man may look all his days on it, and yet

not be changed; but the Spirit within, transforms and changes a man's soul to more and more conformity to that pattern, by beholding it. If a man shall shut his eyes on the pattern, he cannot know what he is, and ought to be. If he look only on the Spirit's work within, and make that his rule, he takes an imperfect rule, and an incomplete copy. And yet this is the highest attainment of these aspirers to new light. They have forsaken the word as their rule, and instead of it, have another law within them, as much as is already written on their hearts, which is in substance this, as they suppose,—I am bound to do no more than I have already power to do; I am not to endeavour more holiness than I have already. These men are indeed perfect here in their own apprehension, and do not know in part, and believe in part, and obey in part, because they are advanced the length of their own law and rule, their rule being of no perfection. Paul was not so, but forgetting what he had attained, he followed on to what was before him, and was still reaching forward. Let not us, my brethren, believe every spirit, and every doctrine that comes out under that name,—Christ hath forewarned us. Pray for more of that Spirit, which may quicken the word to us, and quicken us to obey the word. There must be a mutual enlivening. The word must be made the ministration of life, by the Spirit of Jesus, which can use it "as a sword, to divide the soul and spirit;" and we must be quickened to the obedience of the truth in the word. The word is the seed incorruptible; but it cannot beget us, or be a principle of new life within us, except a living spirit come along to our hearts. Know that the word is your pattern and rule; the Spirit your leader and helper, whose virtue and power must conform you to that rule, 1 Pet. 1:22. Peter joins these two,—the purification and cleansing of the soul, which Christ attributes to the word, "ye are clean through the word which I have spoken," John 15:3. Peter attributes it to the Spirit working according to the pattern of truth. It is true, the Spirit of God needs no pattern to look to; nay, but we must have it, and eye it, else

we know not the Spirit of truth from a lie and delusion. We cannot try the spirits but by this rule; and it is by making us steadfastly look on this glorious pattern in the word, and the example of Christ Jesus' life, that we are conformed unto Christ, as by the Spirit of the Lord, 2 Cor. 3:13. Certainly that must be fleshly walking, which is rather conformed unto the imaginations of a man's own heart, than the blessed will of God revealed in his word. Can such walking please God, when a man will not so much as hearken to what is God's will and pleasure? As other heresies, so especially this, is a work of the flesh.

Now there is another principle amongst many of us. We account it spiritual walking, to be separated from the gross pollutions of the world, to have a carriage blameless before men. This is the notion that the multitude fancy of it. Be not deceived,—you may pass the censure of all men, and be unreprouable among them, and yet be but walkers after the flesh. It is not what you are before the world can prove you spiritual men, though it may prove many of you carnal. Your outside may demonstrate of many of you, that ye walk after the flesh; and if ye will not believe it, I ask you if ye think drunkenness a walking in the Spirit? Do ye think ye are following the Spirit of God, in uncleanness? Is it not that Holy Spirit that purgeth from all filthiness? Look but what your walk is, ye that are not so much as conformed to the letter of the word in any thing; who care not to read the Scriptures, and meditate on them. Is this walking after the Spirit of truth? If drunkenness, railing, contention, wrath, envy, covetousness, and such like, be the Spirit's way, then I confess, many of you walk after the Spirit; but if these be the manifest works of the flesh, and manifestly your way and work, then why dream ye that ye are Christians?

But I suppose, that ye could be charged with none of these outward things; that you had a form of religion and godliness, yet I say, all that is visible before men, cannot prove you to be spiritual walkers. Remember it is a Spirit ye must walk after; now, what shall be the chief agent here? Sure, not the body,—what fellowship can your body have with him that is a Spirit? The body indeed may worship that eternal Spirit, being acted by the Spirit, but I say, that alone can never prove you to be Christians. We must then lay aside a number of professors, who have no other ground of confidence but such things as may be seen of men; and if they would enter their hearts, how many vain thoughts lodge there! How little of God is there! God is not almost in all our thoughts; we give a morning and evening salutation, but there is no more of God all the day throughout. And is this walking after the Spirit, which imports a constancy? And what part can be spared most, but the spirit of a man? The body is distracted with other necessary things, but we might always spare our souls to God. Now, thus should a man obey that command,—"pray always." It is impossible that he should do nothing else but pray in an express formal way; but the soul's walking with God, between times of prayer, should compensate that. And thus prayer is continued, though not in itself, yet in meditation on God, which hath in it the seed of all worship, and is virtually prayer and thanksgiving, and all duties.

Let us then consider. If our bodies be not more exercised in religion than our souls, yea, if they be not the chief agents, how many impertinencies, and roveries, and wanderings, are throughout the day? The most part of our conversation, if it be not profane, yet it is vain, that is, unprofitable in the world. It neither advantageth us spiritually, nor glorifies God. It is almost to no purpose; and this is enough to make it all flesh. And for our thoughts, how do they go unlimited and unrestrained?—like a wild ass, traversing her ways,

and gadding about, fixed on nothing,—at least not on God; nay, fixed on any thing but God. If it be spiritual service, should it not carry the seal of our spirit and affection on it? We are as so many shadows walking, as pictures and statues of Christians, without the soul and life, which consists in the temper and disposition of the spirit and soul towards God.

V

Verse 1.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It is no wonder that we cannot speak any thing to purpose of this subject, and that you do not hear with fruit, because it is indeed a mystery to our judgments, and a great stranger to our practice. There is so little of the Spirit, both in teachers and those that come to be taught, that we can but speak of it as an unknown thing, and cannot make you to conceive it, in the living notion of it as it is. Only we may say in general,—it is certainly a divine thing, and another thing than our common or religious walk is. It is little experience, so we can know the less of it; but this much we should know,—it is another thing than we have attained. It is above us, and yet such a thing as we are called to aspire unto. How should it stir up in our spirits a holy fire of ambition to be at such a thing, when we hear it is a thing attainable; nay, when Christ calls us unto himself, that we may thus walk with him! I would have Christians men of great and big projects and resolutions; of high and unlimited desires, not satisfied with their attainments, but still aspiring unto more of God, more conformity to his will, more walking after the Spirit, more separation from the course of the world. And this is indeed to be of a divine Spirit. The divine nature is here, as it were, in a state of violence, out

of its own element. Now, it is known by this, if it be still moving upwards, taking no rest in this place, and these measures and degrees, but upon a continual motion towards the proper centre of it,—God, his holiness, and Spirit.

We desire to speak a word of these three. First, The nature of the spiritual walking. Next, Its connection and union with that blessed state of non-condemnation. And then of the order of this, how it flows from a man's being implanted in Christ Jesus;—which three are considerable in the words.

This spiritual walking is according to a spiritual rule, from spiritual principles, for spiritual ends. These three being established aright, the walk is even the motion of a Christian within the compass of these. It is according to the word, as the holy rule; it is from the faith and love of Jesus Christ, as the predominant principles. Nay, from the Spirit of Jesus, living in the heart by faith, and dwelling in it by love, as the first wheel of this motion, the *primum mobile*. And as it begins in the spirit, so it ends there, in the glory of Jesus Christ, and our heavenly Father. Consider this then,—it is not a lawless walking and irregular walk, it is according to the rule, and the rule is perfect, and it is a motion to perfection, not a rest in what is now attained to. The course of this world is the way and rule of the children of disobedience, Eph. 2:2. There is a spirit indeed that works in them, and a rule it works by. The spirit is that evil spirit, contrary to the Holy Spirit of God; and you may know what spirit it is that works, by the way it leads men unto—a broad way, pathed and trodden in by many travellers. It is the king's high street, the common way that most part walk into, according as their neighbours do, as the most do. But that king is the prince of this world, Satan, who blinds the eyes of many, that they may not see that pit of misery before them, which their way leads them to. A Christian must have a kind of

singularity, not in opinion, but in practice rather, to be more holy, and walk more abstracted from the dregs of the world's pollution. This were a divine singularity. Indeed men may suspect themselves, that separate from the godly in opinion. They have reason to be more jealous of themselves, when they offend against the generation of the just. But if this were the intention and design of men, to be very unlike the multitude of men, nay, to be very unlike the multitude of professors, in the affection and practice of holiness, humility, and spiritual walking, I think this were an allowed way, though a singular way. Men may aspire to as great a difference as may be, from the conversations and practice of others, if there be a tending to more conformity to the word, the rule of all practice. "The law is spiritual and holy," saith Paul, "but I am carnal." This, therefore, were spiritual walking,—to set that excellent spiritual rule before our eyes, that we who are carnal, may be transformed and changed into more likeness to that holy and spiritual law. If a man had not an imperfect rule of his own fancy and imagination before his eyes, he could not be satisfied with his attainments, but, with Paul, would forget them,—in a manner, not know them, but reach forward still to what is before. Because so much length would be before us, as would swallow up all our progress,—this would keep the motion on foot and make it constant. A man should never say, "Master, let us make tabernacles, it is good to be here." No, indeed, the dwelling-place and resting would be seen to be above. As long as a man had so much of his journey to accomplish, he would not sit down in his advancement; he would not compare with others, and exalt himself above others. Why? Because there is still a far greater distance between him and his rule, than between the slowest walker and him. This made Paul more sensible of a body of death, Rom. 7 than readily lower Christians are. Reflections on our attainments and comparisons with others, which are so often the work of our spirit, are a retrograde motion; it makes no way, but spends the time,—is a

returning as we go; whereas we ought to go straight forward. I beseech you, Christians, consider what you are doing, if you would prove yourselves so indeed. I know not how you can evidence it better, than by honouring and esteeming his word and commandments,—exceeding large and precious; no end of their perfection. The word is much undervalued in the opinions of many, but it is as little cared for in the practice of most. There is certainly little of God there, where this is not magnified and honoured. There must be darkness in that way, where this candle, which was a lamp to David's feet, shines not. Some promise to us liberty, but they themselves are the servants of corruption; it is no liberty to be above all law and rule. It was innocent Adam's liberty to be conformed to a holy and just command; nay, this was his beauty. The Spirit indeed gives liberty where he is, but this liberty is from our sins and corruptions, not to them. It looses the chains of a man's own corrupt lusts off him, to walk at freedom in the way of his commandments. The Spirit enlargeth the prisoner's heart, and then he runs, but not at random, but "the way of his commands," Psalm 119:32. It was our bondage to be as wild asses, traversing our ways,—to be gadding abroad, to change our way. Now, here is the Spirit's liberty to bring us into the way, and that way is one. Let us then learn this one principle,—the word must be the rule of your walking, both common and religious. Alas! it is not spiritual walking, to confine religion to some solemn duties. Remember, it is a walk, a continued thing, without interruption; therefore your whole conversation ought to be as so many steps progressive to heaven. Your motion should not be to begin only when you come to pray, or read, or hear, as many men do. They are in a quite different way and element when they step out of their civil callings into religious ordinances. But Christians, your motion should be continued in your eating and drinking, and sleeping, and acting in your callings, that when you come to pray or read, you may be but stepping forward in the way, out of one darker,

obscurer path, into a more beaten way. Remember, this word can make us perfect to salvation. It is a principle in the hearts of folks, which is vented now by many, that the word doth not reach their particular carriages and conversations in civil matters. These are apprehended to be without the sphere and compass of the word; while it is commonly cast up to ministers—meddle with the word and spiritual things, and not with our matters. Truly I think, if we separate these from the word, we may quickly separate all religion from such actions; and if such actings and businesses be without the court of the word, they are also without the court of conscience; conscience, religion, and the word being commensurable. Therefore I beseech every one of you, take the word for the ruling of your callings and conversations among men. Extend it to all your actions, that in all these you may act as Christians as well as men. It is certainly the licentiousness of the spirits of men, that cannot endure the application of the word unto their particular actions and conversations.

Now this spiritual walk proceeds from spiritual principles. It is certain, the Spirit of Jesus Christ is he "in whom we live, and move, and have our being" spiritually. Without him we can do nothing. And therefore Christians ought to walk with such a subordination to, and dependence on him, as if they were mere instruments, and patients under his hand. Though I think, in regard of endeavoured activity, they should bestir themselves, and give all diligence, as if they acted independently of the Spirit; yet in regard of denial of himself, and dependence on the Spirit, each one ought to act as if he did not act at all, but the Spirit only acted in him. This is the divinity of Paul,—"I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but grace in me. I live, yet not I, but Christ in me." O how difficult a thing is it to reconcile these two in the practice of Christians, which yet cannot really be, except they be together! It is certainly one of the great

mysteries of Christianity, to draw our strength and activity from another, to look upon ourselves and our actings, as they can do nothing,—as empty vines; and that notwithstanding of all infused and acquired principles. Whatever we ought to do in judging and discerning of our condition, yet sure I am, Christians, in the exercise and practice of godliness, should look upon themselves void of any principle in themselves either to do or think. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves. The proficient and growing Christian should look no more on his own inclinations and habits, than if he had none. He should consider himself an ungodly man, that no fruit can grow upon, one that cannot pray, as he is in himself. But, alas! we come to duties in the confidence of qualifications for duties, act more confidently in them because accustomed to them, and so make grace and religion a kind of art and discipline, that use and experience make expert unto. Learn now this one thing, which would be instead of many rules and doctrines to us,—to shut out of your eyes the consideration of what you are by gifts, or grace, or experience. Do not consider that, but rather fix your eyes on the grace of Jesus Christ, and upon the power and virtue of the Holy Spirit, which is given by promise; that when the way is all the easiest to you, both by delight and custom, yet you may find it to your natural principles as insuperable as at the beginning; and may still cry "Draw me, and I will run after thee; lead me, and I will walk with thee." Do not measure the call into duties, by the strength thou findest in thyself, but look unto him who strengtheneth us with all might. Now, the Spirit worketh in us by subordinate spiritual principles, as believing in Christ, and loving of him, as our Lord and Saviour; and these two acts drive on a soul sweetly in the way of obedience. Fear, where not mixed in its actings with faith and love, is a spirit of bondage; but the Christian ought to walk according to the spirit of adoption, which cries, "Abba, Father." Yet how many Christians are rather in a servile and slavish manner driven on by terrors and chastisements to their

duty, than by love! There is a piece of liberty in Christian walking, when there is not a restraint upon the spirit, by this slavish fear. This, I say, is not befitting those that are in Christ Jesus. You ought to have the Spirit of your Father for your leader and guide. O how sweet, and how certain and necessary also, would this walking be! The love of Christ would be an inward principle of motion, and would make our spiritual actings as easy and pleasant as natural motions are. Fear is but a violent principle, that is like the impulse of a stone thrown upward; as long as that external impression remains, it moves, but still slower and slower, and at length vanisheth. But if you believed in him, and your hearts were engaged to love him, O how would it be a pleasant and native thing to walk in his way, as a stone goeth downward! Consider your principles, that act you to matters and duties of religion. Many men there be, in whom there appears no difference of their work to beholders; but O how wide a difference doth God discern in them! Engines and artifice may make dead and lifeless things move and walk as orderly as things that have life. But the principle of this motion makes a huge difference;—the one is moved from without, the other from itself. The most part of us act as irrational and brute beasts in religion; nay, we walk as inanimate and senseless creatures. It is some one or other consideration without us moves us,—custom, censure, education, and such like. Ah! these are the principles of our religion. How many would have no religion, no form of it, if they were not among such company! And therefore we see many change it according to companies, as the fish doth its skin, according to the colour of that which is nearest it. How many would do many things they dare not for punishment and censure, and for that same dare not leave other things undone! In a word, the most part of us are such as would walk in no path of godliness, if it were not the custom of the time and fear of men that constrained us. But, my brethren, let it not be so among you, you who are in Jesus Christ. Let this be predominant in your

hearts to constrain you not to live to yourselves, but unto God, even this,—that you believe Christ hath died for sinners, that they might live from sin. And from this let your hearts be inflamed with his love, that it may carry you on in a sweet and blessed necessity to walk in all well-pleasing. Let the consideration of his love lay on a constraint, but a constraint of willingness, to live to him who hath thus loved you. But as the principle is spiritual, so must the end be; and I think these two complete the mystery of the practice of Christianity,—to act from another principle unto another end; even as these two make up the mystery of iniquity in our hearts,—to act for ourselves unto ourselves. Every man naturally makes a god of himself, is his own Alpha and Omega, the beginning of his actions, and the end of them, which is proper to God. As the fall hath cut off the subordination of the soul to God in its actions, that it cannot now derive all from that blessed Fountain of all-being and well-being, so is this channel of reference of all our actions to God stopped, that they do not tend unto him, as they are not derived from him; and thus they return from a man's self again. There is one point of self, and making it our aim and design, which possibly many do not take heed unto. It is ordinary for us to act and walk in Christian duties, for our salvation,—for obtaining of life eternal, as our chief and only end, which is but an inferior end; because we ought not to walk mainly for life, but to life. We should not walk after the command only for heaven, but in the way of it unto heaven. Our spiritual walking can never purchase us a right unto the least of his mercies. When we have done all, this should be our soul's language,—We are unprofitable servants, our righteousness extends not to thee. What gain is it to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Yet for the most part, we make our walking as a hire for the reward. The covenant of works,—doing for life, is some way naturally imprinted in our hearts, and we cannot do, but we would live in doing; we cannot walk unto all well-pleasing, but we would also walk unto pacifying of God. Self-righteousness is men's

great idol, which, when all other baser and grosser idols are down, they do all seek to establish. But, Christians, observe this evil in yourselves, and suffer this mystery of godliness to be wrought in you,—the abasing of yourselves, the denial of yourselves. I would have you, in respect of diligence and earnestness, doing, walking, and running, as if ye were to be saved by it only. But again, you must deny all that, and no more consider it, or lean upon it, than if ye ought to do nothing, or did nothing. But your ends should be more divine and high, as your nature is,—to glorify God in your mortal bodies, since ye are his, and bought with a price. O how ought ye not to be your own! The great purpose of your obedience should be, a declaration of your sense of his love, and of your obligation to him. Ye ought to walk in his way, because ye are escaped condemnation, and saved by him, and not that ye may be saved only. It is the glory of our heavenly Father, and the honour of the Redeemer, for Christians to walk, even as he walked, and follow his footsteps. It commends the grace of Jesus Christ exceedingly. Therefore this cannot but be the choice and delight of a believing soul,—to walk unto all well-pleasing, to have the glory of him as their great design to aim at; who for our salvation laid aside his glory, and embraced shame and reproach. We use to walk in obedience to God, that we may pacify God for our disobedience. But let a Christian abhor such a thought. Christ's blood must pacify, but the walking of his child pleaseth him in his well-beloved Son. When he is once pacified for sin, when he once accepts your persons, your performances are his delight. Now this should be the great scope of a soul, that all its powers should be fixed on,—to please him, and live to him.

Now these three being established, we must conceive that the chief agent and party in this walking must be spiritual; therefore men's bodies are not capable of this walk after the Spirit principally. Outward ordinances are but the shell wherein the kernel must be

inclosed. All our walking that is visible to men, is but like a painted or engraven image and statue, that hath no breath or life in it, unless the Spirit actuate and quicken the same. I say not only the Spirit of God, but the spirit and soul in man; for the Spirit's immediate and divine operations are upon such a suitable subject as the immortal soul. Verily, there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding. We must not abolish the outward form, because it hath some divinity in it, even the stamp of God's authority; and therefore, those who are swelled above ordinances, I fear they be monstrous Christians. A man is composed of a spirit and a body, acted and quickened by that spirit. Without either of these, he is not a complete man. So I say, he is not a Christian, that doth not worship God in the spirit and in truth both; and it is not religion that excludes either the inward soul-communion with God, or the outward ordinance and appointment of God. But, alas! this may be our complaint,—we come and worship God, and draw nigh with our bodies, but our hearts are far removed. Here is the death of many's worship,—the soul is separated from the body of it. These are but pictures and images of Christians. We have mouths and faces of saints; but O how little of divine affection or of soul-desires, breathes in us! We are deniers of the power of godliness, by resting in a form, and this is the great sin of this generation. The essentials, the vital spirits of Christianity are exhausted, and some dry bones, like an anatomy of a Christian, remain behind. I beseech you, gather your spirits to this spiritual walking: They only can follow the Spirit. Your bodies are earthly and lumpish, and the way is all upward to the holy hill. Look inwardly and measure yourselves so. Outward appearance is no just measure. Retire within your souls, and engage them in this exercise, and enter them to this motion, and your spirits will sweetly and surely act your bodies and externals, in all matters of godliness.

VI

Verse 1.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It is one of the greatest mysteries in a Christian's practice, to join these two together, which the gospel hath conjoined,—justification and sanctification, and to place them in their due order. There is much miscarrying in both these, if they are either separated or misplaced. But the truth is, they cannot really be, except they be jointly. Yet, often it falls out, that in men's apprehensions and endeavours, they are disjoined. This, then, were the argument of a living, and believing Christian,—to join the study of holiness, with the exercise of faith in Christ, for remission of sin and righteousness; and not only to join it, but also to derive it from that principle. There is both an union between these and an order established in Scripture. The most part of those that profess the gospel are of two sorts; they do either divide holiness from imputed righteousness, or Christ's righteousness from holiness. I do not say, that any man truly seeks to be covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and to have his sins freely pardoned, but he will also study to walk before God in all well pleasing. But the truth is, many do pretend and profess to seek salvation and forgiveness in Christ's blood, and have the mercy of God, and merits of Christ always in their mouth, who yet declare by their conversation, that they do not so much as desire or propose to seek after holiness. I do not speak of those who are Antinomians in profession, but of a great multitude in the visible church, who are really more Antinomians, to wit, in practice, than most part of professed Antinomians. You hear all of free grace, and free redemption in Jesus Christ, of tender and enduring mercies in God, and this you take for the whole gospel; and presently, upon the notion of mercy and grace, you conclude unto yourselves, not only

immunity and freedom from all the threatenings of the word, and from hell, but likewise ye proclaim secretly in your own hearts, a liberty to sin so much the more securely. The door of mercy cast open in the gospel, and the free access to Christ manifested therein, through the corruption that is within us, proves the very occasion of many's giving indulgence to their lusts—of delaying reformation, and turning to God. You all profess, that you seek to be justified and saved by Jesus Christ; yea, you persuade yourselves to be escaped condemnation by Christ. Now then, conjoin that profession and persuasion with your walk, and O how contrary you may find them to one another! Your faith is vain, "for ye are yet in your sins," Tit. 2:11, 12. The grace of God appearing to some men effectually, teacheth them "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly," &c. But if we may conjecture your teaching by your walking, it seems the notion of grace and the gospel that is formed in your minds, hath taught you another doctrine,—to avow ungodliness and follow worldly lusts. Is there so much as a shadow of this spiritual walking in many? I confess, it is natural for every man to seek his own righteousness, and it is the arm of God that must show men how to submit to Christ's imputed righteousness. Yet, the most part of men seem to be so far from seeking any righteousness, that they are rather seeking the fulfilling of their own carnal lusts, working wickedness with greediness, not caring how little they have to put confidence into. And yet, certain it is, that how much soever a man attains to of a form of religion or civil honesty, he is ready to put his trust in it, and to lean the weight of his soul upon it. But seeing this is natural to you all, to seek heaven by doing and working, I wonder that ye do no more. How do you satisfy your consciences in the expectation of heaven, who take so little pains in religion, and are so loose and profane in your conversation? I wonder, seeing ye have it naturally engraven in your hearts to establish your own

righteousness, that ye labour not to have more of it to fill your eye withal.

But again, on the other hand, there are some men, who have a form of religion, and labour to be of a blameless conversation among men, that possibly persuade themselves they are seeking holiness, and walking spiritually. But, alas! you may find it but a painted and seeming religion, that is an abomination in the sight of God; because it is to them, all the ground of their acceptation before God. If ever this question was moved in some of you, "What shall I do to be saved?" you have condescended on such a walk, such a profession for the answer of it. It is natural to all, even those who have least appearance of godliness, to seek heaven by doing God's will. Those that have no more to speak of than their baptism, or receiving the Lord's Supper, or attending well the solemn assemblies, will ground their hope of salvation on these things. How much more, will the civil and honest men, commonly so called, who pray and read, and profess godliness,—how much more, I say, will they establish that which they attain to, as the ground of their confidence before God! Now, this is a general, unknown ill that destroys the world, and yet few are convinced of it, how hard it is to be driven out of ourselves, and to seek life in another. O know, that it is in a manner the crucifying of a man's self, thus to deny himself,—to have a sort of righteousness, and not to trust in it. Who is he that cannot endure to look upon himself for moral vileness? Alas, men flatter themselves in their own eyes, and look with a more favourable eye on their own actions, than they ought. Who is he that abhors himself even for abominable works? But who shall be found to abhor himself for his most religious and best actions? Who casts these out of his sight as unclean and menstruous things? Therefore, I say, though thy righteousness were equal to, or exceeded any Pharisee's righteousness, thou canst not enter into heaven. The poor publican,

that was a vile and profane sinner, yet had a righteousness exceeding the Pharisee's. Though he had none of his own, yet he had a righteousness without blemish, of Christ's purchasing, having by faith fled to the mercy of God, in and through a Mediator. It is not more doing, more praying, more exact walking, that can make you more righteous in God's account, in order to absolution from law-condemnation, than the profanest and most wretched sinner. But the baser and viler thou be in thine own eyes, the more thou hide thy best doings from thine eyes, and look on thy uncleanness, and betakest thyself to Christ, his unspotted and perfect righteousness, the more honourable and precious thou art in his eyes. Therefore, God is said to dwell in the heart of the humble and contrite one, not for the worth of his humility and repentance; no, no, but for the pleasure he hath in the Well-beloved's righteousness. That is the beautiful garment, only in the eye of a humbled soul, that seeth nothing in itself desirable.

Therefore, I wish that this conjunction which is made in the gospel, were also engraven in your hearts, and on your practices, that is, that you would "seek after holiness, without which no man shall see God." Seek to perfect it in the fear of God, but not as though ye were to be thereby justified. Seek it with that diligence and earnest study, as if ye were to be saved by it, and yet seek it, so as to be denied to your diligence, or as if ye sought it not at all. How sweet a conjunction were this in the Christian's practice, to walk and run so after the prize, as if his walking did obtain it, and yet to look upon his walking, as if it were not at all. Your diligence and seriousness in godliness should be upon the growing hand, as if doing did save you; yet you ought to deny all that, and look to the righteousness of another, as if nothing were done at all by you. How doth Paul, Phil. 3:8, unite these in his practice, "I count all loss and dung to be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness," and yet I press forward, and follow

after perfection, as having attained nothing yet. One of these two is the original of many stumblings and wanderings in our Christian way. Either there is not a necessity and constraint laid upon the souls of many to walk in all well-pleasing, and to "perfect holiness in the fear of God,"—we look on it as a thing indifferent, that is to be determined according to the measure of our receivings from God, or we look on it as a thing not urging all, but belonging to ministers, or more eminent professors; and hence there ariseth much carnal liberty, in walking without the line of Christian liberty, because there is an indifference in the spirit that gives that latitude in walking; or else there is not that following of holiness in such a way, as can consist with the establishing of Christ's righteousness,—no denial of ourselves in our actions. We act as if we were sufficient of ourselves, and walk as if we were thereby justified, and commend ourselves to God in our own consciences, whenever we can have the testimony of our consciences for well-doing. And by this means the Lord is provoked. Because we do not honour the Son, the Father counts himself despised, and the Spirit is grieved and tempted to depart, and leave us to our own imaginations, till our idol which we established fall down, and our understanding return to us.

As it would be of great moment to the peace of Christians, and increase of holiness, to have that union of justification and sanctification stamped on their hearts, so especially to have the due and evangelic method and order of these impressed on their consciences, would conduce exceedingly, both to their quickening and comforting. As there is nothing, that either so deadens or darkens, and saddens the spirits of the godly, as darkness in this particular, the ignorance and mistake of the method and order of that well-ordered covenant must certainly be very prejudicial to the life and consolation tendered by the gospel. This spiritual walking flows from the believer's state of non-condemnation in Christ. He is

once in Jesus Christ, and then he walks after the Spirit of Christ. You may make engines to cause a dead statue walk, but it cannot walk of itself till it have a principle of life in it. Walking is one of the operations of life, that flows from some inward principle, and so this spiritual walk and motion of a Christian in his course, is the proper operation of the new nature that he is a partaker of in Christ Jesus. As, then, you know it is impossible that there can be true and unfeigned walking, where there is no life, no principle within, to put the creature to motion, though a man may by art and some external impulse so act a piece of timber or stone, as it may resemble to you a walking like to living creatures, so it is not possible that any of the sons of Adam, who are by nature dead in sins, can walk spiritually, before they be united to Jesus Christ, by believing in him for righteousness and salvation. There may be such a walking of carnal unregenerate men, as may deceive all the senses and judgments of beholders. Men may be acted from base external principles in matters of religion, so that a beholder shall perceive no difference between them and others in whom Christ lives and walks; but before God it is nothing else but an artificial walk, a painted and dead business, because "the Spirit that raised up Christ," is not stirring in them. They are not living members of that head that quickens all, have not been driven out of their own righteousness to Christ,—the city of refuge. Their principles are no higher than walking to obtain salvation, and acceptance of God in a legal way, walking to pacify him, walking to please men and their own consciences, walking for gain or credit, or advantage in the way, walking according to custom or education in the way. These are not living principles. But when once a soul hath embraced Christ Jesus within it, he becomes in a manner a soul to actuate and quicken that soul. He animates it, and moves it in God's ways, according to the covenant of grace,—“I will put my Spirit in you, and cause you walk in my ways.” There is first quickening, and then walking; “You who were dead in sins, hath he

quicken together with Christ," Eph. 2:1, 5; and then it follows in due order,— "I will cause you to walk in my ways," Ezek. 36:27. Christ comes into the heart to dwell, and then he walks in it; 2 Cor. 6:16. And what is that,—Christ to walk in believers? It is nothing else, but Christ by his Spirit making them to walk in his way. There is so little in us to principle a spiritual action, even when renewed and quickened, that we should look on ourselves not so much as workers with him, but as being acted by him. We should look on soul and body as pieces of organized clay that cannot move, but as they are moved by him as the soul and life of them; so that, according to the Scripture dialect, a Christian is nothing else, but Christ living and walking in such a person. This is it which Christ, when he is to go out of the world, instructs his disciples into, John 15:1. "He is the vine, and we the branches." The branch must first be united to the tree, and implanted into the tree, ere it bring forth fruit. Without the tree it withers. So must a soul be first ingraft in Jesus Christ, implanted in him by faith in his death and sufferings, before it can grow up into "the similitude of his resurrection, or walk in newness of life," as Paul speaks, Rom. 6:4, 5. "Without me ye can do nothing." Ye must first be one with him, by believing in him, and receiving him as a complete Saviour, and then the sap and virtue of the tree flows into the dead branch, and it shoots forth, and blossoms and bears.

Now, if this doctrine of Christ and his apostles were duly pondered and believed, O what a change would it make on the lives and spirits of Christians! Since this is the order established in the gospel, and an order suitable both to his grace and our necessity, (as all that is in it speaketh forth an excellent contriver)—when we go about to establish our souls in another method, how is it possible that we should not weary and vex our souls in vain? How can we choose but torment ourselves and intricate ourselves still more? Our method and way is just contrary. We perplex our souls how to find the fruits

of the Spirit of Christ, how to walk after the Spirit, without first closing entirely with Christ himself. We trouble ourselves to find the operations of a spiritual life, before we lay hold on Christ, who is the life of our souls. It is made an argument by many, to keep them from believing in Christ, because they do not find that spiritual life stirring in them. How cross is this to the declared mind of Christ in the gospel! It cannot choose but both darken the spirit more, and dry up the influences of the Spirit of God, because it keeps thee from the fountain of all consolation. You may disquiet your souls by this means, but you shall never make advantage this way. Without him "ye can do nothing:" and yet ye will not come to him, because ye have done nothing. It is strange how little reason is in it, if your eyes were opened. You refuse or delay to abide in the vine till you bring forth fruit, and fruit ye cannot bring forth till you be in the vine. You would walk, and you will not have the life from which you must walk. Paul lived indeed, but what a life! "The life that I live is by the faith of the Son of God." Faith in Christ transported him out of himself to Christ, or received Christ into the soul, and Christ in the soul was the life of his soul, Gal. 2:20. Your walking is as if a dead man would essay to go. "Will one expect figs of thorns, or grapes of thistles?" I beseech you, know what wrong ye do to yourselves, and to Christ. Ye wrong yourselves, because ye stand in the way of your own mercy, ye stand aback from your life,—him that is "the way, the truth, and the life." You would walk in the way, but no man can walk in this way, but by this way. Christ must quicken you to walk in himself. Ye must get life in him, and not bring it. You are in a vain expectation of fruits from yourselves,—they will never see the sun; and when you have wearied yourselves in such a vain pursuit, you must at length come and begin here. Ye wrong Christ's grace and mercy. This order is suited of purpose for our desperate condition, and yet ye presume to reject it, and seek another. You prescribe to your skilful and tender Physician, that which would undo you. I beseech you, know the original of your

miseries, doubts, barrenness, and darkness. Here it is,—you are still puzzling yourselves about grace and duties, how to fill your eyes with these, and ye neglect Christ as your righteousness, as one dead and risen again, and now sitting at God's right hand for us. You must first close with him, as ungodly men. Though you were godly, you must shut your eyes on any such thing, and lay living Jesus upon your dead and benumbed hearts. Answer all your challenges with his absolution, and stand before God, in his clothing. Put his garment immediately on your nakedness and vileness, and we may persuade you, it shall yield you abundant consolation and life. "Because he lives, ye shall live," and walk. If you were more frequent and serious in the consideration of his excellent majesty, of his beautiful and lovely qualifications, as the Mediator for sinners, and of the precious promises, which are all, "yea and amen," confirmed in him, and less in the vain and unprofitable debates of self-interest, and such like, I am persuaded ye would be more fruitful Christians. This is not as the business of a holiday, to be done at your first coming to Christ, and no more. No, it must run alongst all your life. The aged experienced Christian must come along as an ungodly sinner, to a blessed and living Saviour, and have no other ground of glory or confidence before God, but Christ Jesus crucified.

VII

Verse 2.—For the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

You know there are two principal things in the preceding verse,—the privilege of a Christian, and the property or character of a Christian. He is one that never enters into condemnation; "He that believeth

shall not perish," John 3:15. And then he is one, "that walks not after the flesh, though he be in the flesh," but in a more elevate way above men, after the guiding and leading of the holy Spirit of God. Now it may be objected in many consciences,—how can these things be? Have not all sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and so the whole world is become guilty before God? Is not every man lying under a sentence of death? "Cursed is he that abides not in all things," &c. How then can he escape condemnation? Again, you speak of walking after the Spirit, as proper to the Christian; but whose walk is not carnal? Who is it that doth not often step aside out of the way, and follow the conduct and counsel of flesh and blood? Is not sin dwelling here in our mortal bodies? Who can say, "my heart or way is clean?" Therefore both that privilege and this property of a Christian, seem to be but big words, no real thing. And indeed I confess the multitude of men hath no other opinion of them, but as fancied imaginary things; few believe the report of the gospel concerning the salvation of elect ones, and few understand what this spiritual walking is. Many conceive it is not a thing that belongs to men, who are led about with passions and affections, but rather to angels or spirits perfected.

However, we have in these words an answer to satisfy both objections. He grants something implicitly, and it is this: It is true indeed, Christians are under a twofold law, captives and bondmen to these. "A law of sin in their members, bringing them in subjection to the lusts of the flesh." Sin hath a powerful dominion and tyranny over every man by nature. It hath a sort of right and power over him. And likewise, every one was under a law of death, the law of God cursing him, and sentencing him to condemnation because of sin. These two were joint conquerors of all mankind. But, saith he, there is a delivery from this bondage. Freedom is obtained to believers by Jesus Christ, and so "there is no condemnation to them that are in

Christ," and so they walk not after the leading and direction of that law of sin within them, but after the guiding of our blessed Tutor,—the Spirit of God. If you ask how this comes to pass.—by what authority, or law, or power, is this releasement and freedom obtained? Here it is,—"by the law of the Spirit of life, which is in Christ." Christ is not an invader, or unjust conqueror, he hath fair law for what he doth, even against those laws which detain unbelievers in bondage. There is a higher and later law on his side, and he hath power and strength to accomplish his design. He opposes law unto law, and life unto death, and spirit unto flesh; a law of spirit unto a law of sin and flesh; a law of life unto a law of death;—in a word, the gospel, or covenant of grace, unto the law, or covenant of works. The powerful and living Spirit of grace that wrought mightily in him, is set fore-against the power of sin and Satan in us, and against us. The one gives him right and title to conquer, the other accomplisheth him for the work; and by these two, are believers in Jesus Christ made freemen, who were bondmen. That, then, which we would speak from these words, is the common lot of all men by nature, viz. to be under the power of sin, and sentence of death; the special exemption of believers in Christ, and immunity from this, or delivery from it; and then the true ground and cause of this delivery from that bondage;—which three are contained in the words. It is a purpose indeed of a high nature, and of high concernment to us all. Our life and death is wrapt up in this. You may hear many things more gladly, but if you knew it, none so profitable. Therefore let us gather our spirits to the consideration of these particulars.

As to the first, all men are under the bondage of a twofold law,—the law of sin within them, and the law of death without them. Man was created righteous; but, saith the wise man, "he found out many inventions." A sad invention indeed! He found out misery and

slavery to himself, who was made free and happy. His freedom and happiness was to be in subjection to his Maker, under the just and holy commands of his Lord, who had given him breath and being. It was no captivity or restraint, to be compassed about with the hedges of the Lord's holy law, no more than it is a restraint on a man's liberty, to have his way hedged in, where he may safely walk, that he may keep himself within it, from pits and snares on every hand. But, alas!—if we may say alas, when we have such a redemption in Jesus Christ,—Adam was not content with that happiness, but seeking after more liberty, he sold himself into the hands of strange lords,—first sin, and then death. "Other lords besides thee, O Lord, have had dominion over us," Isa. 26:13. This is too true in this sense; Adam seeking to be as the Lord himself, lost his own lordship and dominion over all the works of God's hands, and became a servant to the basest and most abominable of all, even that which is most hateful to the Lord,—to sin and death. And this is the condition we are now born into. Consider it, I pray you,—we are born captives and slaves, the most noble, the most ingenuous, and the most free of us all. Paul speaks of it as a privilege, to be born free; to be free in man's commonwealth. It is counted a dignity to be a free citizen or burgess of a town. Liberty is the great claim of people now-a-days; and indeed it is the great advantage of a people to enjoy that mother, and womb-privilege and right. But, alas! what is all this to be free born in a civil society? It is but the state of a man among men. It reaches no further than the outward man, his life or estate. But here is a matter of greater moment,—know you what state your souls are in? Your souls are incomparably more worth than your bodies, as much as eternity surpasseth this inch of time, or immortality exceeds mortality. Your souls are yourselves, indeed; your bodies are but your house or tabernacle you lodge into for a season. Now then, I beseech you, ask whether you be born free or not. If your souls be slaves, you are slaves indeed; for so the evangelist changeth these.

Matthew saith, in chap. 16:26, "what hath a man gained, if he lose his soul?" And Luke, chap. 9:25, saith, "what hath he gained, if he lose himself?" Therefore you are not free indeed, except your souls be free. What is it, I pray you, to enjoy freedom among men? I ask you, what are you before God, whether bond or free? This is the business indeed. The Pharisees pleaded a claim to the liberty and privilege of being Abraham's sons and children, and thought they might hence conclude they were God's children. But our Lord Jesus discovers this mistake, when he tells them of a freedom and liberty that he came to proclaim to men, to purchase to them, and bestow on them. They stumbled at this doctrine. What, say they, talkest thou to us of making us free, we were never in bondage, because we be Abraham's children? This is even the language of our hearts, when we tell you, that ye are born heirs of wrath, and slaves of sin and Satan. Here is the secret whispering of hearts;—we be Abraham's seed; we were never in bondage to any. We be baptized Christians; we have a church state,—have the privileges, and liberties, not only of subjects in the state, but of members in the church; why sayest thou, we are bondmen? I would wish ye were all free indeed, but that cannot be till you know your bondage. Consider then, I beseech you, that you may be free subjects in a state, and free members in a church, and yet in bondage, under the law of sin and death. This was the mistake; that was a ground of presumption in the Jews, and occasioned their stumbling at this stone of salvation laid in Sion. You think you have church privileges, and what needs more? Be not deceived,—you are servants of sin, and therefore not free. There are two sorts or rather two ranks of persons in God's house,—sons and slaves. The son abides in the house for ever, the slave but for a time. When the time expires, he must go out, or be cast out. The church is God's house, but many are in it, that will not dwell in it. Many have the outward liberties of this house, that have no interest in the special mercies and loving-kindness proper to children. The time will come, that the

most part of the visible church, who are baptized, and have eaten with him at his table, and had a kind of friendship to him here, shall be cast out as bondmen, and Isaac only shall be kept within, the child of the promise. The house that is here, hath some inward sanctuary, and some outer porches. Many have access to these, that never enter within the secret of the Lord, and so shall not dwell in the house above. It is not so much the business, who shall enter into the holy hill, but who shall stand and dwell in it. The day of judgment will be a great day of excommunication. O how many thousands will be then cut off from the church of the living God, and delivered over to Satan, because they were really under his power, while they were church-members and Abraham's sons! Let me tell you then, that all of us were once in this state of bondage which Christ speaks of,—“he that committeth sin is the servant of sin,” John 8:34; “and the servant abides not in the house for ever.” So that I am afraid, many of us who are in the visible church, and stand in this congregation, shall not have liberty to stand in the assembly of the first-born, when all the sons are gathered in one to the new Jerusalem. Sin hath a right over us, and it hath a power over us; and therefore it is called a law of sin. There is a kind of authority that it hath over us, by virtue of God's justice, and our own voluntary consent. The Lord in his righteousness hath given over all the posterity of Adam, for his sin, which he sinned, as a common person, representing us,—he hath given us all over to the power of a body of death within us. Since man did choose to depart from his Lord, he hath justly delivered him into the hands of a strange lord to have dominion over him. Transmitting of such an original pollution, to all men, is an act of glorious justice. As he in justice gives men over to the lusts of their own hearts now, for following of these lusts contrary to his will; so was it, at first, “by one man's disobedience many were made sinners,” and that, in God's holy righteousness, sin entered into the world, and had permission of God, to subdue and conquer the world to itself, because man would

not be subject to God. But as there is the justice of God in it, so there is a voluntary choice and election, which gives sin a power over us. We choose a strange lord, and he lords it over us. We say to our lusts, come ye and rule over us. We submit our reason, our conscience, and all, to the guidance and leading of our blind affections and passions. We choose our bondage for liberty. And thus sin hath a kind of law over us, by our own consent. It exerciseth a jurisdiction; and when once it is installed in power and clothed with it, it is not so easy again, to put it out of that throne. There is a conspiring, so to speak, of these two, to make out the jurisdiction and authority of sin over us. God gives us over to iniquity and unrighteousness, and we yield ourselves over to it. Rom. 6:16, 19, "we yield our members servants to iniquity." A little pleasure or commodity, is the bait that ensnares us to this. We give up ourselves, and join to our idols, and God ratifies it, in a manner, and passeth such a sentence—"Let them alone," he says, "go ye every one and serve your idols." Ezek. 23. Since ye would not serve me, be doing,—go serve your lusts, look if they be better masters than I; look what wages they will give you.

Now, let us again consider what power sin hath, being thus clothed with a sort of authority. O but it is mighty, and works mightily in men! It reigns in our mortal bodies, Rom. 6:12. Here is the throne of sin established, in the lusts and affections of the body, and from hence it emits laws and statutes, and sends out commands to the soul and whole man. Man chose at first to hearken to the counsel of his senses, that said, it was pleasant and good to eat of the forbidden fruit; but that counsel is now turned into a command. Sin hath gotten a sceptre there, to rule over the spirit which was born a free prince. Sin hath conquered all our strength, or we have given up unto it all our strength. Any truth that is in the conscience; any knowledge of God, or religion, all this is incarcerated, detained in prison of unrighteous affections. Sin hath many strongholds and bulwarks in

our flesh, and by these, commands the whole spirit and soul in man, and leads captive every thought to the obedience of the flesh. You know how strong it was in holy Paul, Rom. 7.; what a mighty battle and wrestling he had, and how near he was to fainting and giving over. How then must it have an absolute, and sovereign, full dominion over men in nature. There being no contrary principle within, by nature, to debate with it, it rules without much controlment. There may be many convictions of conscience, and sparkles of light against sin, but these are quickly extinguished and buried. Nay, all these principles of light and knowledge in the conscience, do oftentimes strengthen sin, as some things are confirmed, not weakened, by opposition. Unequal and faint opposition strengthens the adversary, as cold, compassing springs, makes them hotter. So it is here. Sin takes occasion, by the command, "to work all manner of concupiscence," Rom. 7:8. Without the law, sin is in a manner dead; but when any adversary appears, when our lusts and humours are crossed, then they unite their strength against any such opposition, and bring forth more sinful sin. The knowledge and conscience that many have, serve for nothing, but to make their sins greater; to exasperate and embitter their spirits and lusts against God. "Why tormentest thou me before the time?" It is a devilish disposition that is in us all;—we cannot endure the light, because our deeds are evil.

Let us but consider these particulars, and we shall know the power and dominion of sin. 1st, Consider the extent of its dominion, both in regard of all men, and all in everyman. I say, all men,—there is none of us exempted from it; the most noble, and the most base. Sin is the catholic king, the universal king, or rather Satan, who is the prince of this world, and he rules the world, by this law of sin, which is even the contradiction of the law of God. Who of you believes this, that Satan's kingdom is so spacious?—that it is even over the most part of

the visible church? This is the emperor of the world. The Turk vainly arrogates this title to himself, but the devil is truly so, and we have God's own testimony for it. All kings, all nobles, all princes, all people, rich and poor, high and low, are once subjects of this prince, ruled by this black law of sin. O know your condition, whose servants ye are! Think not within yourselves, "we have Abraham for our father,"—we are baptized Christians. No, know that all of us are once the children of Satan, and do his works, and fulfil his will. But moreover, all that is in us, is subject to this law of sin,—all the faculties of the soul. The understanding is under the power of darkness, the affections under the power of corruption, the mind is blinded, and the heart is hardened, the soul is alienated from God, who is its life; all the members and powers of a man yielded up as instruments of unrighteousness, every one to execute that wicked law, and fulfil the lusts of the flesh. This dominion is over all a man's actions, even those that are in best account and esteem among men. Your honest, upright dealing with men, your most religious performances to God, they are more conformed to the law of sin, than to the law of God,—Hag. 2:14, "This nation, and the work of their hands, and that which they offer, is unclean." All your works, your good works, are infected with this pollution. Sin hath defiled your persons, and they defile all your actions;—the infection is mutual. These actions again defile your persons still more: "To the impure all things are impure, even their mind and conscience is defiled," Tit. 1:15. Do what you can, ye who are in nature cannot please God; it is but obedience to the law of sin that is in you.

But, 2nd, Consider the intenseness and force of his power, how mighty it is, in working against all oppositions whatsoever, unless it be overcome by almighty power. Nothing but All-might can conquer this power. The spirit that works in men by nature, is of such activity and efficacy, that it drives on men furiously, as if they were possessed

to their own ruin. How much hath it of a man's consent! And so it drives him strongly and irresistibly. Much will, desire, and greediness, will make corruption run like a river, over all its banks set in the way thereof,—counsel, persuasion, law, heaven, hell, yet men's corruption must be over all these. Preaching, threatenings, convictions of conscience, are but as flaxen ropes to bind a Samson. Sin within easily breaks them. In a word, no created power is of sufficient virtue to bind the strong man; it must be one mightier than he, and that is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Do ye not see men daily drawn after their lusts, as beasts, following their senses as violently as a horse rusheth to the battle? If there be any gain or advantage to oil the wheels of affection, O how men run head-long! There is no crying will hold them. In sum, sin is become all one with us; it is incorporate into the man, and become one with his affections, and then these command.

VIII

Verse 2.—For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

That whereabout the thoughts and discourses of men now run, is freedom and liberty, or bondage and slavery. All men are afraid to lose their liberties, and be made servants to strangers. And indeed liberty, whether national, or personal, even in civil respects, is a great mercy and privilege. But, alas! men know not, neither do they consider what is the ground and reason of such changes, and from what fountain it flows, that a nation of long time free from a foreign yoke, should now be made to submit their necks unto it. Many wonder that our nation, unconquered in the days of ignorance and darkness, should now be conquered in the days of the gospel; and there want not many ungodly spirits, that will rather impute the fault unto the reformation of religion, than take it to themselves. There are many secret heart jealousies among us, that Christ is a hard master, and cannot be served. But would you know the true original of our apparent and threatened bondage? Come and see, come and consider something expressed in these words. All your thoughts are busied about civil liberty, but you do not consider that you are in bondage while you are free, and that to worse masters than you fear. We are under a law of sin and death, that hath the dominion and sway in all men's affections and conversations; and when the glorious liberty of the sons of God is offered unto us in the gospel, when the Son hath come to make us free, we love our own chains, and will not suffer them to be loosed. Therefore it is that a nation that hath despised such a gracious offer of peace and freedom in Jesus Christ, is robbed and spoiled of peace and freedom. When this

law of the Spirit of life in Christ is published, and proclaimed openly unto congregations, unto judicatories, and unto persons, yet few do regard it. The generality are in bondage to a contrary law of sin, and this they serve in the lusts thereof. Yea, which most of all aggravates and heightens the offence, even after we have all of us professed a subjection to the law of God, and to Jesus Christ, the King and Lawgiver, we are in an extraordinary way engaged to the Lord, by many oaths and covenants, to be his people; we did consent that he should be our King, and that we should be ruled in our profession and practice by his word and will, as the fundamental laws of this his kingdom; we did solemnly renounce all strange lords, that had tyrannized over us; and did swear against them, never to yield willing obedience unto them; namely, the lusts of the world, ignorance of God, unbelief, and disobedience. Now what became of all this work, you may know. The generality of all ranks have rebelled against that Lord and Prince, and withdrawn from his allegiance, and revolted unto the same lusts and ways—these same courses against which we had, both by our profession of Christianity and solemn oaths, engaged ourselves. And so men have voluntarily and heartily subjected themselves unto the laws of sin, and desires of the flesh. Hence is the beginning of our ruin. Because we would not serve our own God and Lord in our own land, therefore are so many led away captive to serve strangers in another land, therefore we are like to be captives in our own land. Because we refused homage to our God, and obeyed strange lords within, therefore are we given up to the lust of strangers without.

I would have you thinking, and that seriously, that there are worse masters you serve than those you most hate, and that there is a worse bondage, whereof you are insensible, than that you fear most. You fear strangers, but your greatest evil is within you. You might retire within, and behold worse masters, and more pernicious and mortal

enemies to your well-being. This is the case of all men by nature, and of all men as far as in nature; sin ruling, commanding in them, and lording it over them, and they willingly following after the commandment, and so oppressed and broken in judgment. If you could but rightly look upon other men, you might see, that they who are servants of divers lusts, are not their own men, so to speak; they have not the command of themselves. Look upon a man given to drunkenness, and what a slave is he! Whither doth not his lust drive him? Let him bind himself with resolutions, with vows, yet he cannot be holden by them. Shame before men, loss of estate, decay of health, temporal punishment, nay, eternal, all set together, cannot keep him from fulfilling the desires of that lust, when he hath opportunity. A man given to covetousness, how doth he serve that idol! How doth he forget himself to be a man!—or to have a reasonable soul within him, he is so devoted to it! And thus it is with every man by nature. There may be many petty little gods that he worships upon occasion, but every unrenewed man hath some one thing predominant in him, unto which he hath sworn obedience and devotion. The man most civilized, most abstracted from the grosser outward pollutions,—yet certainly, his heart within is but a temple full of idols, to the love and service of which he is devoted. There are some of the fundamental laws of Satan's kingdom, that rule in every natural man,—either the lust of the eyes, or the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life. Every man sacrificeth to one of these his credit and honour, or his pleasure, or his profit. Self, whatever way refined and subtilized in some, yet at best it is but an enemy to God; and without that sphere of self cannot a man act upon natural principles, till a higher Spirit come in, which is here spoken of.

Oh! that you would take this for bondage, to be under this woful necessity of satisfying and "fulfilling the desires of your flesh and mind," Eph. 2:2. Many account it only liberty and freedom, therefore

they look upon the laws of the Spirit of life as cords and bonds, and consult to cast them off, and cut them asunder. But consider what a wretched life you have with your imperious lusts. The truth is, sin is for the most part its own punishment. I am sure, you have more labour and toil in fulfilling the lusts of sin, than you might have in serving God. Men's lusts are never at quiet, they are continually putting you on service, they are still driving and dragging men headlong, hurrying them to and fro, and they cannot get rest. What is the cause of all the disquiet, disorder, confusion, trouble, and wars in the world? "From whence do contentions arise? Come they not hence," saith James 4:1, "even of the lusts that war in your members?" It is these that trouble the world, and these are the troublers of Israel's peace. These take away inward peace, domestic peace, and national peace. These lusts, covetousness, ambition, pride, passion, self-love, and such like, do set nation against nation, men and men, people and people, by the ears. These multiply businesses beyond necessity; these multiply cares without profit, and so bring forth vexation and torment. If a man had his lusts subdued, and his affections composed unto moderation and sobriety, O what a multitude of noisome and hurtful cares should he then be freed from; what a sweet calmness should possess that spirit! Will you be persuaded of it, beloved in the Lord, that it were easier to serve the Lord, than to serve your lusts,—that they cost you more labour, disquiet, perplexity, and sorrow, than the Lord's service will; that so you may weary of such masters, and groan to be from under such a law of sin.

But if that will not suffice to persuade you, then consider, in the next room, if you will needs serve a law of sin, you must needs be subject to a law of death. If you will not be persuaded to quit the service of sin, then tell me, what think you of your wages? "The wages of sin is death,"—that you may certainly expect; and can you look and long

for such wages? God hath joined these together by a perpetual ordinance. They came into the world together,—“sin entered, and death by sin;” and they have gone hand in hand together since. And think you to dissolve what God hath joined? Before you go farther, and obey sin more, think, I pray you, what it can give you,—what doth it give you for the present, but much pain, and toil, and vexation, instead of promised pleasure and satisfaction? Sin doth with all men, as the devil doth with some of his sworn vassals and servants. They have a poor wretched life with him. They are wearied and troubled, to satisfy all his unreasonable and imperious commands. He loads them with base service, and they are still kept in expectation of some great reward; but for the present, they have nothing but misery and trouble. And at length he becomes the executioner, and perpetual tormentor of them whom he made to serve him. Such a master is sin, and such wages you must expect. Consider then, what your expectation is, before you go on, or engage further,—death. We are under a law of bodily death, therefore we are mortal. Our house is like a ruinous lodge, that props through, and one day or other it must fall. Sin hath brought in the seeds of corruption into men's nature, which dissolve it, else it had been immortal. But there is a worse death after this, a living death, in respect of which simple death would be chosen rather. Men will rather live very miserably than die. Nature hath an aversion to it,—“skin for skin, and all for life will a man give.” Death imports a destruction of being, which every thing naturally seeks to preserve. But O what a dreadful life is it, worse than death, when men will chuse death rather than life! O how terrible will it be to hear that word, “Hills and mountains fall on us, and cover us!” Men newly risen, their bodies and souls meet again after a long separation, and this to be their mutual entertainment one to another,—the body to wish it were still in the dust, and the soul to desire it might never be in the body! Surely if we had so much grace as to believe this, and

tremble at it, before we be forced to act it, there were some hope. If we could persuade ourselves once of this, that the ways of sin, all of them, how pleasant, how profitable soever, whatsoever gain they bring in, whatsoever satisfaction they give, that they are nothing else but "the ways of death, and go down to the chambers of hell;" that they will delude and deceive us, and so in end destroy us. If we might once believe this with our heart, there were some hope that we would break off from them, and choose the untrodden paths of godliness, which are pleasantness and peace. However, this is the condition of all men, once to be under sin, and under a sentence of death for sin. It is the unbelief of this, and a conceit of freedom, that securely and certainly destroys the world, by keeping souls from Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life.

But there is a delivery, and that is the thing expressed in the words. There is freedom from both attainable. And I think, the very hearing of such a thing, that there is a redemption from sin and misery possible, yea, and that some are actually delivered from it; this might stir up in our hearts some holy ambition, and earnest desire after such a state. How might it awake our hearts after it! But this is the wofulness of a natural condition, that a soul under the power of sin can neither help itself nor rightly desire help from another, because the will is captive too. This makes it a very desperate and remediless business to any human expectation, because such a soul is well-pleased with its own fetters, and loves its own prison, and so can neither long for freedom, nor welcome the Son who is come to make free. But yet, there is a freedom and delivery, and if ye ask who are partakers of it, the text declares it to you,—even those "who are in Jesus Christ, and walk according to the Spirit" of Christ. All those, and those only, who, finding themselves "dead in sins and trespasses," under the power and dominion of sin, and likewise under the sentence of death and condemnation, begin to lift up their

heads upon the hope of a Saviour, and to look unto their Redeemer as poor prisoners, whose eyes and looks are strong intreaties, and instead of many requests;—such as give an entire renounce unto their former ways and prevailing lusts, and give up themselves, in testimony of their sense of his unspeakable favour of redemption, to be wholly his, and not their own. There are some souls who are free from the dominion of sin, and from the danger of death, some who were once led about with divers lusts, as well as others, who "walked after the course of this world, and fulfilled the desires of the flesh, and were children of wrath," as well as others; "but now they are quickened in Christ Jesus," and have abandoned their former way. They have another rule, another way, other principles. Their study is now to please God, and grow in holiness. The ways they delighted in, in former times, are now loathsome. They think that a filthy puddle, which they drank greedily of; and now it is all, or their chiefest grief and burden, that so much of that old man must be carried about with them,—and so this expresseth many groans from them with Paul, "Wo is me, miserable man! who shall deliver me?" Such souls are, in a manner, so to speak, half redeemed, who being made sensible of their bondage, groan and pant for a Redeemer. The day of their complete redemption is at hand. All of you are witnesses of this, that there are some thus freed, but they are signs and wonders indeed to the world. Their kinsmen, their acquaintance, their friends and neighbours, wonder what is become of them. They think it strange they walk not, and run not into that same excess of riot with them. But whosoever thou art, that art escaped from under the slavery of sin, wonder at the world, that doth run so madly on its own destruction. Think it strange that thou didst run so long with them, and that all will not run in these pleasant ways with thee. Think it strange, that thou runnest so slowly, when so great a prize is to be obtained,—an immortal and never-fading crown. If mortifying and crucifying the lusts of the flesh, if dying to the world, and to thyself,

seem very hard and unpleasant to thee, if it be as "the plucking out of thine eye, and cutting off thine hand;" know then, that corruption is much alive yet, and hath much power in thee. But remember, that if thou canst have but so much grace and resolution, as to kill and crucify these lusts, without foolish and hurtful pity,—if thou canst attain that victory over thyself, thou shall never be a loser. Thou canst not repent it afterward. To die to ourselves and the world, to kill sin within—O that makes way to a life hid from the world, one hour whereof is better than many ages in sinful pleasure! Quickened thyself often with this thought, that there is a true life after such a death, and that thou canst not pass into it, but by the valley of the death of thy lusts. Remember, that thou dost but kill thine enemies, which embrace, that they may strangle thee; and then stir up yourself with this consideration,—the life of sin will be thy death. Better enter heaven without these lusts, than go to hell with them.

IX

Verse 2.—For the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

That which makes the delivery of men from the tyranny of sin and death, most difficult, and utterly impossible unto nature, is, that sinners have given up themselves unto it, as if it were truly liberty, that the will and affections of men are conquered, and sin hath its imperial throne seated there. Other conquerors invade men against their will, and so they rule against their will. They retain men in subjection by fear, and not by love. And so whenever any occasion offers, they are glad to cast off the yoke of unwilling obedience. But sin hath first conquered men's judgment, by blinding it,—putting out

the eye of the understanding, and then invaded the affections of men, drawn them over to its side; and by these, it keeps all in a most willing obedience. Now, what hopes are there then of delivery, when the prisoner accounts his bondage liberty, and his prison a palace. What expectation of freedom, when all that is within us conspires to the upholding that tyrannous dominion of sin, against all that would cast off its usurpation, as if they were mortal enemies?

Yet there is a delivery possible, but such as would not have entered into the heart of man to imagine; and it is here expressed,—“the law of the Spirit of life,” &c. This declares how, and by what means, we may be made free. Not indeed by any power within us, not by any created power without us. Sin is stronger than all these, because its imperial seat is within, far without the reach of all created power. There may be some means used by men, to beat it out of the outworks of the outward man, to chase it out of the external members; some means to restrain it from such gross out-breakings; but there is none can lay siege to the soul within, or storm the understanding and will, where it hath its principal residence. It is inaccessible, and impregnable by any human power. No intreaties or persuasions, no terrors or threatenings can prevail;—it can neither be stormed by violence, nor undermined by skill, because it is within the spirit of the mind; until at length some other spirit stronger than our spirit come; till the Spirit of life which is in Christ, come and bind the strong man, and so make the poor soul free. You heard that we were under a law of death, and under the power of sin. Now there is another law, answering this law, and a power to overcome this power. You may indeed ask, by what law or authority can a sinner that is bound over, by God's justice, unto death and condemnation, be released? Is there any law above God's law, and the sentence of his justice? The apostle answers, that there is a law above it, a law after it,—“the law of the Spirit of life.” Jesus Christ opposes law unto law,

the law of life unto the law of death; the gospel unto the law, the second covenant unto the first. Thus it is then, "Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, full of grace and truth," did come in man's stead, when the law and sentence of death was passed upon all mankind, and there was no expectation, from the terms of the first covenant, that there should be any dispensation or mitigation of the rigour of it. He obtains this, that so many as God had chosen unto life, their sins and their punishment might be laid on him. And so he took part of our flesh, for this end, that he might be made a curse for us, and so redeem us from the curse. Thus, having satisfied justice, and fulfilled the sentence of death, by suffering death,— "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and Saviour," and the head of all things. In compensation of this great and weighty work given him by his Father, all judgment is committed to him, and so he sends out and proclaims another law in Zion; another sentence, even of life and absolution, unto all, and upon all them that shall believe in his name. Thus you see the law of death abrogated by a new law of life, because our Lord and Saviour was made under the law of death, and suffered under it, and satisfied it, that all his seed might be freed from it, and might come under a life-giving law. So that it appears to be true, that was said at first, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ,"—there is no law, no justice against them.

But then another difficulty, as great as the former, is in the way. Though such a law and sentence of life and absolution be pronounced in the gospel, in Christ's name, yet we are dead in sins and trespasses. We neither know nor feel our misery, nor can we come to a Redeemer. As there was a law of death above our head, so there is a law of sin within our hearts, which rules and commands us; and there is neither will nor ability to escape from under it. It is true, life and freedom is preached in Christ, to all that come to him for life. To all that renounce sin's dominion is remission of sin preached. But

here is the greatest difficulty,—how can a dead soul stir, rise, and walk,—how can a slave to sin, and a willing captive, renounce it, when he hath neither to will nor to do? Indeed, if all had been purchased for us, if eternal life and forgiveness of sins had been brought near us, and all the business done to our consent, and that only wanting; if these had been the terms—I have purchased life, now rise and embrace it of yourselves, truly, it had been an unsuccessful business. Christ had lost all that was given him, if the moment and weight of our salvation had been hung upon our acceptance. Therefore, it is well provided for this also, that there should be a power to overcome this power, a spirit of life in Christ to quicken dead sinners, and raise them up, and draw them to him. And so, the second Adam hath this prerogative beyond the first, that he is not only a living soul in himself, but a quickening Spirit to all that are given him of the Father, 1 Cor. 15:45. So then, as Christ Jesus hath law and right on his side, to free us from death, so he hath virtue and power in him to accomplish our delivery from sin. As he hath fair law to loose the chains of condemnation, and to repeal the sentence passed against us, without prejudice to God's justice, he having fully satisfied the same in our name, so he hath sufficient power given him, to loose the fetters of sin from off us. When he hath paid the price, and satisfied the Father, so that justice can crave nothing, yet he hath one adversary to deal with. Satan hath sinners bound with the cords of their own lusts, in a prison of darkness and unbelief. Jesus Christ therefore comes out to conquer this enemy, and to redeem his elect ones from that unjust usurpation of sin,—to bring them out of the prison by the strong hand. And therefore, he is one mighty and able to save to the uttermost; he hath might to do it, as well as right to it.

Consider, then, my beloved, these two things, which are the breasts of our consolation, and the foundation of our hope. We are once lost

and utterly undone, both in regard of God's justice, and our own utter inability to help ourselves, which is strengthened by our unwillingness, and thus made a more desperate business. Now, God hath provided a suitable remedy; "he hath laid help on one that is mighty," indeed, who hath almighty power; and by his power he first conflicted with the punishment of our sins, and with his Father's wrath, and hath overcome, discharged, and satisfied that, and so hath purchased a right unto us, to give salvation to whom he will. He conquered, and by his power obtains this supreme authority of life and death.

Now, having this authority established in his person, the next work is to apply this purchase,—actually to confer this life. And therefore he hath almighty power to raise up dead sinners; "to create us again to good works;" to redeem us from the tyranny of sin and Satan, whose slaves we are. He hath a Spirit of life, which he communicates to his seed; he breathes it into those souls that he died for, and dispossesseth that powerful corruption that dwells in us. Hence it comes to pass, that they walk after the Spirit, though they be in the flesh; because the powerful Spirit of Christ hath entered, and taken possession of their spirits. Isa. 59:20, 21.

Let us not be discouraged in our apprehensions of Christ. When we look on our ruinous and desperate estate, let us not conclude, it is past hope, and past his help too. We do proclaim, in the name of Jesus Christ, that there is no sinner, howsoever justly under a sentence of death and damnation, but they may in him find a relaxation from that sentence, and that without the impairing of God's justice. And this is a marvellous ground of comfort, that may establish our souls, 1 John 1:9; even this, that law and justice is upon Christ's side, and nothing to accuse or plead against a sinner that employs him for his advocate. But know this also, that you are not

delivered from death, that you may live under sin; nay, you are redeemed from death, that you may be freed from the law of sin. But that must be done by his almighty Spirit, and cannot be otherways done.

I know not whether of these is matter of greatest comfort,—that there is in Christ a redemption from the wrath of God and from hell; and that there is a redemption too, from sin, and corruption which dwells within us. But sure I am, both of them will be most sweet and comfortable to a believer; and without both, Christ were not a complete Redeemer, nor we completely redeemed. Neither would a believing soul, in which there is any measure of this new law and divine life, be satisfied without both these. Many are miserably deluded in their apprehensions of the Gospel. They take it up thus, as if it were nothing but a proclamation of freedom from misery, from death and damnation; and so the most part catch at nothing else in it, and from thence take liberty to walk after their former lusts and courses. This is the woful practical use that the generality of hearers make of the free intimation of pardon, and forgiveness of sin, and delivery from wrath. They admit some general notion of that, and stop there, and examine not what further is in the gospel; and so you will see the slaves of sin professing a kind of hope of freedom from death,—the servants and vassals of corruption, who walk after the course of this world, and fulfil the lusts and desires of their mind and flesh, yet fancying a freedom and immunity from condemnation,—men living in sin, yet thinking of escaping wrath;—which dreams could not be entertained in men, if they did drink in all the truth, and open both their ears to the gospel; if our spirits were not narrow and limited, and so excluded the one half of the gospel, that is, our redemption from sin. There is too much of this, even among the children of God,—a strange narrowness of spirit, which admits not whole and entire truth. It falls out often, that when we think of

delivery from death and wrath, we forget in the mean time the end and purpose of that, which is, that we may be freed from sin, and serve the living God without fear. And if at any time we consider, and busy our thoughts about freedom from the law of sin, and victory over corruption, such is the scantiness of room and capacity in our spirits, that we lose the remembrance of delivery from death and condemnation in Christ Jesus. Thus we are tossed between two extremes—the quicksands of presumption and wantonness, and the rocks of unbelief and despair or discouragement, both of which do kill the Christian's life, and make all to fade and wither. But this were the way, and only way, to preserve the soul in good ease,—even to keep these two continually in our sight, that we are redeemed from death and misery in Christ, and that not to serve ourselves, or to continue in our sins, but that we may be redeemed from that sin that dwells in us, and that both these are purchased by Jesus Christ, and done by his power,—the one in his own person, the other by his Spirit within us. I would have you correcting your misapprehensions of the gospel. Do not so much look on victory and freedom from sin as a duty and task, though we be infinitely bound to it; but rather as a privilege and dignity conferred upon us by Christ. Look not upon it, I say, only as your duty, as many do; and by this means are discouraged from the sight of their own infirmity and weakness, as being too weak for such a strong party. But look upon it is as the one half, and the greater half, of the benefit conferred by Christ's death,—as the greater half of the redemption which the Redeemer, by his office, is bound to accomplish. He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities; "with him is plenteous redemption," Psal. 130:7, 8. This is the plenty, this is the sufficiency of it,—that he redeems not only from misery, but from iniquity, and that all iniquities. I would not desire a believer's soul to be in a better posture here away, than this,—to be looking upon sin indwelling as his bondage, and redemption from it as freedom; to account himself in so far free, as the free Spirit

of Christ enters and writes that free law of love and obedience in his heart, and bolts out these base characters of the law of sin. It were a good temper to be groaning for the redemption of the soul; and why doth a believer groan for the redemption of the body, but because he shall then be freed wholly from the law of sin, and from the presence of sin? I know not a greater argument, to a gracious heart, to subdue his corruption, and strive for freedom from the law of sin, than the freedom obtained from the law of death. Nor is there any clearer argument and evidence of a soul delivered from death, than to strive for the freedom of the spirit from the law of sin. These jointly help one another. Freedom from death will raise up a Christian's heart to aspire to a freedom and liberty from sin; and again, freedom from sin will witness and evidence that such an one is delivered from death. When freedom from death is an inducement to seek after freedom from sin, and freedom from sin a declaration of freedom from death, then all is well; and indeed thus it will be in some measure with every soul that is quickened by this new law of the Spirit of life, for it is the entry of this that expels its contrary, the law of sin. And indeed the law must enter; the command and the promise must enter into the soul, and the affections of the soul be enlivened thereby, or rather the soul changed into the similitude of that mould, or else the having of it in a book, or in one's memory and understanding, will never make him the richer or freer. A Christian looks to the pattern of the law, and the word of the gospel without; but he must be changed into the image of it, by beholding it; and so he becomes a living law to himself. The Spirit writes these precepts and practices of Christ's, in which he commands imitation, upon the fleshly tables of the heart. And now the law is not a rod above his head, as above a slave; but it is turned into a law of love within his heart, and hath something like a natural instinct in it. All that men can do, either to themselves or others, will not purchase the least measure of freedom from predominant corruptions; cannot deliver you from your sins, till this

free Spirit, that blows where he pleases, come. It is our part to hoise up sails, and wait for the wind; to use means, and wait on him in his way and order. But all will be in vain, till this stronger one come and cast out the strong man; till this arbitrary and free wind blow from heaven, and fill the sails.

X

Verse 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.

The greatest design that ever God had in the world, is certainly the sending of his own Son into the world. And it must needs be some great business, that drew so excellent and glorious a person out of heaven. The plot and contrivance of the world was a profound piece of wisdom and goodness; the making of men after God's image, was done by a high and glorious counsel: "Let us make man after our image." There was something special in this expression, importing some peculiar excellency in the work itself, or some special depth or design about it. But what think you of this consultation,—let one of us be made man, after man's image and likeness. That must be a strange piece of wisdom and grace: "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh." No wonder though Paul cried out, as one swallowed up with this mystery; for indeed it must be some odd matter, beyond all that is in the creation, wherein there are many mysteries, able to swallow up any understanding, but that in which they were first formed. This must be the chief of the works of God, the rarest piece of them all,—God to become man, the Creator of all to come in the likeness of a creature,—he by whom all

things were created,—and do yet consist, to come in the likeness of the most wretched of all. Strange, that we do not dwell more, in our thoughts and affections, on this subject. Either we do not believe it, or if we did, we could not but be ravished with admiration at it. John, the beloved disciple, who was often nearest unto Christ, dwelt most upon this, and made it the subject of his preaching; "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, and seen, and handled," &c. 1 John 1:1. He speaks of that mystery, as if he were embracing Jesus Christ in his arms, and holding him out to others, saying, "Come and see." This divine mystery, is the subject of those words read, but the mystery is somewhat unfolded and opened up to you in them, yet so as it will not diminish, but increase the wonder of a believing soul. It is ignorance that magnifies other mysteries, which vilify through knowledge; but it is the true knowledge of this mystery that makes it the more wonderful, whereas ignorance only makes it common and despicable.

There are three things then, of special consideration in the words, which may declare and open unto you something of this mystery:

First, What was the ground and reason, or occasion of the Son's sending into the world; next, What the Son, being sent, did in the world; and the third, For what end and use it was,—what fruit we have by it.

The ground and reason of God sending his Son, is, because there was an impossibility upon the law to save man, which impossibility was not the law's fault, but man's defect, by reason of the weakness and impotency of our flesh to fulfil the law. Now, God having chosen some to life, and man having put this obstruction and impediment in his own way, which made it impossible for the law to give him life, though it was first given out as the way of life; therefore, that God

should not fail in his glorious design of saving his chosen, he chose to send his own Son, in the likeness of flesh, as the only remedy of the law's impossibility. That which Christ, being sent into the likeness of flesh, did, is the condemning of sin in the flesh, by a sacrifice offered for sin,—even the sacrifice of his own body upon the cross. He came in the likeness, not of the flesh simply, for he was really a man; but in the likeness of sinful flesh,—though without sin yet like a sinner,—as to the outward appearance, a sinner, because subject to all those infirmities and miseries which sin did first open a door for. Sin was the inlet of afflictions, of bodily infirmities and necessities, of death itself; and when the floods of these did overflow Christ's human nature, it was a great presumption to the world, who look and judge according to the outward appearance, that sin was the sluice opened to let in such an inundation of calamity. Now, he being thus in the likeness of a sinner, though not a sinner,—he, for sin, that is, because of sin, that had entered upon man, and made life impossible to him by the law; by occasion of that great enemy of God which had conquered mankind, he condemned sin in his flesh, he overthrew it in its plea and power against us. He condemned that which condemned us, overcame it in judgment, and made us free. By sustaining the curse of it in his flesh, he cut off all its plea against us. This is the great work and business, which was worthy of so noble a messenger, his own Son, sent to conquer his greatest enemy that he hates most. And then, in the third place, you see what benefit or fruit redounds to us by it: what was the end and purpose of it;—verse 4, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us:" that seeing it was impossible for us to fulfil the righteousness of the law, and so become impossible to the law to fulfil our reward of life, it might be fulfilled by him in our name; and so the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in us by Christ, the reward also of eternal life might be fulfilled by the law to us,—he having removed the

impediment of our weakness, it might be not only possible, but certain to us.

You would consider then, the reason of Christ's coming. God made at first a covenant with man, promising him life, upon perfect obedience to his law; and threatening death and damnation upon the transgression thereof. You see then, what was the way of life to Adam in the state of innocency. He was made able to satisfy the law with obedience, and the law was abundantly able to satisfy him, by giving life unto him. God's image upon man's soul instructed him sufficiently for the one, and the Lord's promise made to him, was as sufficient to accomplish the other; so that there was no impossibility then upon the law, by reason of the strength which God gave man. But it continued not long so. Sin entering upon man, utterly disabled him; and because the strength of that covenant consisted in that mutual and joint concurrence of God's promise and man's obedience—this being broken, (the one party falling off) that life and salvation becomes impossible to the promise alone to perform. It is sin that is the weakness and impotency of man. This is the disease which hath consumed his strength, and concluded man under a twofold impossibility; an impossibility to satisfy the curse, and an impossibility to obey the command. There are three things in the covenant of works,—a command of obedience, and a threatening of wrath and condemnation upon disobedience, and a promise of life upon obedience. Sin hath disabled us every way. In relation to the curse and threatening, man cannot satisfy it—no price, no ransom found sufficient for the soul, for the redemption of it is precious, and ceaseth for ever. That curse hath infinite wrath in it, which must needs swallow up finite man. And then in relation to the command, there is such a diminution of all the powers of the soul, such a corruption and defilement, by reason of the first sin, that that wherein man's strength lay, which was God's image, is cut off and

spoiled; so that henceforth it is become impossible to yield any acceptable obedience to the commandment. And hence it is, from our impossibility to obey in time to come, that there is a holy and faultless impossibility upon the promise, to give life unto mankind. So you see that the law cannot do it, because of our weakness. If either man, while he was made upright, had continued in obedience, or man now fallen from uprightness, could satisfy for the fault done, and walk without any blemish in time coming, then it were feasible for the law to give life to us. But the one was not done, and the other now cannot be done; and so the impossibility of life by works, is redounded upon ourselves, who would not when we could, and now neither will nor can obey. Thus we may see clearly, that all mankind must needs perish, for any thing that man can do; and according to that first transaction of God with man, unless some other way and device be found out, which indeed was far from the eyes of all living, without the reach of their invention or imagination. I believe if all the creatures, higher or lower, that have any reason, had convened to consult of this business, how to repair that breach made in the creation by man's sin, they might have vexed their brains, and racked their inventions unto all eternity, and yet never have fallen upon any probable way of making up this breach. They might have taken up a lamentation, not as the bemoaners of Babylon's ruin,—“we would have healed thee, and thou wouldst not;”—but rather thus,—we would heal thee, but we could not, and thou wouldst not. This design, which is here mentioned of repairing the breach, by destroying that which made it, sin, lay hid in the depth of God's wisdom, till it pleased himself to vent and publish it unto poor forlorn and desperate man, who, out of despair of recovery, had run away to hide himself. A poor shift indeed, for him to think that he could hide himself from him to whom darkness is as light, and to flee from him whose kingdom is over all, and who is present in all the corners of his

universal kingdom,—in hell, in heaven, in the utmost corners of the earth. But this silly invention shews how hopeless the case was.

Though this be the case and condition of man by nature, yet strange it is, to see every man by nature attempting his own delivery; and fancying a probability, yea, a certainty of that which is so impossible, that is, an attaining of life by ourselves, according to the law and first covenant of works. Though our strength be gone, yet, like Samson, men rise up and think to walk and rouse up themselves as in former times, as if their strength were yet in them, and many never perceive that it is gone, till they be laid hold on by Satan according to the law's injunction, and bound in the chains of everlasting darkness. But then, alas! it is too late, for they cannot save themselves, and the season of a Saviour is gone. And this, no doubt, will be the accession of the bitterness and torment that damned souls shall be into,—that they dreamed of attaining life by a law, that now is nothing but a ministration of death;—that they lost life by seeking their own righteousness; and made the law more able to condemn them, by their apprehending in themselves an ability to satisfy it, and by resting in a form of obedience to it. There is something natural in it. Adam and all his posterity were once to be saved this way,—so the terms run at first, "do this and live." No wonder that something of that impression be retained; but that which was a virtue in Adam, while he retained integrity, and fulfilled his duty, is a mighty fault, and presumptuous madness in us, who have fallen from that blessed estate. If man, doing his duty, expected a reward, according to the promise, it was commendable; but for man, now rebellious and stubborn, and come short of the glory of God, to look for a reward from God, against whom he warreth continually, and that for rebellion and enmity, it is damnable. But besides this, I think this principle of self-righteousness is much corrupted in man now, by what it was in Adam. I conceive, though Adam looked for life upon

obedience, according to the promise, yet he rested not on, and trusted not in, his obedience. I believe, a holy and righteous man would be a humble man too, and would rather glory in God's grace than in his own works. The sense of a free and undeserved promise, would not suffer him to reflect so much upon his own obedience, or put such a price upon it. But now, it is conjoined with unmeasurable pride, and arises only from self-love. There is no ground of man's looking to be saved by his own doings, but the inbred pride and self-love of the heart, together with the ignorance of a better righteousness. Adam hid himself among the trees, and covered his nakedness with leaves, and truly the shift of the most part is no better. How vain and empty things do men trust unto, and from them conclude an expectation of eternal life? The most part think to be safe in the midst or thick of the trees of the church. If they be in the throng of a visible church, and adorned with church privileges, as baptism, hearing the word, and such like, they do persuade themselves all will be well. Some have civility, and a blameless conversation before men, and with such acts of righteousness, or rather wants of some gross outbreakings, do many cover their nakedness. If there be yet a larger and finer garment of profession of religion, and some outward performances of service to God, and duties to men, O then, men do enforce upon their own hearts the persuasion of heaven, and think their nakedness cannot be seen through it! These are the coverings, these are the grounds of claim and title, that men have to eternal life, and in the meantime they are ignorant of that large glorious robe of righteousness, which Christ by his obedience and sufferings, did weave for naked sinners.

But as the impossibility of the law's saving us, by reason of the weakness of the flesh, was the ground and occasion of Christ's coming into the flesh for to supply that defect, and take away that impossibility; so the sense and sight of this impossibility in us to

satisfy and fulfil the law, and of the law to give life, is the very ground and reason of a soul's coming to Jesus Christ for the supplying of this want. As the Son should not have come in the likeness of sinful flesh, unless it had been otherwise impossible by man's doing or suffering, that life should be obtained; so will not a soul come to Christ, the Son of God, through the vail of his flesh, until it discern and feel that it is otherwise impossible to satisfy the law or attain life. That was the impulsive cause, (if we may say that there was any cause beside his love) why Christ came,—even man's misery, and remediless misery. And this is the strong motive and impulsive, that drives a poor sinner unto Jesus Christ,—the sense and impression of its desperate and lost estate without him. As there was first sin, and then a Saviour dying for sin, because nothing else could suffice, so there must be in the soul, first, the apprehension of sin, and that remediless sin, sin incurable by any created power or act; and then a sight of a Saviour coming to destroy sin and the works of the devil, and destroying it by dying for it. There is no employment for this Physician upon every slight apprehension of a wound or sickness, till it be found incurable, and help sought elsewhere be seen to be in vain. Indeed, upon the least apprehension of sin and misery, men ought to come to Christ. We shall not set or prescribe any measure of conviction to exclude you, if you can but come to him indeed. Upon the least measure of it, you will not be cast out, according to his own word; but as certain it is, that men will not come to this Physician, till they find no other can save them. These two things I wish were deeply and seriously thought upon,—that you cannot satisfy God's justice for the least point of guilt; and then, that you cannot do any thing in obedience to please God. There is a strange inconsideration; yea, I may say, ignorance among us. When you are challenged and convinced of sin, (as there is no conscience so benumbed, but in some measure it accuseth every man of many wrongs,) what is the course you fall on to pacify it or please God? Indeed, if you can get any shadow of

repentance, if it were but a bare acknowledgment of the fault, you excuse yourselves in your own consciences, and answer the accusation by it. Either some other good works formerly done occur to you, or some resolution for amendment in time coming. And this you think shall pacify God and satisfy justice. But alas! you are far from the righteousness of God, and you do err even in the very foundation of religion. These are but sparks of your own kindling, and for all these, you shall lie down in darkness and sorrow. These are but the vain expiations and excuses of natural consciences, which are led to some sense of a deity by the law written in their heart. But consider this once,—you must first satisfy the curse of the law which you are under, before you can be in any capacity to please him by new obedience. Now, if you should undertake to pay for your former breaches of the law, that will eternally ruin you; and therefore, you see the punishment is lengthened throughout eternity to them who have this to undergo alone. Go then, and first suffer the eternal wrath of an infinite God, and then come and offer obedience if thou can. But now, thou art in a double error, both of which are damnable; one is, thou thinkest thou art able, by consideration and resolution, to perform some acceptable obedience to God; another, that performance, and amending in time coming, will expiate former transgressions. If either of these were true, Christ needed not to have come in the likeness of sinful flesh, because it had been possible for the law to save thee. But now, the truth is, such is the utter disability and impotency of man through sin, that he can neither will nor do the least good, truly good and pleasant to God. His nature and person being defiled, all he doth is unclean. And then, suppose that it were possible that man could do any thing in obedience to his commands, yet it being unquestionable, that all have sinned, satisfaction must first be made to God's threatening, "thou shalt die," before obedience be acceptable, and that is impossible too. This then, I leave upon your consciences, beseeching you to lay to heart the

impossibility you are encompassed with on both hands;—justice requiring a ransom and you have none, and justice requiring new obedience again, and you can give none; old debts urging you, and new duty pressing you, and ye alike disabled for both; that so finding yourselves thus environed with indigency and impossibility within, you may be constrained to flee out of yourselves unto him that is both able and willing. This is not a superficial business, as you make it. It is not a matter of fancy, or memory, or expression, as most make it. Believe me, it is a serious business, a soul-work, such an exercise of spirit as useth to be when the soul is between despair and hope. Impossibility within, driving a soul out of itself, and possibility, yea, certainty of help without, even in Christ drawing a soul in to him. Thus is the closure made, which is the foundation of our happiness.

XI

Verse 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.

For what purpose do we meet thus together? I would we knew it,—then it might be to some better purpose. In all other things we are rational, and do nothing of moment, without some end and purpose. But, alas! in this matter of greatest moment, our going about divine ordinances, we have scarce any distinct or deliberate thought of the end and rise of them. Sure I am, we must all confess this, that all other businesses in our life are almost impertinent to the great end, the salvation of our souls, in respect of [i.e. in comparison with] these, in which God in a manner trysts with men, and comes to dwell

with them. These have the nearest and most immediate connection with God's glory and our happiness; and yet so Wretched and unhappy are we, that we study and endeavour a kind of wisdom and diligence in other petty things, which are to perish with the using, and have no great reach to make our condition either better or worse; and yet we have no wisdom, nor consideration, or attention to this great and momentous matter,—the salvation of our souls. Is it not high time we were shaken out of our empty, vain, and unreasonable custom, in going about such solemn duties, when the wrath of God is already kindled, and his mighty arm is shaking terribly the earth, and shaking us out of all our nests of quietness and consolation, which we did build in the creature? God calls for a reasonable service, but I must say, the service of the most is an unreasonable and brutish kind of work,—little or no consideration of what we are about; little or no purpose, or aim at any real soul advantage. Consider, my beloved, what you are doing, undoing yourselves with ignorance of your own estate, and unacquaintedness with a better; whence it comes, that you live contented in your misery, and have no lively stirrings after this blessed remedy. That for which we met together is to learn these two things, and always to be learning them,—to know sensibly our own wretched misery and that blessed remedy which God hath provided. It is the sum of the Scriptures, and we desire daily to lay it out before you, if at length it may please the Lord to awake you out of your dream, and give you the light of his salvation.

You hear of a weakness of the flesh; but if you would understand it aright, it is not properly and simply a weakness. That supposeth always some life, and some strength remaining. It is not like an infirmity, that only indisposeth to wonted action, in the wonted vigour; but it is such a weakness, as the apostle elsewhere, Eph. 2:1, calls deadness. It is such a weakness, as may be called wickedness,

yea, enmity to God, as it is here. Our souls are not diseased properly, for that supposeth there is some remnant of spiritual life, but they are dead in sins and trespasses. And so it is not infirmity but impossibility,—such a weakness as makes life and salvation impossible by us, both utter unwillingness and extreme inability. These two concur in all mankind,—no strength to satisfy justice, or obey the law, and no willingness either. There is a general practical mistake in this. Men conceive, that their natures are weak to good, but few apprehend the wickedness and enmity that is in them to God and all goodness. All will grant some defect and inability, and it is a general complaint. But to consider that this inability is an impossibility, that this defect is a destruction of all spiritual good in us,—the saving knowledge of this is given to few, and to those only whose eyes the Spirit opens. There may be some strugglings and wrestlings of natural spirit to help themselves, and upon the apprehension of their own weakness, to raise up themselves by serious consideration, and earnest diligence, to some pitch of serving God, and to some hope of heaven. But I do suspect that it proceeds in many from the want of this thorough and deep conviction of desperate wickedness. Few really believe that testimony which God hath given of man,—he is not only weak, but wicked, and not only so, but desperately wicked. And that is not all,—the heart is deceitful too, and to complete the account, "deceitful above all things," Jer. 17:15. A strange character of man, given by him that formed the spirit of man within, and made it once upright, and so knows best how far it hath departed from the first pattern. O who of us believes this in our hearts! But that is the deceitfulness of our hearts, to cover our desperate wickedness from our own discerning, and flatter ourselves with self-pleasing thoughts. If once this testimony were received, that the weakness of the flesh is a desperate wickedness, such a wretched and accursed condition, as there is no hope therein, as is incurable to any created power, and makes us incurable, and

certainly lost,—then, I say, the deceitfulness of the heart were in some measure cured. Believe the desperate wickedness of your natures, and then you have perceived the deceitfulness of your hearts to your own advantage; then you have known that which none can know aright, till the searcher of the heart and reins reveal it unto them.

Thus man stands environed with impossibilities. His own weakness and wickedness, and the law's impossibility by reason of that,—these do shut up all access to the tree of life, and are instead of a flaming sword to guard it. Our legs are cut off by sin, and the law cannot help us; nay, our life is put out, and the law cannot quicken us. It declares our duty, but gives no ability; it teacheth well, but it cannot make us learn. While we are in this posture, God himself steps in to succour miserable undone man; and here is the way,—he sends his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and grace and truth come by him, which do remove those impediments that stopped all access to life.

This is a high subject, but it concerns the lowest and most wretched amongst us; and that is indeed the wonder of it, that there should be such a mystery, such a depth in this work of redemption of poor sinners, so much business made, and such strange things done for repairing our ruins. In the consideration of this we may borrow that meditation of the Psalmist's, Psal. 8:4, "Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest thus magnify him; and make him not a little lower than the angels, but far higher?" "For he took not on him the nature of angels," Heb. 2:14, 16; but took part with the poor children of flesh and blood. This deserves a pause;—we shall stay a little, and view it more fully in the steps and degrees that this mystery rises and ascends up by. But, oh! for such an ascending frame of heart as this deserves. It is a wonder it doth not draw us upward beyond our own

element,—it is a subject of such admiration in itself, and so much concernment to us.

Every word hath a weight in it, and a peculiar emphasis. There is a gradation that the mystery goes upon till it come to the top. Every word hath a degree or stop in it, whereby it rises higher. "God sent,"—that is very strange; but God sent "his Son,"—is most strange. But go on, and it is still stranger,—"in the likeness of flesh," and that sinful flesh, &c. In all which degrees you see God is descending and coming lower and lower, but the mystery ascends and goes higher and higher; the lower God comes down, the wonder rises up. Still the smaller and meaner that God appears in the flesh, the greater is the mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh."

If you would rise up to the sensible and profitable understanding of this mystery, you must first descend into the depths of your own natural wretchedness and misery, in which man was lying, when it pleased God to come so low to meet him, and help him. I say you must first go down that way in the consideration of it, and then you shall ascend to the use and knowledge of this mystery of godliness.

God's sending, hath some weight of wonder in it, at the very apprehension of it. If you did but know who he is, and what we are, a wonder it had been, that he had suffered himself to be sent unto by us, that any message, any correspondence should pass between heaven and earth, after so foul a breach of peace and covenant by man on earth. Strange, that heaven was not shut up from all intercourse with that accursed earth. If God had sent out an angel to destroy man, as he sent to destroy Jerusalem, 1 Chron. 21:15,—if he had sent out his armies to kill those his enemies, who had renounced the yoke of his obedience, it had been justice, Matth. 21:41; 22:7. If he had sent a cruel messenger against man, who had now acted so

horrid a rebellion, it had been no strange thing, as he did send an angel with a flaming sword to encompass the tree of life. He might have enlarged that angel's commission, to take vengeance on man: and this is the wonder, he did not send after this manner. But what heart could this enter into? Who could imagine such a thing as this? God to send, and to send for peace to his rebellious footstool! Man could not have looked for acceptance before the throne, if he had presented and sent first up supplications and humble cries to heaven; and therefore finding himself miserable, you see he is at his wits end, he is desperate, and gives it over, and so flies away to hide himself, certainly expecting that the first message from heaven should be to arm all the creatures against him, to destroy him. But, O what a wonderful, yet blessed surprisal! God himself comes down, and not for any such ends as vengeance, though just, but to publish and hold forth a covenant of reconciliation and peace, to convince man of sin, and to comfort him with the glad tidings of a Redeemer, of one to be sent in the likeness of flesh. It is the grandeur and majesty of kings and great men, to let others come to them with their petitions; and it is accounted a rare thing if they be accessible and affable. But, that the Lord of lords, and King of kings, who sitteth in the circle of the heavens, and before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are as poor grasshoppers, or crawling worms, "about whose throne, there are ten thousand times ten thousand glorious spirits ministering unto him," as Daniel saw him, chap. 7:9, 10,—that such a one should not only admit such as we to come to him, and offer our suits to his Highness, but himself first to come down unto Adam, and offer peace to him, and then send his own Son! And what were we, that he should make any motion about us, or make any mission to us? Rom. 5:10. "While we were yet enemies,"—that we were when he sent. O how hath his love triumphed over his justice! But needed he fear our enmity, that he should seek peace? No ways; one look of his angry countenance, would have looked us unto nothing,—"Thou

lookest upon me, and I am not;" one rebuke of his for iniquity, would have made our beauty consume as the moth, far more the stroke of his hand had consumed us, Psalm 39:11. But that is the wonder indeed,—“while we were yet enemies;” and weak too, neither able to help ourselves, nor hurt him in the least, and so could do nothing to allure him, nothing to terrify him, nothing to engage his love, nothing to make him fear; yet, then he makes this motion, and mission to us, “God sending,” &c.

God sending, and sending his own Son, that is yet a step higher. Had he sent an angel, it had been wonderful, one of those ministering spirits about the throne being far more glorious than man. “But God so loved the world, that he sent his Son.” Might he not have done it by others? But he had a higher project; and verily, there is more mystery in the end and manner of our redemption, than difficulty in the thing itself. No question, he might have enabled the creature, by his almighty power, to have destroyed the works of the devil, and might have delivered captive man some other way. He needed not, for any necessity lying upon him, to go such a round as the Father to give to the Son, and the Son to receive,—as God to send, and the Son to be sent. Nay, he might have spared all pains, and without any messenger, immediately pardoned man's sin, and adopted him to the place of sons. Thus he had done the business, without his Son's, or any others travail and labour in blood and suffering. But this profound mystery, in the manner of it, declares the highness and excellency of the end God proposed, and that is the manifestation of his love; “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us,” 1 John. 3:1. “And in this was manifested the love of God toward us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world,” 1 John 4:9. And truly for such a design and purpose, all the world could not have contrived such a suitable and excellent mean as this. Nothing besides this could have declared such love. There is no expression of love

imaginable to this,—to give his Son, and only begotten Son for us. It had been enough, out of mere compassion, to have saved us, however it had been. But if he had given all, and done all besides this, he had not so manifested the infinite fulness of love. There is no gift so suitable to the greatness and magnificence of his majesty, as this,—one "that thought it no robbery to be equal with himself." Any gift had been infinitely above us, because from him; but this is not only infinitely above us, but equal to himself, and fittest to declare himself.

But then, there is yet a higher rise of the mystery, or a lower descent of God: for 'tis all one, God descending is the wonder ascending,—he sent his Son. Man's admiration is already exhausted in that. But if there were any thing behind, this which follows would consume it,—in the flesh. If he had sent his own Son, might he not have sent him in an estate and condition suitable to his glory, as it became the Prince and Heir of all things, him by whom all were created and do subsist. Nay, but he is sent, and that in a state of humiliation and condescendency, infinitely below his own dignity. That ever he was made a creature, that the Maker of all should be sent in the form of any thing he had made, O what a disparagement! There is no such distance between the highest prince on the throne, and the basest beggar on the dunghill, as between the only begotten of the Father, who is the brightness of his glory, and the most glorious angel that ever was made. And yet, it would be a wonder to the world, if a king should send his son in the habit and state of a beggar, to call in the poor, and lame, and blind, to the fellowship of his kingdom. It had been a great mystery then, if God had been manifested in the nature of angels, a great abasement of his majesty. But, O what must it be for God, to be manifested in the flesh, in the basest, naughtiest, and most corruptible of all the creatures, even the very dregs of the creation, that have sunk down to the bottom! "All flesh is grass;" and

what more withering and fading, even the flower and perfection of it? Isa. 40:6. Dust it is, and what baser? Gen. 18:27. And corruption it is, and what viler? 1 Cor. 15:44. And yet, God sent his Son in the flesh. Is this a manifestation? Nay, rather, it is a hiding and obscuration of his glory. It is the putting on of a dark vail to eclipse his brightness. Yet manifested he is, as the intendment of the work he was about required,—manifested to reproach and ignominy for our sin. This is one, and a great point of Christ's humiliation,—that "he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," Heb. 2:16.

But yet, to complete this mystery more, the Son descends a third step lower, that the mystery may ascend so much the higher;—in the likeness of flesh? Not so, but in the likeness of sinful flesh. If he had appeared in the prime flower and perfection of flesh, in the very goodness of it, yet it had been a disparagement. If he had come down as glorious as he once went up, and now "sits at the right hand of the majesty on high;" if he had been always in that resplendent habit he put on in his transfiguration; that had been yet an abasement of his majesty. But, to come in the likeness of sinful flesh, though not a sinner, yet in the likeness of a sinner,—so like as that, touching his outward appearance, no eye could discern any difference, compassed about with all those infirmities and necessities, which are the followers and attendants of sin in us; "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs;" a man who all his lifetime had intimate acquaintance, and familiarity with grief. Grief and he were long acquaintance, and never parted till death parted them. Nay, not only was he, in his outward estate, subject to all those miseries and infirmities, unto which sin subjects other men, but was something beyond all, "his visage more marred than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men," Isa. 52:14; and therefore he was a hissing and astonishment to many. He had no form nor comeliness in him, and no beauty to make him desirable; and

therefore his own friends were ashamed of him, and hid their faces from him; "he was despised and rejected of men," Isa. 53:2, 3. Thus you see, he comes in the most despicable and disgraceful form of flesh that can be; and an abject among men; and as himself speaks in Psal. 22:6, "a worm, and not a man;" a reproach of men, and despised among the people. Now this, I say, is the crowning of the great mystery of godliness, which without all controversy, is the mystery in all the world that hath in it most greatness and goodness combined together, that is the subject of the highest admiration, and the fountain of the sweetest consolation that either reason or religion can afford. The mysteries of the Trinity are so high, that if any dare to reach at them, he doth but catch the lower fall; it is as if a worm would attempt to touch the sun in the firmament. But this mystery is God coming down to man, to be handled and seen of men, because man could not rise up to God's highness. It is God descending to our baseness, and so coming near us to save us. It is not a confounding but a saving mystery. There is the highest truth in it, for the understanding to contemplate and admire; and there is the greatest good in it, for the will to choose and rest upon. It is contrived for wonder and delight to men and angels. These three, which the angelic song runs upon, are jewels of it,— "glory to God, peace on earth, and good-will towards men."

XII

Verse 3.—For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, &c.

Of all the works of God towards man, certainly there is none hath so much wonder in it, as the sending of his Son to become man; and so

it requires the exactest attention in us. Let us gather our spirits to consider of this mystery;—not to pry into the secrets of it curiously, as if we had no more to do, but to satisfy our understandings; but rather that we may see what this concerns us, and what instruction or advantage we may have by it, that so it may ravish our affections. I believe, there is very palpable and gross ignorance in thousands of the very thing itself. Many who profess Jesus Christ, know not his natures, or his glorious person,—do not apprehend either his highness as God, or his lowness as man. But truly, the thing that I do most admire, is, that those who pretend to more knowledge of this mystery, yet few of them do enter upon any serious consideration about it,—for what use and purpose it is; though it be the foundation of our salvation, the chief ground of our faith, and the great spring of our consolation. Yet to improve the knowledge of it to any purpose of that kind, is a thing so rare, even among true Christians, that it is little the subject of their meditation. I think, indeed, the lively improvement of this mystery of godliness would be very effectual to make us really what we are said to be, that is, Christians. There is something to this purpose, 1 John 4:2, 3, 15, and 5:1. The confessing and knowing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and is the Son of God, before his taking on flesh, is made a character of a spiritual man that dwelleth in God. Not that a bare external confession, or internal opinion and assent to such a truth, is of so much value,—which yet is the height that many attain unto; but it is such a soul acknowledgment, such an heart approbation of this mystery, as draws alongst the admiration and affection after it, as fixeth the heart upon this object alone, for life and salvation. The devils confessed and believed, but they trembled at it, Luke 4:34, 41. He was afraid of what he knew, but Peter confessed and loved what he knew; yea, he did east his soul upon that Lord whom he confessed. It is such an acknowledgment of Christ, as draweth the soul, and unites it to him, by a serious and living embracement. Such a sight of Jesus

Christ, hath both truth and goodness in it, in the highest measure; and so doth not only constrain the assent of the mind, but is a powerful attractive to the heart, to come to him, and live in him. I pray you consider then what moment is in this truth, that you may indeed apply your souls to the consideration of what is in Jesus Christ thus revealed, not simply to know it, but for a further improvement of it, to seek life in him, that the stamp and impression of this Saviour may be set so deeply on your souls, as that you may express this in a real confession of him in your words and works, Tit. 1:16, Matt. 7:21. This is indeed to know and confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, to fetch thence the ground of all our hope and consolation, and to draw thence the most powerful motives to walking, "even as he walked," to improve it for confidence in him, and obedience to him.

I shall speak then a word of these two great ends and purposes,—of God's sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, his own glory, and man's good. The song of angels at his birth shews this,—"Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards man." His glory is manifested in it in an eminent manner. The glory of his wisdom,—that found out a remedy. What a deep contrivance was it! How infinitely beyond all creature inventions! Truly there are riches of wisdom, depths of wisdom in it. I think it could never have entered the thought of men or angels;—all men once to be drowned under a deluge of sin and misery, and made subject to God's righteous judgment, and then to find out a way how to deliver and save so many! All the wisdom that shines in the order and beauty of the world, seems to be but a rude draught to this. Then, herein doth the glory of his mercy and grace shine most brightly, that he transfers the punishment due to man's sin upon his own Son, that when no ransom could be found by man, he finds it out, how to satisfy his own justice, and save us. Truly, this is the most shining

jewel in the crown of God's glory,—so much mercy towards so miserable sinners, so much grace towards the rebellious. If he had pardoned sin, without any satisfaction, what rich grace had it been! But truly, to provide the lamb and sacrifice himself, to find out the ransom, and to exact it of his own Son, in our name, is a testimony of mercy and grace far beyond that. But then, his justice is very conspicuous in this work. And indeed these two do illustrate one another: the justice of God, in taking and exacting the punishment of sin upon his own well-beloved Son, doth most eminently heighten the mercy and grace of God towards us; and his grace and mercy in passing by us, doth most marvellously illustrate the righteousness of God, in making his own Son a curse for us. What testimony can be given in the world, of God's displeasure at sin, of his righteousness in punishing sin, like this! There was no such testimony of love to sinners, and no such demonstration of hatred at sin, imaginable. That he did not punish sin in us, but transfer it over on his most beloved Son, O what love and grace! and that he did punish his own Son, when standing in the place of sinners, O what righteousness and justice! This is that glorious mystery, the conjunction of these two resplendent jewels, justice and mercy, of love and displeasure, in one chain of Christ's incarnation, "into which the angels desire to look," 1 Pet. 1:12. And truly they do wonder at it, and praise from wonder. This is it, that the praises of men and angels shall roll about eternally. David, Psal. 103:19, foreseeing this day, foretold it, that "angels should praise him;" and now it is fulfilled, when all these glorious companies of holy, powerful spirits, welcome the Son of God into the world, by that heavenly harmony of praise, Luke 2:14.

What lumpishness and earthliness is in us, that we do not rise up above, to this melody in our spirits, to join with angels in this song; we, I say, whom it most concerns. The angels wonder, and praise and wonder at this, because the glory of God shines so brightly in it, as if

there were many suns in one firmament, as the light of seven days in one. These three especially,—wisdom, mercy and grace, justice and righteousness, every one of them looks like the sun in its strength, carried about in this orb of the redemption of man, to the ravishing of the hearts of all the honourable and glorious companies above, and making them cheerfully and willingly to contribute all their service to this work, to be ministering spirits to wait on the heirs of salvation.

Now, when the glory of the highest raiseth up such a melodious song above, among angels, O what should both the glory of the highest God, and the highest good of man do to us! When the greatest glory of God, and the chiefest advantage of man are linked together in this chain, what should we do but admire and adore, adore and admire, and, while we are in this earth, send up our consent to that harmony in heaven!

In relation to our good, much might be said, but we shall briefly shew unto you, that it is the greatest confirmation of our faith, and the strongest motive to humility, that can be afforded. Now, if we could be composed thus unto confidence and reverence, to glorify him by believing, and to abase ourselves, to believe in him, and walk humbly with him, upon the meditation of Christ's coming in the flesh, this would make us true Christians indeed.

There is nothing, I know, more powerful to persuade us of the reality of God's invitations and promises to us than this. We are still seeking signs and tokens of God's love, something to warrant us to come to God in Christ, and to persuade us that we shall be welcome; and many Christians puddle themselves in the mire of their own darkness and discouragement, because they cannot find any thing in themselves that can give but the least probable conjecture, that he

will admit and welcome them to come to him, or that such precious promises, and sweet invitations, can belong to such sinners as they conceive themselves to be. Truly, my beloved, I think, while we exercise ourselves thus, we are seeking the sun with a candle, making that which is in itself as bright as the light to be more dark. The evidence of God's reality in offering life to you in Christ, and his willingness to receive you, is not without the compass of his invitation, and yet you seek it where it is least to be found, that is, in yourselves. But indeed, his invitations in the gospel, carry the evidence in their bosom,—that which is above all other signs and evidences, that he did even send his own Son in the flesh for this purpose. Is there any thing besides this, either greater or clearer? I think we are like those who, when they had seen many signs and wonders done by Christ, which did bear testimony to all the world of his divine nature, yet they would not be satisfied, but sought out another sign, tempting him, Matt. 16:1. And truly, he might return this answer to us, "O wicked and adulterous generation, that seeketh after a sign, there shall no sign be given to thee, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." The greatest testimony that can be imagined, is given already,—that the Father should send his only begotten and well-beloved Son into this state of a servant for man. If this do not satisfy, I know not what will. I see not how any work of his Spirit in us, can make so much evidence of his reality and faithfulness in the gospel, and of his willingness to welcome sinners. All the works of the creation, all the works of grace, are nothing to this, to manifest his love to men; and therefore there is a singular note upon it, "God so loved the world, that he sent his Son," John 3:16. "And in this was love manifested, that he gave his Son," 1 John 4:9. If men and angels had set themselves to devise and find out a pledge or confirmation of the love of God, they would have fallen upon some revelation unto, or some operation upon their spirits. But, alas! this is infinitely above that. His own express image, and the brightness of his glory, is come

down to bear witness of his love; nay, he who is equal with himself in glory, is given as a gift to men; and is not he infinitely more than created gifts, or graces, who is the very spring and fountain of them all? "God so loved the world," that truly he gave no such gift besides, to testify such a love. Therefore, when all that he hath done in this kind, cannot satisfy thy scrupulous mind, but thou wilt still go on, to seek more confirmation of his readiness to receive thee, I think it is a tempting of the holy One, which may draw such an answer from him, —O wicked and adulterous person, there shall no sign be given thee, but that which is darker than the former, that which thou shalt understand less. Thou mayest get what thou seekest, perhaps some more satisfaction in thy own condition, but it shall plunge thee more in the issue. Thou shalt always be unsettled, and "unconstant as water, thou shalt not excel." I confess indeed, if we speak of the manifestation of one's particular interest in these promises, and of an evidence of the love of God to thee, in particular, then there must needs be something wrought by the Holy Spirit, on thy soul, to draw down the general testimony of God's love to mankind, into a particular application to thyself. But that I do not speak of now, because that is the sealing of the Spirit after believing; and because you are always unsettled in the first and main point, of flying unto the Son, and waiting on him for life, therefore have you so much inevidence and weakness in that which follows. That which I now speak of, is, that if this were cordially believed, and seriously considered, that "God sent his own Son in the flesh, to save sinners," you could not readily have any doubt, but that your coming to him for salvation would be welcome. You could not say, that such precious invitations could not belong to sinners, or that he could not love the like of you. Truly, I think, if the general were laid to heart, that God hath so loved mankind, that he gave such a gift unto them, there is none could make any more question of his reality, when that gift is tendered to any in particular. Nay, I think it is the

inconsideration of this general evidence and manifestation of love to the world, that makes you so perplexed in particulars. Could you have so much difficulty to believe his love to you, if you indeed believe that he hath loved the world, that is, so many thousands like you? Is there so much distance, I pray you, between you and another, as between him and all? If, then, he loves so many miserable sinners, is there any impossibility in it, but he may love you? For what is in them, that might conciliate his love? I tell you, why I think the right apprehension of the general truths of the gospel would be able, like the sun in its strength, to scatter all the clouds and mists of our particular interest-debates; because I find, that those very grounds, upon which you call in question your own particular interest, if you did consider them, you would find they go a further length, to conclude against all others; and either they have no strength in your case, or they will be of equal force to batter down the confidence of all the saints, and the certainty of all the promises. What is it that troubles you, but that you are sinners, and such sinners, so vile and loathsome? From whence you do conclude, not only that you have no present assurance of his love, but that he cannot love such a one as you are. Now, I say, if this hold good, in reference to you, take heed that you condemn not yourselves in that which you approve,—that is, that you do not dispute against the interest of all the saints, who were such as you are, and the truth of those fundamental positions of the gospel, "God so loved the world," &c. And so you do not only wrong yourselves, but all others; and not only so, but you offer the greatest indignity to him that out of love sent his Son, and to him who, out of love, came and laid down his life. O consider how you indignify and set at nought that great manifestation of God's love, "God manifested in the flesh;" how you despise his love-pledge to sinners, a greater than which he could not give you, because as great as himself! O that you could see the consequence of your anxious and perplexing doubts!—that they do not only an injury to your own

souls, but that they are of a more bloody nature. If they hold good, they will cut off the life and salvation of all believers, and, which is worse, they will, by an unavoidable consequence, conclude an antichristian point, that Christ is not come in the flesh. I beseech you, unbowel your evils, that you may abhor them.

This may strengthen our faith, and minister much consolation, in another consideration too; that which is laid down, Heb. 2:17, and 4:15, that he was "partaker of our nature, and in all things like unto his brethren, that so he might be a merciful High-priest, able to succour us, and touched with the feeling of our infirmities." What strong consolation may be sucked out of these breasts! When it was impossible that man could rise up to God, because of his infinite highness and holiness, behold, God hath come down to man, in his lowness and baseness. He hath sent down this ladder from heaven to earth, that poor wretched sinners may ascend upon it. It is come down, as low as our infirm, weak, and frail nature, that we may have easy coming up to it, and going up upon it to heaven. Therefore his flesh is called, a "new and living way," because a poor sinner may be assured of welcome and acceptation with one of his own kind, his brother,—(he was not ashamed to call us brethren,) "flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone." This may make boldness of access, that we have not God to speak to, or come to, immediately, as he is clothed with glory and majesty, and as the Jews heard him on mount Sinai, and desired a mediator between him and them; but that that great prophet promised to them, hath come, and we have him between us and God,—as low as we, that we may speak to him, "riding upon an ass," a low ass, that every one may whisper their desires in his ear,—and yet as high as God, that he may speak to God, and have power with him. Truly this is a sweet trysting-place to meet God in, that no sinner may have any fear to come to it, to this treaty of peace and reconciliation. How may it persuade us of that great

privilege, that we may "become the sons of God," when the Son of God is become the Son of man, John 1:11, 12. Truly, though it be hard to be believed, that such as we should become the sons of the great King; yet it is nothing so strange as this, that the eternal and only begotten Son of the great God, should become the son of wretched man. That highness will be easily believed, if we consider this lowness. It will not be so hard to persuade a soul, that there is a way of union and reconciliation to God, of being yet at peace with him, if this be pondered,—that God hath married his own nature with ours, in one person, to be a pledge of that union and peace. And then, how much quickening and comfort may it yield us, that he was not only a man, but a miserable man, and that not through any necessity of love and compassion. He had enough of mercy to save us as God, he had enough of love and compassion as man; but he would take on misery too, in his own person, that he might be experimentally merciful to us. Certainly, the experience of misery and infirmity must superadd some tenderness to the heart of our High-priest. But though it did not help him to be more pitiful, yet it was done for us, to help us to have more confidence in him, and boldness to come unto him. What an encouragement is it for a poor man to come unto the once poor Jesus Christ, who "had not where to lay his head!" He knows the evil of poverty, and he chose to know it, that he might have compassion on thee. With what boldness may poor afflicted and despised believers come to him! Why? because he himself had experience of all that, and he was familiarly acquainted with grief and sorrow, therefore he can sympathize best with thee. Let us speak even of the sinful infirmities thou art subject to. That there might be a suitableness in him to help thee, he came as nigh as might be,—he was willing to be tempted to sin; and so he knows the power that temptations must have over weak and frail natures; but sin he could not, for that had been evil for us. Let this then give us boldness to come to him.

I would desire to persuade you to humility from this, according to the lesson Christ gives us, Matt. 11:29, "Learn of me, I am meek and lowly," And the apostle makes singular use of this mystery of the abasement of the Majesty, to abate from our high esteem of ourselves, Phil. 2:3–6. O should not the same mind be in us, that was in Christ! God abased, man exalted,—how unsuitable are these, think you! God lowly in condition and disposition; and man, though base in condition, yet high in his disposition, and in his own estimation! What more mysterious than God humbled? And what more monstrous than man proud? Truly, pride is the most deformed thing in a man, but in a Christian it is monstrous and prodigious. If he did humble himself out of charity and love, who was so high and glorious, how should we humble ourselves out of necessity, who are so low and base? And out of charity and love too, to be conformed and like unto him! Nature may persuade the one, but Christianity teacheth the other,—to be lowly in mind, and esteem every one better than ourselves. To be meek, patient, long-suffering, reason may persuade it, upon the consideration of our own baseness, emptiness, frailty, and nothingness. But this lesson is taught in Christ's school, not from that motive only,—the force of necessity, but from a higher motive,—the constraint of love to Jesus Christ,—"learn of me." Suppose there was no necessity of reason in it, yet affection might be a stronger necessity to persuade conformity to him, and following his example, who became so low, and humbled himself to the death, even for us.

XIII

Verse 3.—And for sin condemned sin in the flesh.

The great and wonderful actions of great and excellent persons must needs have some great ends answerable to them. Wisdom will teach them not to do strange things, but for some rare purposes; for it were a folly and madness to do great things to compass some small and petty end, as unsuitable as that a mountain should travail to bring forth a mouse. Truly we must conceive, that it must needs be some honourable and high business, that brought down so high and honourable a person from heaven as the Son of God. It must be something proportioned to his majesty and his wisdom. And indeed so it is. There is a great capital enemy against God in the world, that is, sin. This arch-rebel hath drawn man from his subordination to God, and sown a perpetual discord and enmity between them. This hath conquered all mankind, and among the rest, even the elect and chosen of God, those whom God had in his eternal counsel predestinated to life and salvation. Sin brings all into bondage, and exerciseth the most perfect tyranny over them that can be imagined; makes men to serve all its imperious lusts;—and then all the wages is death,—it binds them over to judgment. Now this sedition and rebellion being arisen in the world, and one of the most noble creatures carried away in this revolt, from allegiance to the divine majesty, the most holy and wise counsel of Heaven concludes to send the king's Son, to compesce this rebellion, to reduce men again unto obedience, and destroy that arch-traitor, sin, which his nature most abhors. And for this end the Son of the great King, Jesus Christ, came down into the world, to deliver captive man, and to condemn conquering sin. There is no object that God hath so pure and perfect displeasure at as sin. Therefore he sent to condemn that which he hates most (and perfectly he hates it)—to condemn sin. And this is expressed as the errand of his coming, 1 John 3:5, 8, "to destroy the works of the devil." All his wicked and hellish plots and contrivances against man, all that poison of enmity and sin, that out of envy and malice he spued out upon man, and instilled into his nature; all those

works of that prince of darkness, in enticing man from obedience to rebellion, and tyrannizing over him since, by the imperious laws of his own lusts; in a word, all that work that was contrived in hell, to bring poor man down to that same misery with devils; all that Christ, the only begotten Son of the great King, came (for this noble business) to destroy it;—that tower which Satan was building up against heaven, and had laid the foundation of it as low as hell, this was Christ's business down among men, to destroy that Babylon, that tower of darkness and confusion, and to build up a tower of light and life, to which tower sinners might come, and be safe, and by which they might really ascend into heaven. Some do by these words "for sin," understand the occasion and reason of Christ's coming, that it was, because sin had conquered the world, and subjected man to condemnation; therefore, Jesus Christ came into the world to conquer sin and condemn it, that we might be free from condemnation by sin. And this was the special cause of his taking on flesh. If sin had not entered into the world, Christ had not come into it; and if sin had not erected a throne in man's flesh, Christ had not taken on flesh,—he had not come in the likeness of sinful flesh. So that this may administer unto us abundant consolation. If this was the very cause of his coming, that which drew him down from that delightful and blessed bosom of the Father, then he will certainly do that which he came for. He cannot fail of his purpose, he cannot miss his end: he must condemn sin, and save sinners. And truly this is wonderful love, that he took sin only for his party, and came only for sin, or against sin, and not against poor sinners. He had no commission of the Father but this, as himself declares, John 3:17; for "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." As one observes well, Christ would never have hinted at such a jealousy, or suggested such a thought to men's minds, had it not been in them before. But this we are naturally inclined unto,—to think hard of God, and can hardly be

persuaded of his love, when once we are persuaded of our enmity. Indeed the most part of the world fancy a persuasion of God's love, and have not many jealousies of it, because they know not their own enmity against God. But let a man see himself indeed God's enemy, and it is very hard to make him believe any other thing of God, but that he carries a hostile mind against him. And therefore Christ, to take off this, persuades and assures us, that neither the Father nor he had any design upon poor sinners, nor any ambushment against them; but mainly, if not only, this was his purpose in sending, and Christ's in coming,—not against man, but against sin, not to condemn sinners, but to condemn sin, and save sinners. O blessed and unparalleled love! that made such a real distinction between sin and sinners, who were so really one. Shall not we be content to have that woful and accursed union with sin dissolved? Shall not we be willing to let sin be condemned in us, and to have our own souls saved? I beseech you, beloved in the Lord, do not think to maintain always Christ's enemy, that great traitor against which he came from heaven. Wonder that he doth not prosecute both as enemies; but if he will destroy the one and save the other, O let it be destroyed, not you; and so much the more, for that it will destroy you! Look to him, so iniquity shall not be your ruin, but he shall be the ruin of iniquity. But if you will not admit of such a division between you and your sins, take heed that you be not eternally undivided, that you have not one common lot for ever, that is, condemnation. Many would be saved, but they would be saved with sin too; alas! that will condemn thee. As for sin, he hath proclaimed irreconcilable enmity against it, he hath no quarter to give it, he will never come in terms of composition with it, and all because it is his mortal enemy. Therefore let sin be condemned, that thou mayest be saved. It cannot be saved with thee, but thou mayest be condemned with it.

The words, "for sin," may be taken in another sense as fitly, "a sacrifice for sin," so that the meaning is,—Jesus Christ came to condemn and overthrow sin in its plea against us by a sacrifice for sin, that is, by offering up his own body or flesh. And thus you have the way and means how Christ conquered sin, and accomplished the business he was sent for. It was by offering a sacrifice for sin, to expiate wrath, and so satisfy justice. "The sting and strength of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," as the apostle speaks it, 1 Cor. 15:55. We had two great enemies against us, two great tyrants over us,—sin and death. Death had passed upon all mankind. Not only the miseries of this life and temporal death had subjected all men, but the fear of an eternal death, of an everlasting separation from the blessed face of God, might have seized upon all, and subjected them to bondage, Heb. 2:15. But the strength and sting of that is sin; it is sin that arms death and hell against us. Take away sin, and you take away the sting, the strength of death,—it hath no force or power to hurt man, but death being the wages due for sin, Rom. 6:23. All the certainty and efficacy in the wages, flows from this work of darkness,—sin. But now "the strength of sin is the law." This puts a poisonable and destructive virtue in the sting of sin, for it is the sentence of God's law, and the justice and righteousness of God, that hath made so inseparable a connection between sin and death. This gives sin a destroying and killing virtue. Justice arms it with power and authority to condemn man, so that there can be no freedom, no releasement from that condemnation, no eschewing that fatal sting of death, unless the sentence of God's law, which hath pronounced "thou shalt die," be repealed, and the justice of God be satisfied by a ransom. And this being done, the strength of sin is quite gone, and so the sting of death removed.

Now, this had been impossible for man to do. These parties were too strong for any created power. The strength of sin to condemn may be

called some way infinite, because it flows from the unchangeable law of the infinite justice of God. Now, what power could encounter that strength, except that which had infinite strength too? Therefore, it behoved the Son of God to come for this business; to condemn sin and save the sinner. And being come, he yokes first with [i.e. assails] the very strength of sin, for he knew where its strength did lie, and so did encounter first of all with that,—even the justice of his Father, the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us; for if once he can set them aside, as either vanquished or satisfied, he hath little else to do. Now, he doth not take a violent way in this either. He doth it not with the strong hand, but deals wisely, and (to speak so with reverence) cunningly in it; "he came under the law, that he might redeem them who were under the law," Gal. 4:4. Force will not do it, the law cannot be violated, justice cannot be compelled to forego its right. Therefore our Lord Jesus chooseth, as it were, to compound with the law,—to submit unto it: "He was made under the law," he who was above the law, being lawgiver in mount Sinai, Acts 7:38, Gal. 3:19. He cometh under the bond and tie of it, to fulfil it: "I came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it," Matt. 5:17. He would not offer violence to the law, to deliver sinners contrary to the commination of it, or without satisfaction given unto it, for that would reflect upon the wisdom and righteousness of the Father who gave the law. But he doth it better in an amicable way,—by submission and obedience to all its demands. Whatsoever it craved of the sinner, he fulfils that debt. He satisfies the bond in his own person by suffering, and fulfils all the commandments by obedience. And thus, by subjection to the law, he gets power over the law, because his subjection takes away all its claim and right over us. Therefore it is said, that he blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us, by nailing it to his cross; and so took it out of the way, Col. 2:14. Having fulfilled the bond, he cancelled it, and so it stands in no force either against him or us. Thus, the strength of sin, which is the law, is removed; and by

this means, sin is condemned in the flesh. By the suffering of his flesh, it is fallen from all its plea against sinners; for, that upon which it did hang, viz. the sentence of the law, is taken out of the way, so that it hath no apparent ground to fasten any accusation upon a poor sinner that flies into Jesus Christ, and no ground at all to condemn him,—it is wholly disabled in that point. For, as the Philistines found where Samson's strength lay, and cut his hair, so Christ hath in his wisdom found where the sin's plea against man lay, and hath cut off the hair of it, that is, the hand-writing of ordinances which was against us.

This is that which hath been shadowed out from the beginning of the world, by the types of sacrifices and ceremonies. All those offerings of beasts, of fowls, and such like under the law, held forth this one sacrifice, that was offered in the fulness of time, to be a propitiation for the sins of the world. And something of this was used among the Gentiles before Christ's coming, certainly by tradition from the fathers, who have looked afar off to this day, when this sweet-smelling sacrifice should be offered up to appease Heaven. And it is not without a special providence, and worthy the remarking, that since the plenary and substantial One was offered, the custom of sacrificing hath ceased throughout the world. God, as it were, proclaiming to all men, by this cessation of sacrifices, as well as silence of oracles, that the true atonement and propitiation is come already, and the true prophet is come from heaven, to reveal God's mind unto the world. There were many ceremonies in sacrificing observed, to hold out unto us the perfection of our atonement and propitiation. They laid their hands on the beast, who brought it, to signify the imputation of our sins to Christ, that "he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And truly, it is worth the observation, that even those sacrifices for sin were called sin; and so the word is used

promiscuously in Leviticus, to point out unto us, that Jesus Christ should make his soul sin, Isa. 53:10, that is, a sacrifice for sin, and be made sin for us, that is, a sacrifice for sin. When the blood was poured out ("because without shedding of blood there was no reconciliation," Heb. 10.) the priest sprinkled it seven times before the Lord, to shadow out the perfection of that expiation for our sins, in the virtue and perpetuity thereof, Heb. 9:26, that he should appear to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;—to put it away, as if it had never been, by taking it on him and bearing it. And then the high priest was to bring in of the blood into the holy place and within the vail, and sprinkle the mercy seat, to shew unto us, that the merit and efficacy of Christ's blood should enter into the highest heavens, to appease the wrath of God. Our high priest, by his own blood, hath entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us, Heb. 9:12. And truly this is that sacrifice, which being offered without spot to God, pacifies all, ver. 14. Sin hath a cry, it crieth aloud for vengeance. This blood silenceth it, and composeth all to favour and mercy. It hath so sweet and fragrant a smell in God's account, that it fills heaven with the perfume of it. He is that true scape-goat, who, notwithstanding that he did bear all the sins of his people, yet he did escape alive. Albeit he behoved to make his soul a sacrifice for sin, and so die for it; yet by this means he hath condemned sin, by being condemned for sin. By this means he hath overcome death and the grave, by coming under the power of death, and so is now alive for ever, to improve his victory for our salvation. And by taking on our sins he hath fully abolished the power and plea of them, as the goat that was sent to the wilderness out of all men's sight was not to be seen again. Truly, this is the way how our sins are buried in the grave of oblivion, and removed as a cloud, and cast into the depths of the sea, and sent away as far as the east is from the west, that they may never come into judgment against us to condemn us, because Christ, by appeasing wrath and satisfying justice by the

sacrifice of himself, hath overthrown them in judgment, and buried them in the grave with his own body.

You see then, my beloved, a solid ground of consolation against all our fears and sorrows—an answer to all the accusations of our sins. Here is one for all, one above all. You would have particular answers to satisfy your particular doubts. You are always seeking some satisfaction to your consciences besides this; but believe it, all that can be said, besides this atonement and propitiation, is of no more virtue to purge your consciences, or satisfy your perplexed souls, than those repeated sacrifices of old were. Whatsoever you can pitch upon besides this, it is insufficient; and therefore you find a necessity of seeking some other grace or qualification to appease your consciences, even as they had need to multiply sacrifices. But now, since this perfect propitiation is offered up for our sins, should not all these vain expiations of your works cease? Truly, there is nothing can pacify Heaven but this; and nothing can appease thy conscience on earth but this too. If you find any accusation against you, consider Christ hath, by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in his own flesh. The marks of the spear, of the nails, of the buffetings of his flesh—these are the tokens and pledges, that he encountered with the wrath due to your sins, and so hath cut off all the right that sin hath over you. If thou canst unfeignedly in the Lord's sight, say, that it is thy soul's desire to be delivered from sin, as well as wrath, thou wouldst gladly fly from condemnation; then come to him who hath condemned sin, by suffering the condemnation of sin, that he might save those who desire to fly from it to him.

XIV

Verse 4.—That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.

God having a great design to declare unto the world both his justice and mercy towards men, he found out this mean most suitable and proportioned unto it, which is here spoken of in the third verse—to send his own Son to bear the punishment of sin, that the righteousness of the law might be freely and graciously fulfilled in sinners. And, indeed, it was not imaginable by us, how he could declare both in the salvation of sinners. We could not have found out a way to declare his righteousness and holiness, which would not have obscured his mercy and grace; nor a way to manifest his grace and mercy, which would not have reflected upon his holiness and justice, according to the letter of the law that was given out as the rule of life. He that doth them shall live in them; "and cursed is every one that doeth them not," &c. What could we expect, if this be fulfilled, as it would appear, God's truth and holiness require. Then we are gone,—no place for mercy, if this be not fulfilled, that the mercy may be shewed in pardoning sin. Then the truth and faithfulness of God seem to be impaired. This is the strait that all sinners would have been into, if God had not found such an enlargement as this—how to shew mercy without wronging justice; and how to save sinners without impairing his faithfulness. Truly, we may wonder, what was it that could straiten his majesty so, that he must send his own Son, so beloved of him, and bruise him, and hide his face from him; yea, and torment him, and not let the cup pass from him for any intreaties. Might he not more easily have never added such a commination to the law,—"thou shalt die;" or more easily relaxed and repealed that sentence, and passed by the sinner without any more, than exacted so heavy a punishment from one that was innocent? Was it the satisfaction of his justice that straitened him, and put a necessity of this upon him? But truly it seems it had

been no more contrary to righteousness to have passed over the sinner, without satisfaction, than to require and take it off one who was not really guilty. The truth is, it was not simply the indispensable necessity of satisfying justice, that put him upon such a hard and unpleasant work, as the bruising of his own Son; for, no doubt, he might have as well dispensed with all satisfaction, as with the personal satisfaction of the sinner. But here the strait lay, and here was the urgency of the case: He had a purpose to declare his justice, and therefore a satisfaction must be had, not simply to satisfy righteousness, but rather to declare his righteousness, Rom. 3:25. Now, indeed, to make these two shine together in one work of the salvation of sinners, all the world could not have found out the like of this,—to dispense with personal satisfaction in the sinner, which the rigour of the law required, and so to admit a sweet moderation and relaxation, that the riches of his grace and mercy might be manifested, and yet withal, to exact the same punishment of another willingly coming in the sinner's place, to the end that all sinners may behold his righteousness and justice. And so this work of the redemption of sinners, hath these names of God published by himself, (Exod. 34:6, 7.) to Moses; engraven deeply upon it; mercy and goodness spelled out at length in it,—for love was the rise of all, and love did run alongst in all; yet so, as there is room to speak out his holiness, and righteousness, and justice, not so much to affright sinners, as to make his mercy the more amiable and wonderful.

I know not a more pressing ground of strong consolation, nor a firmer bulwark of our confidence and salvation, than this conjunction of mercy and justice in the business. There might have been always a secret hink [i.e. loop, tie, knot, or entanglement] of jealousy and suspicion in our minds, when God publisheth mercy and forgiveness to us freely. O how shall the law be satisfied, and the importunity of justice and faithfulness, that hath pronounced a

sentence of death upon us, answered! Shall not the righteous law be a loser this way, if I be saved, and it not satisfied by obedience or suffering! How hard would it be to persuade a soul of free pardon, that sees such a severe sentence standing against it! But now there is no place for doubting. All is contrived for the encouragement and happiness of poor sinners, that we may come to him with full persuasion of his readiness and inclineableness to pardon, since Jesus Christ hath taken the law and justice of God off our head, and us off their hand; and since he hath reckoned with them, for what is due by us, and paid it without us,—then we have a clear way, and ready access to pardon, and to believe his readiness to pardon. And this is it which is holden out here,—Christ condemning sin in the flesh, or punishing sin in his own flesh, giving a visible and sensible representation of the justice and righteousness of God in punishing sin, and that in his own flesh, offering up himself as the condemned sinner, and hanging up to the view of all the world, as an evident testimony of the justice and righteousness of God against sin, and by this means cutting off the very strength of sin—the law, by fulfilling it. In Christ's sufferings you may behold, as in a clear mirror, the hatred and displeasure of God against sin, the righteousness of God in punishing sin. "Him hath God set forth to the world to be a propitiation, to declare the righteousness of God," Rom. 3:24, 25. In this crucified Lord, you may behold the sensible image, and the most lively demonstration of holiness and righteousness. Christ's flesh bare the marks of both,—God's holiness in hating Sin, his righteousness in punishing it, and both in his beloved and only begotten Son's person,—in his flesh; and all for this purpose, that the law might be no loser by our salvation, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," &c.

This is that which Christ says, "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," Matt. 5:17; and which Paul seconds, "Is the law then made

void by faith? God forbid: it is rather established," Rom. 3:31. The law and justice come better to their own, by our cautioner, than by us. There is no such way conceivable, to satisfy them fully, as this, whether you look to the commandment or the curse.

The commandment never got such satisfaction in any person, as in Christ's; he hath fulfilled it by obedience. "It becomes us," saith he, "to fulfil all righteousness," Matt. 3:15, both moral and ceremonial; so that "there was no guile found in his mouth,"—he knew no sin, he was holy and harmless. His Father's will was his soul's delight,—"I delight to do thy will," Psal. 40:8. It was more to him than his necessary food, his meat and drink. There was so absolute a correspondency between his will and God's will, and between his way and his will, that it was not possible that any difference should fall between them. His obedience had more good in it (so to speak) than Adam's disobedience had evil in it, Rom. 5:18, 19. Adam's disobedience was but the sin of a finite creature, but Christ's obedience was the work of an infinite person. I think there was more real worth in Christ's obedience to the commands, than in all the united service and obedience of men and angels. All the love, delight, fear, and obedience flowing from these,—take them in one bundle, as they will be extended and multiplied to all eternity; there is something in Christ's that elevates it above all, and puts a higher price upon it. The transcendent dignity of his person,—his own Son "made under the law," Gal. 4:4,—that is more worth than if all men and angels had been made under it. It had been no humiliation, but rather the exaltation of an angel, to be obedient to God. That subordination to a law, is the highest top of the creature's advancement. But he was such a person, as his obedience was a humbling himself: "He humbled himself, and became obedient, even to the death," Phil. 2:8; and though he was the Son of God, yet he stooped to learn obedience, Heb. 5:8. Now indeed the

commandment comes to it better, by this means, to have such a glorious person under it, than if it had poor naughty us under it; and that is fulfilled by him, when otherwise it would never have been done. I suppose that justice had exacted the punishment of us: As we could never have ended suffering to all eternity, so we would never have begun new obedience to the command to all eternity. Thus, except Christ had taken it off us, and us off its hand, it would never have been fulfilled, since it was first broken. Next, the curse of the law could not get fuller satisfaction than in Christ. I suppose it had fallen upon the sinner: There is not so much worth in the creature's extremest sufferings, as to compensate the infinite wrongs done to the holiness and righteousness of God. Therefore, what was wanting in the intrinsic value of the creature's suffering, behoved to be made up in the infinite extent of it, and eternal continuance of it upon the creature. Thus, there could never be a determined time assigned, in which the curse were fulfilled, and in which, justice could say,—hold, I have enough. It is as if a man were owing an infinite debt, and he could get nothing to defray it, but poor petty sums, which being all conjoined, cannot amount to any proportion of it. Therefore, since he cannot get one sum in value equal to it, he must be eternally paying it in smalls, according to his capacity. And so, because the utmost farthing cannot be won at, [i.e. reached] he can never be released out of prison. But our Lord Jesus hath satisfied it to the full. He was a more substantial debtor, and because of the infinite dignity of his person, there was an intrinsic value upon his sufferings, proportioned unto the infiniteness of man's sin; so that he could pay all the debt in a short time, which a sinner could but have done to all eternity. Now, you know, any man would rather chuse such a cautioner, that can solidly satisfy him in gross, and pay all the sum at once, than such a principal, that because of his inability, cannot amount to any considerable satisfaction in many years. And even so it is with the law and justice of God. They hold themselves better

contented in Christ than in us, in his being "made a curse," than the falling of the curse on us, Gal. 3:13. And therefore God testifies it to poor sinners, "Deliver them, I have found a ransom," Job 33:24;—and that is the ransom which Christ gave,—"his life for many," Matt. 20:28.

You see then, how this conclusion follows, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," he having fulfilled it, and satisfied it so fully, both by obedience to the commandment, and submission to the curse. It is all one in God's account, as if we had done it, because Christ was surety in our stead, and a common person representing us, and therefore his paying of the debt acquits us at the hand of justice, and whatsoever he did to fulfil all righteousness, that is accounted ours, because we were represented in him, and judicially one with him. And therefore, we were condemned when he was condemned; we were dead when he died,—and so the righteousness of the law, in exacting a due punishment for sin, was fulfilled for us in him; and it is all one as if it had been personally us. And this is laid down as the foundation of that blessed embassy or message of reconciliation to sinners, as that upon which God is in Christ reconciling and beseeching us to be reconciled, 2 Cor. 5:19, 20, 21,—"Him who knew no sin, hath he made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." You see the blessed exchange that he hath made with us,—he hath laid our sins on sinless Christ, and laid Christ's righteousness on sinful us. Christ took our sins on him, that he might give us his righteousness; and by virtue of his transaction and communication, as it was righteous with God to condemn sin in Christ's flesh, because our sin was upon him, so it is as just with him to impute righteousness to us, because we were in him. And as the law made him a curse, and exacted the punishment of him, it is as righteous with the Lord to give us life and salvation,

and to forgive sin, as John speaks, 1 Epistle 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins."

Now consider this, my beloved, for it is propounded unto you as the greatest persuasive to move you to come to Jesus Christ,—there is such a clear and plain way in him to salvation. If this do not move your hearts, I know not what will. I do not expect that your troubles in this world,—the frequent lashes of judgment, the impoverishing and exhausting of you, the plucking away of those things you loved, the disquieting your peace so often, that any of those things that have the image of wrath upon them, can drive you to him, and make you forsake your way, when such a motive as this doth not prevail with you. O what heart could stand against the power of this persuasion, if it were but rightly apprehended! Who would not willingly fly into this city of refuge, if they did but know aright the avenger of blood that pursues them, and what safety is within? You are always imagining vain satisfactions to the law of God; how great weight doth your fancy impose upon your tears, your confessions, your reformatations! If you can attain any thing of this kind, that is it which you give to satisfy justice, it is that wherewith you pretend to fulfil the law. But if it could be so, wherefore should God have sent his Son to condemn sin, and purchase righteousness by him? I beseech you, once know and consider your estate, that you may open your hearts to this Redeemer, that you may be willing to be stripped naked of all your imaginary righteousness, to put on this which will satisfy the law fully. Will you die in your sins, because you will not come to him to have life? Will you rather be condemned with sin, than saved with Christ's righteousness? And truly, there is no other altar that will preserve you but this. Now, if any, apprehending their own misery, be hardly pursued in their consciences, by the law of God, I beseech you come hither, and behold it satisfied and fulfilled. "I beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God;" to lay down all hostile

affections, and come to him, because "God is in Christ reconciling the world, and not imputing their sins," because he hath imputed them already to Christ, "him who knew no sin," &c., and he is in Christ, imputing his righteousness to sinners.

XV

Verse 4.—That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.

Think not, saith our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "that I am come to destroy the law,—I am come to fulfil it," Matt. 5:17. It was a needful caveat, and a very timeous advertisement, because of the natural misapprehensions in men's minds of the gospel. When free forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting, is preached in Jesus Christ, without our works; when the mercy of God is proclaimed in its freedom and fulness, the heart of man is subject to a woful misconceit of Christ, as if by these a latitude were given, and a liberty proclaimed to men to live in sin. That which is propounded as the encouragement of poor sinners, to come to God, and forsake their own wicked way, is miserably wrestled upon a mistake, to be an encouragement to revolt more and more. Righteousness and life, by faith in a Saviour, without the works of the law, is holden out as the grand persuasion of the gospel, to study obedience to the law. And yet such is the perverseness of many hearts, that either in opinion or practice, they so carry themselves, as if there were an inconsistency between Christ and the law, between free justification and sanctification,—as if Christ had come to redeem us, not from sin, but to sin. Now, to prevent this, "think not," saith he, "that I am come to destroy the law." Do not fancy to yourselves a liberty to live in sin,

and an immunity from the obligation of a commandment, because I have purchased an immunity and freedom from the curse. No, "I am come to fulfil it" rather, not only in mine own person, but in yours also. And to this purpose, Paul, Rom. 3:31, "Do we then make void the law by faith?" It is so natural to our rebellious hearts, to desire to be free from the yoke of obedience, and therefore we fancy such a notion of faith, as may not give itself to working in love, as is active in nothing but imagination. The apostle abominates this,—"God forbid," he detests it, as impious and sacrilegious; "yea, we establish it." So then, all returns to this, one of the great ends of Christ's coming in his flesh, and one main intendment of the gospel published in his name, is not merely to deliver us from wrath, and "redeem us from the curse," Gal. 3:13, 1 Thess. 1:10, but also, and that especially, "to redeem us from all iniquity, that we might be a people zealous of good works," Tit. 2:14; and to take away sin, and "destroy the works of the devil," 1 John 3:5, 8. We spoke something before noon, how Christ hath fulfilled the law, and established it in his own person, by obedience and suffering,—neither of which ways it could be so well contented by any other. But there is yet a third way that he fulfils and establisheth it, and that is in our persons, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He hath obliged himself to fulfil it, not only for believers, but in believers. Therefore the promises run thus, "I will write my law in their hearts, and cause them to walk in my statutes," Ezek. 36:27, Jer. 31:33. Not only I delight to do thy will, but I will make them delight to do it also. And truly, in this respect, the law is more fulfilled and established by Christ, than ever it could have been, if man had been left to satisfy it alone. If we had reckoned alone with the law, we had been taken up eternally with satisfying for the breaches of it, so that there could be no access to obedience of the command, and no acceptance either. A sinner must first satisfy the curse, for the fault done, before ever he can be in a capacity to

perform new obedience on the terms of acceptance of it with God. Now the first would have taken up eternity, so that there can be no place of entry to the second; therefore, if Christ had not found out a way of free pardon of the sins that are past, and assurance of forgiveness for the time to come, the commandments of God would be wholly frustrated. But there is "forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," Psal. 130:4. The word is also, "worshipped," Truly, my beloved, this is the fountain of all religion,—free forgiveness. There had been no religion, no worship of God, no obedience to his commands throughout all eternity; there should never have been any fear, any love, any delight in God, any reverence and subjection to him, if he had no forgiveness,—a treasure of mercies with him to bestow first upon sinners. And this makes access to stand and serve in his sight. The cloud of our transgressions is so thick and dark, that there could never have been any communion with God, if he had not found out the way to scatter and blot it out, for his own name's sake. Religion, then, must begin at this great and inestimable free gift of imputed righteousness,—of accounting us what we are not in ourselves, because found so in another. It begins at remission of sins. But that is not all. This hath a further end, and truly it is but introductive to a further end; that so a soul may be made partaker of the gift of holiness within, and "have that image of God renewed in holiness and righteousness." I would have you once persuaded to begin at this, to receive the free gift of another's righteousness, Rom. 5:17, and another's obedience, to find your own nakedness and loathsomeness without this covering, and how short all other coverings of your own works are. O that we could once persuade you to renounce yourselves, to embrace this righteousness! then it were easy to prevail with you to renounce sin, to put on holiness. I say, first, you must renounce yourselves, as undone in all you do, as loathsome in all that ever you loved, and come under the wide and broad skirt of Christ's righteousness, which he did weave upon the

earth, for to hide our nakedness. You must once have the righteousness of the law fulfilled perfectly by another, before you can have access to fulfil one jot of it yourselves, or any thing you do be accepted. And till this foundation be laid, you do but beat the air in religion, you build on the sand.

Now, if once you were brought this length, to renounce all confidence in yourselves, and to flee into Christ's righteousness, then it were easy to lead you a step further,—to renounce the love of your most beloved sins. And the more lovely that Christ's righteousness is in your eyes, the more beauty would holiness and obedience have in them also unto you. Then you would labour to walk after the guidance of the Spirit.

I would have the impression of this deep in your hearts,—that the gospel is not a doctrine of licentiousness, but a doctrine of the purest liberty, of the completest redemption. Many think it liberty to serve their lusts; and it is indeed as bonds and cords to restrain them. There is no man but would be content to be saved from the wrath to come; and therefore many snatch at such sentences of the gospel, and take them lightly, without consideration of what further is in it. But truly if this were all, it were not complete redemption, if there were not redemption from sin too, which is the most absolute tyrant in the world. I think a true Christian would account the service of sin bondage, though it were left at his own option. "He that commits sin, is the servant of sin;" therefore the freedom that Christ purchaseth, is freedom from sin, John 8:38. I will say more. We are delivered from wrath, that so we may be redeemed from sin. We have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, that so the image of Christ may be renewed within us; this is the very end of that. I am sure any that discerns aright, knows sin to have infinitely more evil in it than punishment hath; nay, punishment is only evil, as it hath relation to

sin. There is a beauty of justice and righteousness in punishment, but there is nothing in sin, but deformity and opposition to his holiness. It is purely evil, and most purely hated of God. And if there were no more to persuade you that sin is infinitely more evil than pain, consider how our pain and punishment was really transferred upon the blessed Son of God, and that all this did not make him a whit the worse. But he was not capable of the real infusion of our sin. That would have made Christ as miserable, wretched, and impotent as any of us; that would have disabled him so far from helping us, that he would have had as much need of a mediator, as we,—all which were highly blasphemous to imagine. Look then how much distance and difference there was between suffering, dying Christ, and wretched men living in sin. None can say but he is infinitely better, even while in pain, nor the highest prince in pleasure, so much disproportion there is between sin and pain; so much is the one worse than the other. Do not think then that Christ died to purchase an indulgence for you to live in sin. Truly that were to take away the lesser evil, that the greater may remain; that were to deliver from one misery, that we may be more involved in that which is the greatest of all miseries. Nay, certainly if Christ be a Redeemer, he must redeem us from our most potent and accursed enemy,—sin; he must take away the root, the fountain of all misery,—sin; that which conceived in its womb all pains, sorrows, sicknesses,—death and hell. You have the great end of redemption expressed, Luke 1:74, 75, "That we being delivered from all our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness." It was that for which he made man at first, and it is that for which he hath made him again, "created unto good works," Eph. 2:8. It was a higher design certainly, for which the Son of God became partaker of our nature, than only to deliver us from hell. No doubt it was to make us partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. 1:4; and this is the very nature of God,—holiness and goodness. As sin is the very nature and image of the devil, so the great breach of the creation

was the breaking off of this image of God, that was the heaviest fall of man, from the top of divine excellency, into the bottom of devilish deformity. Now it is this that is the great plot for which Christ came into the world,—to make up that breach, to restore man to that dignity again; so that redemption from wrath is but a step to ascend upon, to that which is truly God's design, and man's dignity,—conformity with God in holiness and righteousness.

O that you could be persuaded of this,—that Christ's business in the world, was not to bring a notion of an imaginary righteousness only, by mere imputation, but to bring forth a solid and real righteousness in our hearts, by the operation of his Spirit: I say, imputation, or accounting righteous, is but a mere imagination, if this lively operation do not follow. He came not only to spread his garment over our nakedness and deformity, but really and effectually to be a physician to save our souls, to cure all our inward distempers. The gospel is not only a doctrine of a righteousness without us, but of a righteousness both without, for, and within us too;—"that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," &c. Christ without, happiness itself without, cannot make us happy, till they come in within us, and take up a dwelling in our souls. Therefore I declare unto the most part of you who pretend to expect salvation by Jesus Christ, that you are yet in your sins, and as yet you have no fellowship in this redemption. Do you think to walk after the course of the world, and the lusts of the flesh, to wallow in those common pollutions and uncleannesses among men, swearing, lying, contention, railing, wrath, malice, envy, drunkenness, uncleanness, and such like, and yet be in Christ Jesus? "Do not deceive yourselves, God is not mocked." He that is in Christ, is a new creature. His endeavour and study, his affection and desire, is toward a new walk after the Spirit. Are not most of you carnal, all flesh,—the flesh gives laws, and you obey them? Are not your immortal souls enslaved to

base lusts, to the base love of the world? Are they not prone to prostitute themselves to the service of your fleshly and brutish part? Why do you then imagine, that you are in Christ Jesus, partakers of his righteousness? Consider it in time, that so you may be indeed, what you now are not, but pretend to be. It is the opinion that you are in Christ already, that keeps you out of him.

But, on the other hand again, there is nothing here to discourage a poor soul, that thinks subjection to sin the greatest slavery, who would as gladly be redeemed from the power of it as from hell. I say to such, whose soul's desire it is to be purged from "all that filthiness of flesh and spirit," and whose continued aim is to walk in obedience,—though you have many failings, and often fall and defile yourself again, yet this comfort is holden out here unto you,—there is no condemnation to you; Jesus Christ hath condemned sin to save you, he hath fulfilled all righteousness for you; and therefore lay you the weight of your acceptation and consolation upon what he hath done himself, and not upon what is but yet a-doing in you. Do you not find, I say, that the grace of Jesus Christ, revealed in the gospel, is that which melts your hearts most? Is not the goodness of the Lord that which persuades you most? And do not these make you loathe yourself and love holiness? Encourage yourselves therefore in him. Hold fast the righteousness that is without you by faith, and certainly you shall find that righteousness and holiness shall in due time be fulfilled within you. I know no soul so wretched, but it may lay hold on that perfect righteousness of Christ's, and go under the covering of it, and take heart from it, if so be the desire and affection of their soul be directed to a further end, to have his Spirit dwelling within them, for the renewing of their heart "in righteousness and true holiness." I do not say, that this is a condition which you must perform before you venture to lay hold on Christ's righteousness without you; noways, but rather I would declare unto you the very

nature of faith in Christ, that it seeks delivery from wrath in him, not simply and lastly, but that a way may be made for redemption from sin, and that there may be a participation of that divine nature, which is most in its eye.

XVI

Verse 4, 5.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
For they that are after the flesh, &c.

If there were nothing else to engage our hearts to religion, I think this may do it,—that there is so much reason in it. Truly it is the most rational thing in the world, except some revealed mysteries of faith, which are far above reason, but not contrary to it. There is nothing besides in it, but that which is the purest reason. Even that part of it which is most difficult to man, that which concerns the moderating of his lusts and affections, and the regulating his walk and carriage;—there is nothing that Christianity requires in these matters, but that which may be persuaded by most convincing reasons, to be most suitable and comely for man, as man. You may take it in the subject in hand. There is nothing sounds harsher to men, and seems harder in religion, than such a victory over the flesh, such an abstractedness from sensual and earthly things. And yet, truly, there is nothing in the world, that more adorns and beautifies a man, nothing so elevates him above beasts as this, in so much that many natural spirits, void of this saving light, have notwithstanding been taken with somewhat of the beauty of it, and so far enamoured with the love of it, as to account all the world mad and brutish that followed these lower things, and enslaved themselves unto them. I take the two fountains of all the pollutions, disorders, and defilements among

men, to be the inconsideration and ignorance of God, that eternal Spirit and Fountain-being, and the ignorance of our own souls, those immortal spirits within us, which are derived from that Fountain-spirit. This is the misery of men, that scarce do they once seriously reflect upon their own spirits, or think what immortal souls are within them, and what affinity these have to the Fountain of all spirits. Therefore, do men basely throw down themselves to the satisfaction of the lusts of the flesh. Now, indeed, this is the very beginning of Christianity, to reduce men from these baser thoughts and employments, to the consideration of their immortal souls within. And, O how will a Christian blush to behold himself in that light, to see the very image of a beast upon his nature, to look on that slavery and bondage of his far better part, to the worst and brutish part in him,—his flesh!

If a man did wisely consider the constitution of his nature, from its first divine original, and what a thing the soul is, which is truly and more properly himself, than his body; what excellency is in the soul beyond the body, and so, what pre-eminency it advanceth a man unto beyond a beast,—he could not but account religion the very ornament and perfection of his nature. Reason will say, that the spirit should rule and command the body, that flesh is but the minister and servant of the spirit, that there is nothing the proper and peculiar good of man, but that which adorns and rectifies the spirit; that all those external things which men's senses are carried after, with so much violence, do not better a man, as man, but are common to beasts; that in these things, man's happiness as man, doth not all consist, but in some higher and more transcending good, which beasts are not capable of, and which may satisfy the immortal spirit, and not perish in the using, but live with it. All these things, the very natural frame and constitution of man doth convincingly persuade. Now then, may a soul think within itself, O how far am I

departed from my original! How far degenerated from that noble and royal dignity, that God by the stamp of his image once put upon me! How is it that I am become a slave and drudge to that baser and brutish part, the flesh? I would have you retire into your own hearts, and ask such things at them. "Man being in honour, and understanding not, is even like the beasts that perish," Truly we are become like beasts, because we consider not that we are men, and so advanced by creation far above beasts. The not reflecting on the immortal, spiritual nature of our souls, hath transformed us, in a manner, into the nature of beasts, perishing beasts. Christianity is the very transforming of a beast into a man, as sin was the deforming of a man into a beast. This is the proper effect of Christianity,—to restore humanity, to elevate it, and purify it from all those defilements and corruptions that were engrossed and incorporated into it, by the state of subjection to the flesh. And therefore the apostle delineates the nature of it unto us, and draws the difference wide between the natural man and a Christian.

The natures of things are dark and hidden in themselves, but they come to be known to us by their operations and acting. Their inclinations and instincts are known this way. Grace is truly a very spiritual thing, and the nature of it lies high. Yet as Christ could not be hid in the house, neither can grace be hid in the heart,—it will be known by its working. Christ can be better hid in a house than in the heart, because, when he is engaged to restore that heart and soul to its native dignity and pre-eminency over the flesh, this cannot but cause much disturbance in the man, for a season. To change governments, to cast out usurpers, and to restore the lawful and righteous owner to the possession of his right, cannot be done secretly and easily. It will shake the very foundations of a kingdom to accomplish it. So it is here,—the restitution of the soul to the possession of its right and dominion over the flesh,—the casting out

of that tyrannous and base usurper, the flesh, cannot be done, except all the man know it, feel it, and in a manner be pained with it. Now, the nature of Christianity doth lay itself open to us in these two especially, in what it minds and savours, and how it causeth to walk. Life is known especially by affection and motion. A feeling, thinking, savouring power, is a living power; so a moving, walking power is a living power, and these are here. The Christian is shortly described by his nature. He is one after the Spirit, not after the flesh; and by the proper characteristical operations of that nature, first, minding or savouring the things of the Spirit, which comprehends his inward thoughts, affections, intentions, and cogitations. All his inward senses are exercised about such objects. And then he is one walking after the Spirit; his motions are in a course of obedience, proceeding from that inward relish or taste that he hath of the things of God. It is not without very good reason, that the name of a Christian is thus expressed,—one after the Spirit. That is his character that expresses his nature unto us. Whether ye look to the original of Christianity, or the prime subject of it, or the chief end of it, it deserves to be called by this name. The original of it is very high, as high as that eternal Spirit, as high as the God of the spirits of all flesh. Things are like their original, and some way participate of the nature of their causes. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," John 3:6. That which is born of God who is a Spirit, must be spirit, 1 John 5:1. How royal a descent is that! How doth it nobilitate a man's nature! Truly, all other degrees of birth among men are vain imaginary things, that have no worth at all, but in the fancies of men. They put no real excellency in men. But this is only true nobility. This alone doth extract a man de fœce vulgi, out of the dregs of the multitude. There is no intrinsic difference between bloods, or natures, but what this makes, this divine birth, this second birth. All other differences are but in opinion, this is in reality. It puts the image of that blessed Spirit upon a man. Truly, such a creature is not begotten in the

womb of any natural cause, of any human persuasion, or enticing words of man's wisdom, of any external mercy or judgment. No instruction, no persuasion, no allurements, nor affrightment can make you Christians in the Spirit, till the Spirit blow when it pleaseth, and create you again. It must come from above,—that power that can set your hearts aright, and make them to look straight above.

Christ Jesus came down from heaven unto the earth, and took on our flesh, that so the almighty Spirit might come down to transform our spirits, and lift them up from the earth to the heaven. We cast the seed into the ground of men's hearts, (and alas! it gets entry but in few souls, it is scattered rather on the highway side, and cannot reach into the arable ground of the heart); but it can do nothing without the influence of heaven, except the Spirit beget you again, by that immortal seed of the word. Therefore we would cease our wondering, that all the means of God's word and works do not beget more true Christians. I do rather wonder that any of Adam's wretched posterity should be begotten again, and advanced to so high a dignity, to be born of the Spirit. O that Christians would mind their original, and wonder at it, and study to be like it! If you believe and consider that your descent is from that uncreated Spirit, how powerful might that be to conform you more and more to him, and to transform more and more of your flesh into spirit! There is nothing will raise up the spirits of the children of princes more, than to know their royal birth and dignity. How should the consideration of this make your spirits suitable to your state or fortunes, as we use to say? You would labour to raise them up to that height of your original, and to walk worthy of that high calling. O that we could learn that instruction from it, which Paul gives, 1 Cor. 1:30, 31, "But of him are ye in Christ; therefore let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord!" Truly, a soul possessed with the meditation of this royal descent from God, could

not possibly glory in those inglorious baser things, in which men glory, and could not contain or restrain gloriation and boasting in him. "The glory of many is their shame," because it is their sin, of which they should be ashamed. But suppose that in which men glory, be not shame in itself, as the lawful things of this present world, yet certainly it is a great shame for a Christian to glory in them, or esteem the better of himself for them. If this were minded always,—that we are of God, born of God, what power do you think temptations, or solicitations to sin, would have over us! "He that is born of God sinneth not, he keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not," 1 John 5:18, 19. Truly, this consideration imprinted in the heart, would elevate us above all these baser persuasions of the flesh. This would make sin loathsome and despicable, as the greatest indignity we could do to our own natures. The strength and advantage of sin, is to make us forget what we are, whom we have relation unto,—to drink us drunk with the puddle of the world, or then with our own jealousies and suspicions, that we may forget our birth and state, and so be enticed to any thing. If you would have wherewith to beat back all the fiery darts of the devil, take the shield of this faith and persuasion; how would it silence temptations? "Shall I, who am a ruler, flee," saith Nehemiah? Shall I, who am born of the Spirit; shall I, who am of God in Christ, abase myself to such unworthy and base things? Shall I dishonour my father, and disgrace myself.

Then Christianity's chiefest residence, its royal seat, is in the spirit of man, and so he is one after the Spirit. "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds," Eph. 4:23. As it is of a high descent, so it must have the highest and most honourable lodging in all the creation, that is, the spirit of a man. Without this there is no room else fit for it, and suitable to it, in this lower world, "My son give me thine heart," saith wisdom, Prov. 23:26. It cares for nothing besides, if it get not the

heart, the inmost cabinet of the imperial city of this isle of man; for "out of it are the issues of life," that flow into all the members. Do not think that grace will lodge one night in your outward man,—that you can put on Christianity upon your countenance or conversation without. Except you admit it into your souls, it can have no suitable entertainment there alone. It is of a spiritual nature, and it must have a spirit to abide in. Every thing is best preserved and entertained by things suitable to its nature; such do incorporate together, and imbosom one with another; whereas things keep a greater distance with things different in nature. A flame will die out among cold stones, without oily matter. This heavenly fire that is descended into the world, can have nothing earthly to feed upon. It must die out, except it get into the immortal spirit, and then furnish, so to speak, perpetual nourishment to it, till at length all the spirit be set on flame, and changed, as it were, into that heavenly substance, to mount up above, from whence it came. Do not think, my beloved, to superinduce true religion upon your outside, and within to be as rotten sepulchres. Yon must either open your hearts to Christ, or else he will not abide with you. Such a noble guest will not stay in the suburbs of the city, if you take him not into the palace; and truly the palace of our hearts is too unworthy for such a worthy guest, it hath been so defiled by sin. How vile is it? But if you would let him enter, he would wash it and cleanse it for himself.

Will you know then the character of a Christian? He is one much within. He hath retired into his own spirit, to know how it goes with it; and he finds all so disordered and confused, all so unsettled, that he gets so much business to do at home, as he gets no leisure to come much abroad again. It is the misery of men, that they are wholly without, carried into external things only; and this is the very character of a beast, that it cannot reflect inwardly upon itself, but is wholly spent on things that are presented to the outward senses.

There is nothing in which men are more assimilated to beasts than this, that we do not speak in ourselves, or return into our own bosoms, but are wholly occupied about the things that are without us. And thus it fares with us, as with the man that is busy in all other men's matters, and never thinks of his own. His estate must needs ruin; all his affairs must be out of course. Truly, while we are immersed and drowned in external things, our souls are perishing, our inward estate is washing away. All our own affairs, that can only and properly be called ours, are disordered and jumbled. Therefore, Christianity doth first of all recall the wandering and vain spirit of man into itself, as that exhortation is, Psal. 77:6, to "commune with his own heart," to make a diligent search of his own affairs; and, O how doth he find all out of course, as a garden neglected, all overgrown, as a house not inhabited!—all dropping through, in a word, wholly ruinous, through intolerable negligence! It was the first turn of the prodigal to return to himself, "he came to himself," Luke 15:17. Truly, sin is not only an aversion from God, but it is an estrangement from ourselves, from our souls, from our own happiness. It is a madness that takes away the use of reason and consideration of our own selves. But grace is a conversion, not only to God, but to ourselves. It bringeth a man home to his heart, maketh him sober again who was beside himself. Hence that phrase, 1 Kings 8:47, "When they shall turn to their own hearts, and return." It is the most laborious vanity, or the vainest labour, to compass heaven and earth,—to be so busied abroad,—to know other things, and then to know and consider nothing of that, which of all things most nearly concerns us,—ourselves. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" for that is himself. And what shall it profit to know all, and not know his soul, to be every where but where he ought to be. Well, a Christian is one called home from vain impertinent diversions, one that is occupied most about his soul and spirit, how to have all the disorders he finds in himself ordered, all

those distempers cured, all those defilements washed. This is the business he is about in this world, "to wash his heart from wickedness," Jer. 4:14,—to cleanse even vain thoughts, and shut up from that ordinary repair, his own heart. He is about the inclosing it, to be a garden to the Well-beloved, to bring forth sweet fruits. He is about the renewing of it, the adorning it with the new man, against that day of our Bridegroom's appearing, and bringing him up to celebrate the marriage. Though he be in the flesh, yet he is most taken up with his spirit, how to have it restored to that primitive beauty and excellency, the image of God in it; how to be clothed with humility, and to put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,—that he accounts his beauty; how to rule his own spirit,—that he accounts only true fortitude; and thinks it a greater vassalage and victory to overcome himself than his enemy, and esteems it the noblest revenge, not to be like to other men that wrong him. He is occupied about the highest gain and advantage, viz. to save his spirit and soul; and accounts all loss to this,—to bring Jesus Christ into the heart, that this is the jewel he digs for, and esteems all dung in comparison of it.

If you be Christians after the Spirit, no doubt, you are busied this way about your spirit. For others, they are busied about the flesh,—to make provision for its lusts; and there needs no other mark to know them by. Alas! poor souls, that you have never yet adverted that you have spirits, immortal beings within you, which must survive this dust, this corruptible flesh; what will ye do, when you cannot have flesh to care for? When your spirits can have nothing to be carried forth into, but must eternally dwell within the bosom of an evil conscience, and be tormented with that worm, the bitter remembrance of the neglect of your spirits, and utter estrangement from them, while you were in the body. Then you must be confined within your own evil consciences, and be imprisoned there for ever,

because, while yet there was time and season, you were always abroad, and everywhere, but within your own hearts and consciences,—and is not that a just recompense?

Then again, as Christianity descends from the Father of Spirits, into the spirit of a man, to lodge there for a while, it doth at length bring up the spirit of a man, and unites it to that eternal Spirit; and so, as the original was high and divine, the end is high too. It issues out of that Fountain, and returns with the heart of man, to imbosom itself in that again. And truly, this is the great excellency of true religion above all those things you are busied about, that it elevates the spirit of a man to God, that it will never rest, till it have carried it above to the Fountain-spirit. Our spirits are sparks and chips, to speak so with reverence, of that divine Being; but now they are wholly immersed and sunk into the flesh, and into the earth by sin, till grace come down and renew them, and extract them out of that dunghill, and purify them. And then they are, as in a state of violence, always striving to mount upwards, till they be embodied, or rather inspirited, so to speak, in that original Spirit, till they be wholly united to their own element, the divine nature. You know Christ's prayer, John 17. "That they may be one, as we are one, I in them, and they in me, that they may be made perfect in one," ver. 22, 23. Then spirits have attained perfection, then "will they rest from their labours," when they are one with him. This is the only centre of spirits, in which they can rest immoveable. You find all the desires and affections of the saints are as so many breathings upward, pantings after union with him, and longings to be intimately present with the Lord. Therefore a Christian is one after the Spirit, groaning to be all spirit, to have the earthly house of this tabernacle dissolved, and to be clothed upon with that house from heaven. He knows with Paul, that he is not at home, though he be at home in the body, because the body is that which separates from the Lord, which

partition wall he would willingly have taken down, that his spirit might be at home, present with the Lord, 2 Cor. 6:1, &c. "Who knoweth (saith Solomon) the spirit of a man that ascends upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth," Eccles. 3:21. Truly, the natural motion of man's spirit, should be to ascend upward to God who gave it. When this frail and broken vessel of the body is dissolved into the elements, the higher and purer nature that lodged within it should fly upwards to heaven; even as the spirit of the beasts, being but the prime and finer part of the body, not different in nature from the earth, naturally falls down to the earth with the body, and is dissolved into the elements. But I think, the consideration of that woful disorder, that sin hath brought into the world, that all things in man are so degenerated and become brutish, both his affections and his conversation, that carnal and sensual lusts have the whole dominion over men; I say, the serious and earnest view of this might make a man suspect and call in question, whether or not there be any difference between men and beasts. Whether or not there be any spirit in the one of a higher nature than in the other? Truly, it would half persuade, that there is no immortal spirit in man, else how could he be such a beast all his time, "serving diverse lusts." Can it be possible, might one think, that there is any spirit in men, that can ascend to heaven, when there is no motion thither, to be observed among men? I beseech you, consider this,—the spirit must either ascend or descend when it goes out of the body, as now in affection and endeavour it ascends or descends while it is in the body. There is an indispensable connection between these. What way soever the spirit aims at, which way soever it turns and directs its flight, thither it shall be constrained to go eternally. Do you think, my beloved, while you are in the body, to bow down yourselves to the earth, to descend into the service of the flesh all your time, never once seriously to rise up in the consideration of eternity, or lift up your heads above temporal and earthly things, and

yet in the close to ascend unto heaven? No, no, do not deceive yourselves; you must go forward. This life and eternity make one straight line, either of ascent or descent, of happiness or misery; and since you have bowed down always, while in the body, there is no rising up after it. Forward you must go, and that is downward to that element, into which you transformed your spirits; that is, the earth, or below the earth,—to hell. Your spirits have most affinity with these, and down they must go, as a stone to the earth. But if you would desire to have your spirits ascending up to heaven, when they are let out of this prison, the body, take heed which way they turn. Bend and strive, while here in the body. If your strugglings be to be upward to God, if you have discovered that blessedness which is in him, and if this be the predominant of your spirit, that carries it upwards in desires and endeavours, and turns it off the base study of satisfying the flesh, and the base love of the world; if thy soul be mounting aloft, on these wings of holy desires of a better life than can be found in any thing below, certainly the motion of thy spirit will be in a straight line upward. When thou leavest thy dust to the earth, angels wait to carry that spirit to that bosom of Christ, where it longed and liked most to be. But devils do attend the souls of most part of men, to thrust them down below the earth, because they did still bend down to the earth.

XVII

Verse 5—For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, &c.

Though sin hath taken up the principal and inmost cabinet of the heart of man, though it hath fixed its imperial throne in the spirit of

man, and makes use of all the powers and faculties in the soul to accomplish its accursed desires, and fulfil its boundless lusts; yet it is not without good reason expressed in Scripture, ordinarily under the name of flesh, and a body of death; and men dead in sins are said to be yet in the flesh. The reason is, partly because this was the rise of man's first ruin, or the chiefest ingredient in his first sin,—his hearkening to the suggestions of his flesh, against the clear light and knowledge of his spirit. The apple was beautiful to look on, and sweet to the taste, and this engaged man. Thus the voluntary debasement and subjection of the spirit, which was breathed in of God, unto the service of that dust which God had appointed to serve it, hath turned into a necessary slavery, so that the flesh being put in the throne, cannot be cast out; and this is the righteous judgment of God upon man, that he that would not serve so good and so high a Lord, should be made a drudge and slave to the very dregs of the creation,—partly again, because the flesh hath in it the seeds of the most part of those evil fruits which abound in the world. The most part of our corruptions have either their rise or their increase from the flesh. The most part of the evils of men are either conceived in the flesh, or brought forth by it, by the ministry and help of our degenerate spirits. And truly this is it that makes our returning to God so hard and difficult a work, because we are in the flesh, which is like stubble, disposed to conceive flame upon any sparkle of a temptation. There are so many dispositions and inclinations in the body since our fall, that are as powerful to carry us to excess and inordinateness in affection or conversation, as the natural instincts of beasts do drive them on to their own proper operations. You know the flesh is oftentimes the greatest impediment that the spirit hath, because of its lumpishness and earthly quality. How willing would the spirit be, how nimble and active in the ways of obedience, if it were not retarded, dulled, and clogged with the heavy lump of our flesh! "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," saith

Christ, Matt. 26:41. Truly I think the great remissness, negligence, weakness, fainting of Christians, in their race of Christianity, ariseth ordinarily from this weight that is carried about with them, that it must be some extraordinary impulse of a higher Spirit, to drive us on without wearying. And because of this indisposition of the flesh, we are not able to bear much of God's presence in this life,—it would certainly confound mortality, if so much were let out of it as is in heaven,—no more than a weak eye can endure to behold the sun in its brightness. And then the flesh, as it is the greatest retardment in good, it is the greatest incitement to evil. It is a bosom-enemy, that betrays us to Satan. It is near us, and connatural to us. And this is the great advantage Satan hath of a Christian. He hath a friend within every Christian, that betrays him often. You know the most part of temptations from without could have no such force or strength against us, if there were not some predisposition in the flesh, some seeds of that evil within,—if they were not presented with some suitableness to our senses. And being once engaged on Satan's side, they easily draw the whole man with them, under a false colour and pretence of friendship: therefore they are said to "war against the soul," 1 Pet. 2:11; and they are said "easily to beset us," Heb. 12:1. Truly it is no wonder that the enemy storm our city, when the outworks, yea, the very ports of the city, are possessed by traitors. No wonder Satan approach near the walls with his temptations, when our senses, our fleshly part, is so apt to receive him, and ready to entertain all objects without difference, that are suitable to affect them.

You see then how much power the flesh hath in man, so that it is no wonder that every natural man hath this denomination,—one after the flesh, one carnal from the predomining part, though the worst part. Every man by nature, till a higher birth come, may be called all flesh, all fashioned and composed of the flesh, and after the flesh,—

even his spirit and mind fleshly and earthly, sunk into the flesh, and transformed into a brutish quality or nature. Now the great purpose of the gospel is, to bring alongst a deliverer unto your spirits, for the releasing and unfettering of them from the chains of fleshly lusts. This is the very work of Christianity, to give liberty to the captive souls of men, "and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," Isaiah 63:1. The souls of men are chained with their own fleshly lusts, and if at any time they can break these grosser chains, as some finer spirits have escaped out of the vilest dungeon of the flesh, and cast off these heavier chains that bind the most part of men, yet wholly escape they cannot. There be higher and lower rooms of this prison. There are some more gross, some more subtile cords and bands of the flesh; and whatsoever it be that holds a man bound, or in whatsoever house he be imprisoned, it is not much matter, since really he is bound, and his liberty restrained. If a chain of gold binds as fast as a chain of iron, there is no real difference, except that mockery is added unto it, when a man is detained in a golden prison with golden chains. Though some men, I say, escape the grosser pollutions of the flesh, yet they are fettered within some narrow, scant, and but imaginary good things,—they cannot go without the compass of those. Every man is confined by nature within the circle of his own narrow bosom, or if he expatiate into the field of the world, yet how narrow, how limited, are all created objects, for the infinite desires of the soul, whether it tend to the enjoyment of other creatures, or to the possession of some imaginary excellency in a man's self. How straitened are they! How imprisoned in all that compass! There is no true liberty can be found there. Though some may be disengaged from baser lusts, and the common vain employments of men; yet far they cannot go. They do but engage more with themselves the love and estimation of themselves. Without that compass they cannot possibly go, whether from another principle, or to another end. And, O how little bounds is within any

created breast for the immortal spirit, that is so vast and expatiating in its desires, to dwell in!

But here is the perfect redemption that is in Jesus Christ. When he comes into the soul, he unfetters and releases it, not only of the grosser lusts of the flesh, but even of those subtile invisible bands of self-love, self-seeking, of all scant, narrow, and particular objects, and sets it at liberty to expatiate on that universal good, the infinite fulness of God, and grace which is in Christ Jesus. And hence a Christian is called one after the Spirit, that is, whose spirit is rid and delivered from that natural bondage and slavery to the creatures, and is espoused, at least in affection and endeavour, to the all-sufficient and self-sufficient God.

We told you, that this new nature of a Christian shews itself in affection and motion, in minding and walking. Both are signs of life, and the proper actions of it. As the natural man is easily known by what he minds and savours, and what way he walks, so is the spiritual man. Minding or savouring comprehends, no doubt, all the inward acts of the soul, all the imaginations, cogitations, thoughts, affections, desires, and purposes of the soul. To express it shortly, there is a concurrence of these two, cogitation and affection, the understanding and the will, in this business. "The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit," so he cannot taste or relish them, since he doth not know them, 1 Cor. 2:14. "How can they believe on him whom they have not heard?" But far more, how can men love and desire that which they do not know? Though it be hard to convince some that they know not God, nor the things of the Spirit, because they have some form of knowledge, and seem to understand, and can discourse on religion; yet I wonder that the most part of men, whose ignorance is written on their foreheads, with such palpable characters, should have so much difficulty to take

with this challenge. I am sure, many that persuade themselves of heaven, are yet shut up in that dungeon of natural blindness and darkness of mind, and that so gross and thick darkness, that it is not possible to make them conceive any notion of spiritual things. The common twilight of nature is almost extinguished, and little or nothing increased by their education in the visible church. How can you prize and esteem Jesus Christ, of whom you know nothing but the bare name? How can you favour heaven, when you have never admitted one serious thought of the life to come? O that you could be persuaded that the grace of God is inconsistent with such gross ignorance as is in the generality of you. Truly grace is a light shining in the soul, that opens the eyes to see that light that surrounds us in the gospel. But will you consider, beloved, how ready you are to receive other things of no moment; how your memories can retain them, and your understandings receive other purposes very perplexed and laborious? But for the knowledge of your sin and misery, or of that blessed remedy shewed in the gospel, we cannot make you capable of a few questions about them; and if you learn the words by heart (as you use to speak) yet, alas! the matter and thing itself is not in the heart or mind. You have nothing but words, as appears. If we ask about the same matter in other words and terms, it is as dark and new to you as if you had never heard it. I beseech you consider, if you do not then mind the things of the flesh most, when you are not only most capable to know those things that concern this life, but most ready to entertain such thoughts. You have no difficulty to mind the world whole weeks and years, but you can never find leisure or time to mind the life to come; and yet vainly you say, you mind it always. I beseech you, how do you mind God, and the things of God, when, if you will but recollect your thoughts, and gather the sum of them, you will not find one serious advised thought of him or his matters in a whole week? I profess, I wonder how so many can enforce upon themselves a persuasion that God is

always in their heart. I think it is the height of delusion. I am sure he is not one of ten thousand thoughts, that travel, walk, lodge, and dwell in the souls of men; and yet they will needs bear upon themselves that they always mind him. I am sure most of you cannot say, that ever you shut the doors of your hearts upon other vain objects, that you might retire to secret meditation on God, or conference with him; and I am as sure, that many men have God oftener in their mouths, by oaths and blasphemies, and irreverent speaking, and taking his holy name in vain, than in their minds, prayers, or praises, or in any holy meditations of him. Are you not as unwilling to fix your minds upon any sad solemn thoughts of God's justice, of hell, of heaven, of sin or misery, of death, as boys, whose heads are full of play, are loath to go to their books? Doth not your practice in this speak with these wicked men, Job. 21:14, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of the Almighty?" How constrained are all your thoughts of religion! They are entertained as those whom you would not desire to come again. But how unconstrained, how free, are all other thoughts! Our minds can rove whole days about vanity, about fancies, dreams, nothings; but you neither like to admit nor retain the knowledge of God in your mind, Rom. 1:28. Do you not entertain any serious weighty thoughts of religion, that by occasion may enter as fire-brands, as hot coals, in your bosom? How glad are you to get any diversion to other things! How willing to shun them, or cast them out! But if it be any temporal thing, any thing relating to this flesh, your thoughts come freely off, are steady and fixed as long as you please; your minds can travel through all the ends of the earth, to bring in some fancy of gain or advantage, or to steal by precious time, and that without wearying. Now, all these things considered, my beloved, are you not carnal? I speak to the most of you,—Are you not those who are born of the flesh, since you mind nothing seriously, resolutely, constantly, and willingly, but the things of the flesh, and the things of this life? O it is

no light matter to be born of the flesh! If you continue so, you are ordained for corruption, for death. "To be carnally minded is death," ver. 6 of this chapter.

But I am persuaded better things of some of you, that the true light of God hath shined into your hearts, and revealed more excellent things unto you than these perishing fleshly things,—viz. heavenly, substantial, and eternal things in the gospel, which you account only worthy of the fixed and continued meditation of your spirits. I am sure, you perceive another beauty and excellency in these things than the world doth, because the Spirit hath revealed them unto you. It is true, that your minds are yet much darkened in the apprehension of spiritual things. They are not so willing to receive them, nor so ready to retain them as you desire. They are very unsettled and unsteady in the meditations of spiritual things, and there are innumerable thoughts of other things that pass through your hearts, like common inns, uncontrolled at their pleasure. All this is true; but I am sure it is the grief of your souls, that your hearts are not so fixed and established as the excellency of these spiritual things requires. I know it will be the aim and real endeavour of any spiritual heart, to be shutting up all the entries and doors of the mind, that vain thoughts enter not. Yet enter they will, there are so many porches to enter in at, and our narrow spirits cannot watch at all. Every sense will let in objects, and imagination itself will be active in framing them, and presenting them. But yet the endeavour of a Christian will be, not to let them lodge long within, Jer. 4:14. If they come in unawares, he will labour to make a diversion to a better purpose; and so still it holds good, that the current and course of a Christian's thoughts and cogitations are upon the things of the Spirit,—how to get his own heart washed and cleansed, how to be more holy and conformed to Christ, how to be at peace with God, and keep that peace unbroken, how to walk in obedience to God, and in duty

towards men, how to forsake himself, and withal to deny himself in all these. I say, his most serious and solemn thoughts are about these things. His resolved and advised thoughts run most on this strain, though it be true, that, whether he will or not, other vain and impertinent, or not so concerning thoughts, will pass more lightly, and too frequently through his heart.

The other thing in which this spiritual life doth appear, is the current of the affections, or that relish and taste of the sweetness of the things of the Spirit, flowing from the apprehension of them in the mind. When the light is discovered indeed, (and, O it is a pleasant thing for the eye to behold it, as Solomon speaks!) then the Spirit hath found an object suitable to its nature, and so it relisheth and delighteth in it. Therefore the word is not simple minding, or thinking, but savouring,—thinking with affection upon them, tasting and feeding upon the knowledge of them. It is a minding of them with care and delight, with earnestness, *ῥοεῖν*, "O taste and see how good the Lord is," Psal. 34:8. Some things cannot indeed be known but by some sense. You cannot make a blind man apprehend what light is, till he see it; a deaf man cannot form a notion of sounds in his mind, except he once heard them; neither can a man understand the sweetness of honey, but by tasting it. Truly spiritual things are of that nature,—there is some hidden virtue and excellency in them, which is not obvious to every man that hath the bare knowledge of the letter. There is a spirit and life in them, that cannot be transmitted into your ears with the sound of words, or infused into ink and paper. It is only the inspiration of the Almighty can inspire this sensible perception and real taste of spiritual things. Some powders do not smell till they be beaten. Truly till these truths be well powdered and beaten small by meditation, they cannot smell so fragrantly to the spirit. As meats do not nourish till they be chewed and digested, so spiritual things do not relish to a soul, nor can they

truly feed the soul, till they be chewed and digested into the heart by serious and earnest consideration. This is that which makes these same truths to be some way not the same; these very principles of religion received and confessed by all, to be lively in one, and dead in another. It is the living consideration of living truth, the application of truth to the heart, that makes it lively in one; whereas others keep it only beside them in a corner of their minds, or in a book, in the corner of the house. The same meat is laid to you all. The most part look on it. Others contemplate it, and exercise only their understandings about it, but there are some who taste it, and find sweetness in it, who digest it by meditation and solemn avocation of their hearts from the things of the world; and therefore some are fed, some are starved.

Need we to enlarge much upon this subject? Is it not too palpable that many who fill up our churches, are in the flesh, because they do mind and savour only the things of the flesh, and not of the Spirit? Will you seriously search your hearts,—ask what relishes most with them? Can you say, that it is "the kingdom of God, or the righteousness thereof?" Or, is it not rather those other things of food and raiment, and such like, that have no extent beyond this narrow span of time? I am persuaded the hearts of many taste no sweetness in religion, else they would fix more upon it, and pursue it more earnestly. Are not the things of another world, the great things of the gospel, counted all strange things, Hos. 8:12,—as things that you have not much to do with? Do you not let the officers of Jesus Christ, all the sweet invitations of the gospel, pass by as strangers, and as if ye were unconcerned in them? What taste have they more than the white of an egg? How unsavoury a discourse or thought to a carnal heart is it, to speak of subduing the lusts of the flesh, of dying to the world, of the world to come? Who find their hearts inwardly stirred upon the proposal of Jesus Christ? But if any matter of petty gain

were proffered, O how would men listen with both their ears! How beautiful in the eyes of the covetous mind is any gain and advantage! The sound of money is sweeter to him, than this blessed sound of peace and salvation. How sweet is pleasure to the voluptuous! What suitableness and conveniency is apprehended in these perishing things! But how little moment or weight is conceived and believed to be in things eternal! O how substantial do things visible seem to men, and how trifling do other things invisible appear! But for you, whose eyes are opened, to you Christ is precious, to you the things of the Spirit are beautiful, and all your grief is, that you cannot affect them according to their worth, or love them according to their beauty. I say, some there are who do see a substance and subsistence only in "things not seen," Heb. 11:1. And for things that are seen and visible in this world, they do account them shadows only in comparison of things invisible. The world apprehends no realities, but in what they see; but a Christian apprehends no solid reality in that he sees, but only in that he sees not. And therefore as, in his judgment, he looks upon the one as a shadow, the other as a substance; so he labours to proportion and conform his affection to a suitable entertainment of them, to give a shadow or show of affection to the things of this life, but the marrow and substance of his heart is to the things invisible of another life. Thus the apostle, 1 Cor. 7:30,—Rejoicing, as if we rejoiced not, enjoying, as if we possessed not, using, as if we used not,—half acts for half objects. If we give our whole spirits,—the strength of our souls and minds to them, we are as foolish as he that strikes with all his strength at the air, or a feather. There is no solidity or reality in these things, able to bottom much estimation or affection. Only mind them, and use them as in the by, as in passing through towards your country.

XVIII

Verse 5, 6—For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace

There are many differences among men in this world, that, as to outward appearance, are great and wide. And indeed they are so eagerly pursued, and seriously minded by men, as if they were great and momentous. You see what a strife and contention there is among men, how to be extracted out of the dregs of the multitude, and set a little higher in dignity and degree than they. How do men affect to be honourable above the base! How do they seek to be rich and hate poverty! These differences of poor and rich, high and low, noble and ignoble, learned and unlearned, the thoughts of men are wholly taken up with. But there is one great difference, that is most in God's eye, and is both substantial and eternal, and so infinitely surpasseth all these differences that the minds of men most run out upon. And it is here,—the great difference between flesh and spirit, and them that are after the flesh, and them that are after the Spirit. This is of all other most considerable, because widest and most durable. I say, it is the widest of all, for all others put no difference between men as men. They do not reach the peculiar excellency of a man, that is, the true and proper good of his spiritual and immortal part. They are such as befall alike to good and bad, and so cannot have either much good or much evil in them. "I have seen folly set in great dignity, and princes walking on foot," Eccles. 10:6, 7. Then certainly such titles of honour and dignity, such places of eminency, erected above the multitude, have little or nothing worth the spirit of a man in them, seeing a fool, a wicked man, is as capable of them as a wise man or a

princely spirit. And so of all others,—they do not elevate a man, as a man, above others. A poor, unlearned, mean man, may have more real excellency in him, than a rich, learned, and great person. But this draws a substantial and vast difference indeed, such as is between flesh and spirit, such as is between men and beasts. You know what pre-eminency a man hath over a beast. There is no such wide distance among the sons of men as between the lowest and meanest man and the chiefest beast. "There is a spirit in man," saith Elihu, Job 32:8,—an immortal, eternal substance, of a far higher nature and comprehension. You know what excellency is in the spirit beyond the flesh, such as in heaven beyond the earth; for the one is breathed from heaven, and the other is taken out of the dust of the earth. The one is corruptible, yea, corruption itself, the other incorruptible. How swift and nimble are the motions of the spirit, from the one end of heaven to the other! How can it compass the earth in a moment! Do but look and see what a huge difference is between a beautiful living body, and the same when it is a dead carcase, rotten and corrupted! It is the spirit dwelling within that makes the odds, that makes it active, beautiful and comely. But on the removal of the spirit, it becometh a piece of the most defiled and loathsome dust in the world.

Now, I say, such a vast and wide difference there is between a true Christian and a natural man,—even taking him in with all his common endowments and excellencies. The one is a man, the other a beast,—the one is after the flesh, the other after the Spirit. It is the ordinary compellation of the Holy Ghost, "Man being in honour, and understanding not, is like the beasts that perish," Psalm 49:20; Psalm 94:8, "Understand, ye brutish among the people," &c. Psalm 92:6, "The brutish man understands not this." And Eccl. 3:18, "That they themselves may know, that they are but beasts." Therefore you find the Lord often turning to beasts, to insensible creatures, thereby

to reprove the folly and madness of men, Isa. 1:2; Jer 8:7. Man hath two parts in him, by which he hath affinity to the two most distant natures. He stands in the middle between angels and beasts; in his spirit he riseth up to an angelic dignity, and in his body he falls down to a brutish condition. Now, which of these hath the pre-eminency,—that he is. If the spirit be indeed elevated above all sensual and earthly things, to the life of angels, that is, to communion with God,—then a man is one after the Spirit,—an angel incarnate, an angel dwelling in flesh. But if his spirit throw itself down to the service of the flesh, minding and savouring only things sensual and visible,—then indeed a man puts off humanity, and hath associated himself to beasts, to be as one of them. And indeed a man made thus like a beast is worse than a beast, because he ought to be far better. It is no disparagement to a beast to mind only the flesh; but it is the greatest abasement of a man, that which draws him down from that higher station God had set him into, to the lowest station, that of beasts. And truly a Nebuchadnezzar among beasts is the greatest beast of all, far more brutish than any beast. Now such is every man by nature. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Every man, as he comes out of the womb, is degenerated, and fallen down into this brutish estate, to mind, to favour, to relish nothing, but what relates to this fleshly or temporal being. The utmost sphere and comprehension of man is now of no larger extent than this visible world, and this present life. "He is blind, and seeth not far off," 2 Pet. 1:9. Truly, such is every man by nature; whereas the proper native sphere of the spirit's motion and comprehension is as large as its endurance, that is, as long as eternity, and as broad as to reach the infiniteness of God, the God of all spirits. Now, through the slavery and bondage of men's spirits to their flesh, it is contracted into as narrow bounds as this poor life in the flesh. He that ought to look beyond time, as far as eternity, and hath an immortal spirit given for that end, he is now half blind. The eye of the mind is so over-clouded with lusts and

passions, that it cannot see far off,—not so far as to the morrow after death, not so far as to the entry of eternity. And truly, if you compare the context, you will find, that whosoever doth not "give all diligence to add to faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, and to patience godliness," &c.; he that is not exercised and employed about this study,—how to adorn his spirit with these graces, how to have a victory over himself and the world, and in respect of these, accounts all things beside indifferent;—such a man is blind, and seeth not far off. He hath not gotten a sight of eternity. He hath not taken up that everlasting endurance;—else he could not spend his time upon provision for the lusts of the flesh, but he behoved to lay such a good foundation for the time to come, as is here mentioned. If he saw afar off, he could not but make acquaintance with those courtiers of heaven, which will minister an entrance into that everlasting kingdom. But truly, while this is not your study, you have no purpose for heaven you see nothing but what is just before your eye, and almost toucheth it. And so you savour and mind only what you see.

Is not this, then, a wide difference between the children of this world and the children of God? Is it not very substantial? All others are circumstantial in respect of this. This only puts a real difference in that which is best in men, viz. their spirits. The excellency of nature is known by their affections and motions. So are these here: "The spiritual man savours spiritual things, the carnal man carnal things." Every thing sympathizes with that which is like itself, and is ready to incorporate into it. Things are nourished and preserved by things like themselves. You see the swine embraces the dunghill. That stink is only a savoury smell to them, because it is suitable to their nature. But a man hath a more excellent taste and smell, and he savours finer and sweeter things. Truly it cannot chuse, but that it must be a nature more swinish, or brutish than a swine, that can relish and

savour such filthy abominable works of the flesh as abound amongst some of you. "The works of the flesh are manifest," Gal. 5:19. And indeed they are manifest upon you, acted in the very day time, out-facing the very light of the gospel. You may read them, and see if they be not too manifest in you. Now, what a base nature, what abominable and brutish spirits must possess men, that they apprehend a sweetness and fragrancy in these corrupt and stinking works of the old man! O how base a scent is it, to smell and savour nothing but this present world, and satisfaction to your senses! Truly your scent and smell, your relish and taste, argues your base and degenerate and brutish natures, that you are on the worse side of this division,—*"after the flesh."* But alas, it is not possible to persuade you that there is no sweetness, no fragrancy, nothing but corruption and rottenness, such as comes out of sepulchres opened, in all these works of the flesh, till once a new spirit be put in you, and your natures changed. No more than you can by eloquence persuade a sick man, whose palate is possessed with a vitiated bitter humour, that such things as are suitable to his vitiated taste, are indeed bitter; or make a swine to believe that the dunghill is stinking and unpleasant. Truly it is as impossible to make the multitude of men apprehend, to relish or savour any bitterness or loathsomeness in the ways and courses they follow, or any sweetness and fragrancy in the ways of godliness, till once your tastes be rectified, your spirits be transformed and renewed.

And indeed, when once the spirit is renewed, and dispossessed of that malignant humour of corruption, and fleshly affection, that did present all things contrary to what they are,—then it is like a healthful and wholesome palate, that tastes all things as they are, and finds bitter bitter, and sweet sweet; or like a sound eye, that beholds things just as they are, both in colour, quantity, and distance. Then the soul savours the sweet smell of the fruits of the

Spirit, verse 22—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, temperance," &c. These are fragrant and sweet to the soul, and as a sweet perfume, both to the person that hath them, and to others round about him, and to God also. These cast a savour, that allures a soul to seek them, and being possessed of them, they cast a sweet smell abroad to all that are round about, and even as high as heaven. A soul that hath these planted in it, and growing out of it, is as a garden enclosed to God. These fruits are both pleasant and sweet to the soul that eats them, and as the pleasantness of the apple allured man to taste it and sin, so the beauty and sweetness of these fruits of the Spirit draw the spirit of a man after them. He hath found the savour, and seen the beauty, and this allures him to taste them, and then he invites the Well-beloved to come and taste also, to eat of these fruits with him. We might instance this in many things. A Christian relishes more sweetness in temperance, in beating down his body, and bringing it into subjection, in abstaining from fleshly lusts, than a carnal man tastes in the most exquisite pleasures that the world can afford. A Christian savours a sweetness in meekness and long-suffering. He hath more delight in forgiving, and forbearing, and praying for them that wrong him, than a natural man hath in the accomplishing of the most greedy desires of revenge. O what beauty hath gentleness, goodness, and patience, in his eye! What sweetness is in the love of God to his taste! How ravishing is the joy of the Holy Ghost! How contenting that peace which passeth understanding! These are things of the Spirit, that he minds and savours. Know, Christians, that it is to this ye are called,—to mind these things most, and to seek them most. Beware lest the deceitfulness of sin entice you, through the treacherous and deceitful lusts that are yet living in your members. If you indeed mind these things, and out of the apprehension of the beauty and savour of the sweetness, and smell of the fragrancy of them, would be content to quit all your corrupt lusts, for to be possessed with them, then you

are on that blessed and happy side of this great and fundamental division of men. You have indeed the privilege of all others who are not renewed. Whatever be your condition in the world, you are of the Spirit; and this is better than to be rich, wise, great, and honourable. God hath not given you such things as the world go mad after. But envy them not; he hath given you better things, more real and substantial things, that make you far better and more excellent.

But then, this difference, as it is the widest, so it is the most durable. As it is substantial here, so it is perpetual hereafter. When all the other differences between men shall be abolished, this alone shall remain; and therefore you have it in the next verse, "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." This division that is begun here shall grow wider for all eternity. There shall be a greater difference after this life, and a more sensible separation. Death and life, eternal death and eternal life, are the two sides of this difference, as it shall shortly be stated. When all other degrees and distances of men shall be blotted out and buried in eternal oblivion, there shall no vestige or mark remain, of either wisdom, or riches, or honour, or such like, but all mankind shall be, as to these outward things, levelled and equalized. This one unseen and neglected difference in the world, shall appear and shine, "in that day when the Lord maketh up his jewels. Then he will discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not," Mal. 3:18. The carnal and spiritual man have opposite affections and motions. The spirit of the one is on a journey or walk upward, after the Spirit, and the spirit of the other is on a walk downward, towards the flesh; and the further they go, the further distant they are. The one shall be taken up to the company of the spirits of just men made perfect, and to the fellowship of angels, the other shall be thrown down into the fellowship and society of devils. And truly it is no wonder it fall so

low, for all its motions in the body were downward, to the fulfilling of the lusts of the flesh. Thus you see the difference will grow wider and more sensible than it is yet between the godly and ungodly. In this world it doth not so evidently appear, as it will do afterward. As two men, that leave one another, and have their faces on contrary airts, [i. e. in opposite directions,]—at the beginning the distance and difference is not so great and so sensible; but wait a little, and the further they go, the further they are distant, and the wider their separation is. Even so, when a Christian begins to break off his way from the common course of the world, it doth not appear to be so different from it, as to convince himself and others; but if his face be towards Jerusalem above, and his heart thitherward, certainly he will be daily moving further from the world, till the distance be sensible both to himself and others. He will be more and more transformed and renewed, till at length all be changed. No wonder then, that these two cannot meet together in the end of their course, whose course was so opposite. Though wicked men will desire to die the death of the righteous, yet it is no more possible they can meet in the end, than hell and heaven can be reconciled together, because they walk to two contrary points.

XIX

Verse 6—For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace

It is true, this time is short, and so short, that scarce can similitudes or comparisons be had to shadow it out unto us. It is a dream, a moment, a vapour, a flood, a flower, and whatsoever can be more fading or perishing; and therefore it is not in itself very considerable. Yet in another respect it is of all things the most precious, and worthy of the deepest attention and most serious consideration; and that is, because it is linked unto eternity; there is an indissolvable knot between them, that no power or art can break or loose. The beginning of eternity is continually united to the end of time; and you know all the infinite extension of eternity is uniform, it admits of no change in it from better to worse, or worse to better; and therefore the beginning of our eternity, whether it be happiness or misery, is but one perpetuated and eternized moment, so to speak. Seeing then, we are in the body, and sent unto the world for this end, that we may pass through into an unchangeable eternal estate; truly, of all things it is most concerning and weighty, what way we choose to this journey's end: seeing the time is short, in which we have to walk, and it is uncertain too, we ought, as the apostle Peter speaks, to give all diligence: as long as the day remains, we should drive the harder, lest that eternal night overtake us. The shortness and uncertainty of time should constrain us to take the present opportunity, and not to let it slip over as we do. Seeing it is not at all in our hand, either what is past, or what is to come,—the one cannot be recalled, the other is not in our power, to call and bring forward,—therefore the present moment that God hath given us should be

caught hold on, and redeemed, as the apostle speaks, Eph. 5:16. We should buy it at the dearest rate of pains and expenses, from all those vain, impertinent, and trifling diversions, that take it up, that we may employ it as it becomes, suitable to eternity that is posting on. And then, as the shortness of it makes it the more precious and considerable, in regard of the end of it,—eternity; as the scantiness of a thing increases the rate of it, so that same consideration should make all worldly things, that are confined either in their being or use, within it, to be inconsiderable, as Paul, 1 Cor. 7:29, 30, 31, shews, seeing the time is short, it remaineth, that we should rejoice, as not rejoicing; weep, as not weeping; buy, as if we possessed not; use the world, as not abusing it. Seeing all its worth is to be esteemed from the end of it,—eternity never ending; then certainly whatsoever in time doth not reach that end, and hath no connexion with it, we should give it but such entertainment, as a passing bird, that is pleasant to the eye, gets of a beholder, while it is in its flight. The shortness of the day should make us double our diligence, and put on the harder in our walk or race, that so we may come in time to our place of rest. And that same should make the passenger give an overly [i. e. superficial] and passing look to all things that are by the way, and which he must of necessity leave behind him.

Seeing these things, then, are so important, let us draw our hearts together to consider what the Lord speaks to us in this word, for in it you have two ways and two ends, opposite and contrary ways and walks, and as contrary ends. The ways are, walking after the flesh, and walking after the Spirit; the end to which they lead are, death and life. We spoke something of the ways, and the wide difference that is between them,—what excellency is in the one beyond the other. But truly it is hard to persuade you to leave off your accustomed ways and walks, because your inward sense, and the inclination of your hearts, is wholly perverted and corrupted by

nature. You know the moving faculty is subordinate in its operations unto the knowing, feeling, and apprehending faculties. The locomotive power is given for a subsidiary and help to the apprehensive and appetitive powers, because things are convenient and inconvenient, good or evil, to the nature of the living creature, without it; and it could not by mere knowledge, or desire, or hatred of things, either come into possession of them, or eschew them. Therefore God hath given them a faculty of moving themselves to the prosecution and attainment of any apprehended good, or to the eschewing and aversion of any conceived evil. Thus, when beasts savour or smell that food which is fit for them, their appetite stirs them up to motion after it, to obtain it. Now, I say, if this inward sense be corrupted, then things that are destructive will be conceived good, because they are suitable to that corrupt humour or quality that possesses the senses, and thus all the motion and walk will be disordered. The truth is, my beloved, our spirits and minds are infected with a poisonable humour. Fleshly passions and lusts are predominant naturally. And, as in them that are in a fever, their organs being distempered with a bitter unsavoury humour, the pleasantest things seem unsavoury, because not suitable to that predominant humour; even so it is with you by nature. That which puts all upon motion is out of course, since the first distemper of man. Your spirits and minds are fleshly and carnal. They have a strong and deep impression of all the lusts that are in the body, and are accordingly affected. And therefore you cannot fitly judge what is good or evil for you, but according to these, Isa. 5:20. You must call evil good, and good evil, bitter sweet, and sweet bitter, because you are already prepossessed thus. And therefore the ways of the flesh, those paths that lead to destruction, you cannot but look on them as pleasant, because they suit and please your corrupted sense or spirit. And so this disordered savour or smell of some fragrant perfume in the ways of the flesh, puts you upon walking in these ways; and being

thus possessed and engaged, you cannot but stop your ears to all contrary persuasions. You think it against your sense and reason, to tell you that these are loathsome and unsavoury, and that the other ways of wisdom and spirit are pleasantness and peace. I say, you cannot believe this, till your hearts and spirits be purged, and your taste be pure and uncorrupted. It is certainly upon this ground, that our Saviour puts such characters upon the way to heaven and hell, to life and death. The one is strait and narrow, and few walk in it; the other broad and easy, and many walk in it, Matt. 7:13. Certainly, it is not the way in itself simply, that admits of such a motion,—to speak properly, as the thing is. The way to life, by the guiding of the Spirit, is easiest, plainest, shortest, and broadest. It hath all the properties of a good way—none so pleasant and plain. How sweet and pleasant sights all the way! It is an alley of delight. The way of his commandments—it wants not accommodation in it to refresh the traveller. The most delightful company is here. The Father and the Son, who sought no other company from all eternity, but were abundantly satisfied and rejoiced in one another. This fellowship the Christian hath to solace himself with, and he is admitted to be partaker of that joy. There is nothing that doth disburden the soul so of care and anxiety, nothing doth rid a man of so many perplexities and troubles as this way. But the way of sin in itself is most laborious, most difficult. It hath infinite by-ways that it leads a man into, and he must turn and return, and run in a circle all the day, all his time, to satisfy the infinite lusts and insatiable desires of sin. O how painful and laborious is it to fulfil the lust of the flesh! How much service doth it impose! How serious attention! What perplexing cares and tormenting thoughts! How many sorrows and griefs are in every step of this way! Do you not perceive what drudges and slaves sin makes you! how much labour you have to satisfy your lusts! And you are always to begin, as near that which you seek in the end of your years, as in the beginning. How thorny, how miry is the

way of covetousness! Are you not always out of one thorn into another, and cut asunder, or pierced through with many sorrows? 1 Tim. 6:10; Matt. 13:22. Is that a pleasant and easy way, I pray you, that makes all your sorrow and your travel grief, and suffers not your hearts to take rest in the night? Eccl. 2:22, 23. What pains of body! What plotting of mind! What labour and vexation of both must a sinner have as his constant attendants in this way! The way is intricate, deep, unpassable, that leads to that satisfaction you desire to your lusts. Your desires are impotent and impatient. The means to carry you on are weak and lame, noways accommodated or fit for such a journey. And this puts you always, as it were, on the rack, tormented between the impatience of your lusts, and the impotency of means, and impossibility to fulfil them. Desires and disappointments, hopes and fears, divide your souls between them. Such is the way after the flesh,—an endless labyrinth of woes and miseries, of pains and cares, ever while here.

But these ways receive such names from the common opinion and apprehension of men, because of our flesh, which is predominant. The way after the flesh being suitable to it, though in itself infinitely more toilsome, seems easy and plain; but the way after the Spirit seems strait, narrow, toilsome, and laborious. Though there be infinitely more room in the way to life, because it leads to that immense universal good,—it expatiates towards the all-fulness of God; yet to the flesh how narrow and strait is it, because it cannot admit of those inordinate lusts that have swelled so immeasurably towards narrow and scanty things! The true latitude of the way of the flesh is not great, for it is all inclosed within poor, lean, narrow, created objects. But because the imagination of men supplies what is wanting really, and fancies an infinite or boundless extent of goodness in these things; therefore the sinner walks easily, without straitening to his flesh,—it is not pinched in this way of fleshly lusts.

But alas! the spirit is wofully straitened, fettered, and imprisoned, though it be not sensibly found.

What is the reason, then, that so many walk in the way to death, but because their flesh finds no straitening, no pressure in it? It is an easy way to their natures, because suitable to the corruption that is in them; therefore men walk on without consideration of what follows. It is like a descent, or going down a hill, and so easy to our flesh. On the other hand, the way to life, after the Spirit, is an ascent upward, and it is very difficult to our earthy and lumpish flesh. Our spirits, by communion with, and subjection to the flesh, are made of an earthly quality, near the element of the flesh, and so they bow naturally downward. But if once they were purified and purged, and unfettered by the Spirit of God, and restored to their native purity, they would more easily and willingly move upward, as you see the flame doth. And till this be done in you, we cannot expect that you would willingly and pleasantly walk in these pleasant walks after the Spirit. Your walk will never be free and unconstrained in the paths of godliness. You may, from some external motives and impulses, move upward for a season, in some particular duties of religion, as a stone cast up. But as that impression is not from an inward principle, so it will not be constant and durable, but you will fall down to your old bias in other things, and move quite contrary, when the external impression of fear or favour, of custom or education, or such like, wears out. But the true Christian hath a spirit within him—the root of the matter in him. This carries him upward in the ways of obedience, after the motions and directions of God's Spirit. At the beginning, indeed, it is strait and uneasy to his flesh, but the difficulty is overcome, if once you begin well. The beginning, as you used to say, is the half of the whole. Truly, to be well entered, is half progress. Afterward the bulksome and burdensome lusts of the flesh are stript off, at least in a greater measure, and then the spirit moves easily and

willingly. This walk becomes a recreation, that at first was a labour. Now delight and desire are as wings to mount the soul aloft. Now it is the good pleasure of the soul to walk to all well-pleasing. Indeed the way of this world is dirty and filthy; and therefore a Christian had need to watch continually, and to gird up his loins, that his thoughts and affections hang not down to the earth, else they will take up much filth, and cannot but clog and burden the spirit, and make it drive heavily and slowly, as Pharaoh did his chariots when the wheels were off. We had need to fly aloft above the ground, and not to come down too low near it, thinking withal to double out our journey, for we shall find, because of the remnants of flesh within us, that this world hath a magnetical attractive virtue to draw us down to it, if we be within the sphere of its activity. It is not good coming near fire with flax; we should endeavour to keep our hearts at much distance, and disengage them from our lower consolations. This world is like the pestiferous lake of Sodom, that kills all that flies over it, and makes them fall down into it. If we fly low upon the surface of it, we cannot think but that the spiritual life will be much extinguished. But to prevent this, we would take our flight straight upward after the Spirit, (for that is the proper motion of the more pure and spiritual part of this world), and give no rest, till we be out of the reach of that infection,—till you be fully escaped the pollutions of the world.

But if you cannot be persuaded to come off this way, that seems so pleasant to your flesh, that way which is the very course of the world, (for these are joined, Eph. 2:2.)—then I beseech you, stand still, and consider whither it will lead. Do but stop a little, and bethink yourselves sadly and seriously, whither this will take you,—where it shall end. And truly that is dreadful;—the end of it is death,—a never-ending death. I am sure, if you were walking by the way, and one came and told you gravely and seriously, that that way is full of

dangerous pits, that there are many robbers in it, waiting to cut your throat, you would count the admonition worthy of so much notice, as to halt and consider what to do. But now, when the Lord himself, that deserves infinitely more respect and credit than men, gives you warning once and often, day after day repeats this admonition to you, sends out many ambassadors to call you off, makes this word to sound daily in your ears, Oh! why will you die? such ways lead down to the chambers of death and hell; to be carnally minded, in the issue is death, whatsoever you may promise to yourselves: I say, when he makes a voice to accompany us in all our walkings,—This is not the way that leads to life; why do you not think it worthy of so much consideration, as once to stop and sist your progress, till you examine what will come of it? Are we so credulous to men, and shall not we believe God, who is truth itself, who affirms it so constantly, and obtests us so earnestly? Are we so wise and prudent in lesser things, and shall we be mad, self-willed, and refractory in the greatest things that concern us eternally? O unbelief is that which will condemn the world,—the unbelief of this one thing, that the walking after, and minding of the flesh is mortal and deadly! Though all men confess with their tongues this to be a truth, yet it is not really believed. The deep inconsideration and slight apprehension of this truth makes men boldly to walk, and violently to run on to perdition. Did you indeed believe that eternal misery is before you at the end of this way, would you be so cruel to yourselves, as to walk in it for any allurement that is in it? Did you really believe that there is a precipice into utter darkness and everlasting death at the end of this alley, would the pleasure and sweetness of it be able to infatuate you, and besot you so far, as to lead you on into it, like an ox to the slaughter, and a fool to the correction of the stocks? It is strange indeed, though you neither will believe that death is the end of these things, nor yet can be persuaded that you do not believe it. There is a twofold delusion that possesses the hearts of men. One is, a dream

and fancy of escaping death, though they live in sin; another is, a dream and fancy that they do believe that death is the wages of sin. We might wonder how they consist together, if we did not find it by so many experiences. Your way proves that you do not believe it, that death is the end of it; and then your words evidence that you do not believe that you are unbelievers of that. O how desperate is the wickedness, and how great is the deceitfulness of the heart! The false prophet that is in every man's bosom deceives him, that it may destroy him. As Satan is a liar and a murderer, and murders by lying, so the heart of man is a self-murderer and a self-destroyer, and that is done by lying and deceiving. There is some lie in every sin, but there is this gross, black, fundamental lie at the bottom of all sin,—a conceit of immunity and freedom from death and hell; a strong imagination of escaping danger, even though such a way be chosen and walked in, as of its own nature inevitably leads to destruction. And there is something of this bloody murdering flattery even in the hearts of Christians; therefore this apostle gives us an antidote against it, and labours often to purge it out, by stirring up that knowledge they have received: "Know you not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" 1 Cor. 6:9. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for what a man soweth, that he shall reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption," &c. Gal. 6:7, 8. O that you might listen to this word, to this watchword given you, and stop your course, at least for a season, to think what shall be the latter end. Know you not, that such shall not inherit the kingdom? Know you not, that the way to heaven lies upward? Know you not that your way lies downward towards the flesh and the earth? Are you so far demented, as to think to come to heaven by walking just downward in the lusts of the flesh? Truly this is the strongest and strangest enchantment that can be, that you think to sow one thing and reap another thing; to sow darkness, and reap light; to sow corruption, and reap incorruption. Is that possible in nature, to sow nettle-seed,

and think to reap barley or wheat? Be not deceived. O that you would undeceive your poor deluded souls, and know that it is as natural for death and hell to grow out of sin, and walking after the flesh, as it is for every seed to yield its own fruit and herb! Do you then think to dissolve the course and order of nature? Truly the flesh is mortal in itself. It is ordained for corruption; you see what it turns to after the life is out. That is an emblem of the state of the fleshly soul after death. As you did abase your spirits to the service of the flesh here, and all your ploughing, and labouring and sowing was about it; the seed which you did cast in the ground was fleshly lusts, earthly things, for the satisfaction of your flesh; so you shall reap of the flesh, corruption, death, and destruction, that shall make your immortal spirits mortal and corruptible, and subject them to death and corruption with the body, as far as they are capable. It shall deprive them of all that which is their proper life and refreshment, and separate them eternally from the fountain of blessedness, and banish them out of heaven unto the fellowship of devils. And O that corruption of the incorruptible spirit, is worse than the corruption of the mortal flesh,—*corruptio optimi pessima*.

Now, whoever of you is thus far undeceived, as to believe your danger and misery, and to discern that inbred delusion of your hearts, be not discouraged utterly. There may be hope of recovery, when you see your disease. I say, if you see that hell is at the end of your way, then know that he who sent that voice to call you off that way of death, leaves you not to your own wits to guide you into the right way, but follows with a voice behind you, saying, "here is the way, walk in it,"—turn not out of it to the right hand or to the left. And this voice sounds plainly in the word, and it is nothing else but the sound of the gospel, that blessed sound that invites and allures you to come in to Jesus Christ, the way, truth, and life, the true way to the true life. All other ways, all other lives, have no truth in them;

it is but a cloud, a fancy, that men apprehend and lay hold on. But come to this way, and it will truly lead thee to the true life, eternal life; if you fly unto him out of the apprehension of your danger, you have a clear way to come to God, and as plain a way to attain life and peace. Being in Christ, you have assurance of not falling into condemnation. He is such a way as will hold you in, and not suffer you to go out of it again to the way of death. And therefore he will give you a tutor, a guide and director in this way to life and peace, and that is the Holy Spirit, to lead in all truth, and to guide your feet in the way of his commandments; so that in this new and living way of Chris, you shall have both the light of the word to know where to walk, and life of the Spirit, to make you walk toward that eternal life; and thus "grace and truth is come by Jesus Christ." Indeed you must suffer the mortification of your flesh, you must endure the pain of the death of your lusts, the cutting off your right hand, and plucking out your right eye, which would make you offend and stumble in the way; but let the remembrance of the life to come sweeten it all. When men undergo the hazard of losing life for a little pleasure, when, for a poor petty advantage, men will endure so much pains and trouble; O! how should eternal life,—and such a life as the best life here is but death to it;—how should it mitigate and sweeten the bitterness of mortification! How should it fortify our spirits to much endurance and patience! A battle we must have for these lusts that we disengage from the devil; and the world besides, will lay wait for us in this way; but when for such small and inconsiderable advantages, men will endure all the disadvantages of war, of a long war; O how should the expectation of this peace, which incloses and comprehends all felicity, all well-being, animate and strengthen us to fight into the city of life and peace eternal!

XX

Verse 7—Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be

Unbelief is that which condemns the world. It involves in more condemnation than many other sins; not only because more universal, but especially because it shuts up men in their misery, and secludes them from the remedy that is brought to light in the gospel. By unbelief, I mean not only that careless neglect of Jesus Christ offered for salvation, but that which is the root of that,—the inconsideration and ignorance of our desperate sinfulness and remediless misery without Christ: which not being laid to heart seriously, makes such slight and superficial entertainment of a Saviour and Redeemer. Man is truly miserable and unhappy, whether he know it or not. But truly it is an accession to his misery, that he knows it not, that he neither apprehends what he is now by nature, nor what he must shortly be made by justice. Indeed, if there were no remedy to be found, it were a happy ignorance to be ignorant of misery. The knowledge and remembrance of it could do nothing but add unto the bitterness of it. If a man might bury it in eternal forgetfulness, it were some ease. But now, when God hath in his mercy so appointed it, that the beginning of the belief of sin and misery shall in a manner be the end of misery; and seeing, whether men know it or not, they must shortly be made sensible of it, when there is no remedy to be found; then certainly it is the height of man's misery, that he knows and considers it not. If we would apply our hearts at length to hear what God the Lord speaks,—for he only can give account of man to himself,—we might have a survey of both these words and the preceding, of our desperate wickedness, and of our intolerable misery. For the present, by nature we are enemies to

God, and shortly we must be dealt with as enemies,—as rebels to the most potent and glorious King, be punished with death, an endless living death. Experience shews how hard a thing it is to persuade you that you are really under sentence of death. You will not suffer your hearts to believe your danger, lest it interrupt your present pleasures of sin. Nay, you will flatter yourselves with the fancied hope of immunity from this curse, and account it a cruel and rigorous doctrine, that so many creatures made by God should be eternally miserable, or a sentence of it should be past on all flesh. Now, that which makes us hardly to believe this, is the unbelief and deep inconsideration of your sinfulness; therefore the apostle, to make way for the former, adds, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." Do not wonder then that your ways and courses, your affections and inclinations, bring forth that ghostly and dreadful end of death, seeing all these are enmity to the greatest King, who alone hath the power of life and death. They have a perfect contrariety to his holy nature and righteous will. Not only is the carnal mind an enemy, but enmity itself; and therefore it is most suitable, that the sovereign power of that King of kings, be stretched out to the vindication of his holiness and righteousness, by taking vengeance on all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. If rebellion in a state or monarchy, against these petty mortal gods, who shall die as men, be so heinous as to deserve death, by the consent of all nations, how much more shall enmity and rebellion against the immortal, eternal King, who hath absolute right and dominion over his creatures, as over the clay, have such a suitable recompense of eternal death? Now, my beloved, if you once believed this, the enmity and opposition of your whole natures to God, you could not but fearfully apprehend what might be the issue of it. You could not bless yourselves as you do, and put the evil day far off; but certainly you would be affrighted with the terror and majesty of that God you have to do with, whom, when he awakes to judgment, you can neither

resist nor escape; no standing against his wrath, and no flying from it out of his dominions; and this would dispose and incline your minds in time to hearken to the treaty of peace, which is holden out in the gospel, and to lay down the weapons of your enmity, and make peace with him in his Son, the Peace-maker.

Amity and unity is the very being and beauty of the world. This universe is made up of innumerable different kinds and natures, and all these climb and walk together by the bond of peace and concord among themselves, and with that one high understanding that directs all, and supreme will of God that moves all. It is that link of union with God that gives and preserves being and beauty in all the creatures, as the dependence of the ray upon the sun, or the stream on the fountain, makes them what they are, which being interrupted, they cease to be what they were. "All things continue as thou hast ordained them, for all are thy servants," Psal. 119:91. You see then this amity and union of subordination of the creatures to God is not dissolved to this day. But woful and wretched man alone hath withdrawn from this subordination, and dissolved this sacred tie of happy friendship, which at first he was lifted up unto, and privileged with. Amity and friendship, you know, consists in an union of hearts and wills, and a communion of all good things. It makes two one, as much as two can be, by the conspiracy of their affections in one thing, and the joint concurrence of their endeavours to communicate to one another what each hath. It takes away propriety, and it makes a community between persons. Now, how happy was that amity!—how blessed that friendship between God and man! Though man's goodness could not extend to God, yet his soul united to God by love and delight, and all that God had given him, returning that to the proper owner, acknowledging his absolute dependence on him, and claiming interest and propriety in nothing, not in himself. And then on the other hand, the love and good-will of the infinite God placed

on man, and from that fountain all the streams of happiness issuing forth towards man, the fulness of God opening up itself to him, and laying out itself towards him, God so far descending, as, in a manner, to become the creature's, to expose and dispose himself, and all in him, for poor man's use and comfort.

How joyful was that amity! But the breaking of this bond of peace is as sad and grievous. There was a woful interposal between God and us, which hath separated these chief friends ever since the beginning, and that is sin, the seeds of all enmity and discord. This hath rent asunder the bond of amity; this hath made such a total aversion of the soul from God, and imprinted such an irreconcilable enmity in the heart against the holy will of God, that there is no possibility to re-unite them again, and restore the old friendship, as long as the soul is not quite changed and transformed. That first creation is so marred and defaced, that there is no mending of it till a second creation come. The carnal mind is not simply an enemy, but enmity itself. An enemy may reconcile again, and accept terms of peace, but enmity cannot reconcile to amity, without the very destruction of itself. The opposition of the heart is so perfect, that as soon may enmity unite with amity, and become one with it, as a carnal natural mind can submit to God's holy will. That which was at the beginning voluntary, is become necessary, and turned into the nature of an inbred antipathy, that no art can cure. The fall was such a disjointing of the soul from God, that no skill but infinite wisdom; no strength but Almighty power can set it right, and put it in the first posture again. It is true, there are not many who will openly and expressly denounce war against heaven. It is not so incident, that any man should have explicit plain thoughts of hatred against God. There are some common principles engraven by God in all men's minds, which serve as his witnesses against men,—that God should be loved, served, adored, and worshipped,—that there is nothing so worthy of

the desires of the soul. Now, this general acknowledgment deludes the most part, for they take it for granted, that they do love God with their heart, because their consciences bear witness that they ought to love him, as if it were all one to know our duty, and to do it. Who is there but he entertains himself with this good opinion of himself, that his heart is good and true to God? For, say you, whom should I love, if I love not God? I were not worthy to live if I loved not him. It is true, indeed, that you say, but if you did know your hearts, you would find their faces turned backward, and averted from God, and could no more please yourselves in such a confession of the truth, than the devil hath reason to think himself a believer, because he is convinced, that Christ is the Son of God, and confessed it too; no more than the Son that promised to go to the garden to work, and went not, had ground to think himself an obedient son, Matt. 21:30. Such a confession of duty may be extorted from damned spirits; and therefore you would not draw this vail over the wretched wickedness of your natures, to the end that you may conceive well of yourselves. It is so far from extenuating or excusing, that the very conviction of the great obligation to love and obey God is the greatest aggravation of the enmity. It is this which makes it the purest malice and most perfect hatred; that knowing the goodness of God, convinced of our bounden duty to love and serve him,—yet in the very light of such a shining truth, to turn our hearts away from him, and exercise all acts of hostility against him.

That you may know then, wherein the enmity of your hearts consists, I shall instance it in three branches or evidences. There is an enmity in the understanding, that it cannot stoop to believing of the truth; there is an enmity in the will, that it cannot subject to the obedience of God's holy commands; and this is extended also to a stubborn rebellion against the will of God, manifested in the dispensations of his providence. In a word, the natural and carnal mind is incapable

of faith, of obedience, and of submission. There are many truths revealed in the Scripture, that the natural man cannot receive or know, for they are foolishness to him, 1 Cor. 2:14. Some spirits there are lifted up above others, either by nature or education, in which this rebellion doth more evidently appear. Reason in them contends with religion, and they will believe no more than they can give a reason for. There is a wisdom in some men, that despiseth the simplicity, or the in-evidence of the gospel, and accounts it foolishness. The carnal mind will needs start out from implicit trusting of God, when once it is possessed with some imagination of wisdom; therefore how many are the insurrections of men's spirits against God's absolute power over the creatures; against the mysteries of the holy Trinity and incarnation; against the resurrection of our bodies? In these and such like, the pretended wisdom of men hath taken liberty to act enmity, and to dispute against God. But truly, the rebellion and insubjection against the truth of God, is more generally practised, even by the multitude of men, though in an unfree hidden way. How few do believe their own desperate wickedness, though God hath testified it of man. Doth not every one apprehend some good to remain in his nature, and some power to good? What an impossibility is it to persuade you, that all mankind are under the sentence of eternal condemnation; that children, who have not done good or evil, are involved in it also? Your hearts rise against such doctrines, as if they were bloody and cruel inventions. To tell you, that many are called, and few chosen; that the most part of those who profess the truth, are walking in the way to hell, and shall undoubtedly fall into it;—you may hear such things, but you bless yourselves from them, and cannot be persuaded to admit them into your minds. The hearts of men will be giving the very lie to the God of truth, when he speaks these things in his word. God forbid that all that be true! If we should expound the law unto you, and shew you that the least idle word, the lightest thoughts, the

smallest inward motion of the heart deserves eternal misery; that anger is murder in God's sight; that lusting is fornication; that covetousness and love of the world is idolatry; these things you cannot know or receive them. There are so many high imaginations in your minds, that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God; so many thoughts that are mustered and set in battle array against the holy truths of God, that truly no weapons of human persuasion or instruction, can be able to cast down your misapprehensions and imaginations or the reasonings of your hearts, or be able to scatter those armies of rebellious thoughts, and bring them into captivity, 2 Cor. 10:4, 5. Man's darkened mind is a stronghold, that all the repeated and continued beatings of the word, the multiplying precept upon precept, and line upon line, cannot storm it, or make any true light shine into it. It is a dungeon, a pit so shut up and inclosed, no door nor window in it; so that, albeit the Sun of Righteousness shine upon it, and round about it, there is no beam of that light can enter into the hearts of many thousands. The generality are drowned as yet in a deluge of ignorance, under the very light of daily preaching. It is a night of as thick darkness within men's souls, as if there were no light about us. Certainly, this declares the height of enmity, the strength of the opposition. This prison of your minds is a stronghold, indeed, that is proof of all preaching or instruction; and, certainly, they will hold out, till Almighty power storm them, and beat or batter open some entry into your souls, to receive this shining light of the gospel.

Then, there is a rebellion of the will against God's holy will revealed in his law or word. It cannot be subject to the law of God. It neither is, nor can; for enmity and antipathy is sunk into its nature so, that it is the most deformed monstrous thing in the world. If the disfigured face of man's soul were visible, O how ugly were it! How would you loathe it! If there were a creature that could do nothing but hate

itself, and sought its own destruction, that were a hateful enough object; but selfhatred and emnity is nothing so deformed and abominable, as for the creature's will to be set in opposition to the holy will of him that made it. It needs not much demonstration this, if you had but a little more consideration. Look back upon the tenor of your ways, set them beside the will and commands of God, and what find you? Whether agreement or disagreement? Take a view of the current of your inclinations and affections, and compare that with the holy will of God, and what find you? Friendship or enmity? You cannot digest the reproach of that, to be called enemies to God; but, I pray you, consider if there be not as perfect contrariety in your desires, affections, inclinations, and actions, to the will of God, as if you did profess it. What would you do if you professed yourselves enemies to God? Could you possibly vent your enmity any other way than this, in withdrawing from the yoke of his obedience, in revolting from that allegiance you owe to him? You could wrong him no further than by setting your hearts and ways contrary to his heart and ways,—in loving what he hates, and hating what he loves, for his own blessed Being you could not impair it. Now, consider if that be not acted as really as if you did profess it. Can you say, that cursing, swearing, lying, railing, anger, strife, envy, revenge, and such like works of darkness, are the things which his soul loves? Are these suitable to his holy will? And yet these are your inveterate customs, to which your natures are so inured and habituated, that you can no more forsake them than hate yourselves. Are filthiness, drunkenness, sabbath-breaking, covetousness, and love of the world,—are these his delight? And yet these are your delight. Again, is it not his will that ye should purge yourselves from all filthiness of flesh, of spirit, and perfect holiness? Is not righteousness that which he loves, and truth in the inward parts? Doth not he look to a contrite heart, and account that a savoury sacrifice? Is it not his royal statute and commandment, of which not one jot shall fail, that ye should deny

yourselves, love your enemies, forgive them that offend you, sanctify his name always in your hearts, and especially on the holy Sabbath? That ye should watch unto prayer, be sober in the use of the world, be much in watching for his second coming again? Now, what repugnance is in your hearts and ways to all these? Do not the conversations of men display a banner against the gospel, and proclaim as much in reality, as is said in words, in Psalm 2:3, "Let us cast his cords behind us, and cut his bands?" These things are unsavoury unto you, you smell nothing pleasant in them; but only in the puddle of the world, in running at random, at your own liberty, after your own imaginations; that you account only liberty. O! when shall your hearts be subdued, and your affections brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ? When shall you be delivered up to the truth; and so made to obey from the heart, that form of doctrine and sound words, Rom 6:17. This is the strongest hold that Satan has in man's heart,—his will and affections; and this keeps out longest against Jesus Christ, till he that is stronger come and bind the strong man, and cast out the enmity, and make all captive to his loving obedience and willing subjection, 2 Cor. 10:4, 5.

Then, thirdly, the enmity of the soul of man is acted in his rebellion against the will of God manifested in his works, in his unsubmission and unsubmitive disposition towards the good pleasure of the Lord, in carving out such a lot in the world. It is certain, that as the will of God is the supreme rule of righteousness, so it is the sovereign cause and fountain of all things; and therefore, how infinitely is the creature bound to be subject to him as a lawgiver, by pleasant and willing obedience to his righteous and reasonable commands; and to submit to him as the absolute ruler, by quiet and humble condescendence to all the dispensations of his providence! Now, you know, if you know anything of yourselves, how cross and opposite these hearts of yours are to his good pleasure;—how they are set just

contrary. And whence flow all murmurings, grudgings, discontents, griefs, cares, and perplexities of men, but from this fountain,—the rebellion of the heart against God? There is nothing in all the creation mutinous and malecontent, but the heart of man. You see frequent examples of it in the murmurings of the people in the wilderness. It is frequently styled,—a tempting of the Lord, Exod, 17:2, importing a high provocation of his holy Majesty; a special incitement, as it were, and motive to declare his absolute power and righteousness against such; and therefore these are often conjoined, Psalm 78:17, 18—"They sinned yet more, by provoking the most High: and they tempted God in their hearts;" and it is added, verse 19, "yea, they speak against God." Wherein you may observe a gradation of aggravations of this enmity. When men have already deserved infinite punishment at his hand, and may always look within, and find an answer to all the murmurings of their hearts, as having sinned so often against him;—yet then, to rise up against his good pleasure; and after we have so often sinned, to repine at any thing coming from him,—this certainly is a high provocation of the most high God. It puts a kind of necessity upon him to inflict that which thou indeed deservest. And then, this inward heart-burning against God, it breaks out often in words against that most high and holy One; for—ver. 40, 41, and ver. 56, 57—provoking, which is the plain expression of murmuring, in the margin is rendered, "rebellious against him:" and so in verse 8, when a short account is given of them, when the character or anagram of such a people is expressed, it is set down thus, "a stubborn and rebellious generation." Therefore Paul considered this woful and wretched posture of the soul, set in opposition to the always blessed will of God, and the madness and folly of it, exhorts us, "neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer; for these things happened for ensamples," &c. 1 Cor. 10:10, 11. Truly, there is nothing, either more deformed and vile in itself, or more disquieting

and tormenting to the soul, or more dangerous in the consequences of it, than such a posture of spirit, a discontented humour against God's providence,—whether it be in withholding that good thing from us which we desire, or sending that which crosseth our humour; whether sickness, or want, or reproach, or disrespect; whatsoever it be that the heart is naturally carried to pursue or eschew. What more abominable and ugly visage, than the countenance of an angry and furious person? But when this is against God, it adds infinitely to the deformity and vileness of it. "I do well to be angry," is the motto of a discontented soul. It erects an imaginary sovereignty against true Sovereignty. It sets up an anti-providence; it establisheth another divine power and wisdom, and brings the majesty, highness, and holiness of God down to be trod upon by the creature. And then it is its own tormentor, a sin that needs no punishment but itself. The insurrection and mutiny of the heart against God's will, sets all the powers of the soul out of course, vexes, pains and disquiets all. There is no peace and tranquillity but in the complacency of the heart with God's heart; as "Ephraim was like a bullock unaccustomed with the yoke," Jer. 31:18. The more he fretted and spurned at his yoke, the more it galled him and grieved him, till he was instructed, and then he was eased. This fills the soul with hideous tormenting thoughts and cares. This feeds upon its own marrow, and consumes it, as some have made the emblem of envy, which is a particular kind of this enmity: as if you would imagine a creature that did waste and consume all its moisture and marrow, and feed upon the destruction of itself. Now, this is but the prelude of what follows; this self-punishment is a messenger to tell what is coming, that the most high God is engaged in his power against such a person, and shall vent his displeasure to their eternal displeasure;—that is the fruit of this enmity.

XXI

Ver. 7, 8—The carnal mind is enmity against God: For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God

It is not the least of man's evils, that he knows not how evil he is; therefore the Searcher of the heart of man gives the most perfect account of it, Jer. 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things," as well as "desperately wicked." Two things superlative and excessive in it, bordering upon an infiniteness, such as sin is capable of,—wickedness and deceitfulness! And indeed, that which makes the wicked heart desperately and hopelessly so, is the deceitfulness of it. There are many specious coverings gotten to palliate this wickedness and enmity, and so many invisible and spiritual wickednesses in the heart, that it is no wonder that they lurk and dwell without observation. Sin is either covered with some deceivable pretext of another thing, or altogether escapes the dim eyes of men, because of its subtle and spiritual nature. Both are in this business. The enmity of man's heart against God is so subtle a thing in many, and it is shrouded over with some other pretences in all, that few get the lively discovery and sense of it. It is true, it is very gross and palpable in the most part of men,—visible, I mean, upon them, though not to themselves. Any whose eyes are opened, may behold the black visage of rebellion in the most part of the actings and courses of men, as the apostle, Gal. 6 speaks, "the works of the flesh are manifest." Truly this enmity against God is too manifest in most part, the weapons of your warfare against God being so carnal and visible too, and your opposition to his holy will and ways being so palpable. There is an

enmity acted by many in the tenor of their conversation, without God in the world, and against God; as appears in all your inveterate and godless customs of lying, swearing, cursing, drunkenness, railing, sabbath-breaking, neglect of prayer, and such like; which carry in their forebrow this inscription, "against the known God," opposite to that of the Athenians' altar. The God whom you pretend to know and worship, his name is every day blasphemed, his word slighted, his will disobeyed, as if you had proclaimed war against him. But there is in some (and I fear a great many) not only an acted but an affected enmity too,—enmity rising up to the maturity and ripeness of malignity and hatred of the image of God, in all his children. Some are not willing to go to heaven, yet they do not disturb others in their journey; they can let others be religious about them, and really desire to be like them. But others there are, who will neither enter into heaven themselves, nor let others enter, as Christ speaks of the Pharisees, Matt. 23:13. They hate the light of another's conversation, because their own deeds are evil, and are reproved and condemned by it. It is said, Rev. 11:10, "The witnesses tormented them that dwelt on the earth." It is strange, what a torment it is to the world, that the godly are in it! Piety is an eye-sore to many. If they could extirpate all that bear that image, they would think it sweet as bread, Psal. 14. This is a more open and declared enmity against the God of heaven; and yet I know it lurks under the mask of some other thing. You pretend to hate hypocrisy only. Alas! what a scorn is it for profanity to hate hypocrisy! Sure it is not because it is a sin, but for the very shadow of piety it carries. You hate the thing itself so perfectly, that you cannot endure the very picture of it. Do not deceive yourselves,—the true quarrel is, because they run not to the same excess of riot with you. If they will lie, cozen, defraud, swear, and blaspheme as other men, you could endure to make them companions, as you do others; and the principle of that is, the enmity that was placed in the

beginning. That mortal irreconcilable feud betwixt the two families, are two seeds of Christ and Satan.

But, as I told you, this enmity acts in a more subtle and invisible way in some, and it is painted over with some fair colours, to hide the deformity of it. Not only the grosser corruptions of men carry this stamp; but take even the most refined piece or part in man,—take his mind, take the excellency of his mind, even the wisdom of it; yet that hath enmity incorporated into it, and mixed with it throughout all; for the wisdom of the flesh is enmity with God, as it may be read, *ωρωνηµα*, the very prudence and reason of a natural man, which carries him to a distance from, and opposition with, the common defilements in the courses of men; yet that hath in its bosom a more exquisite and refined enmity against God; and so the more spiritual and purified it be from grosser corruptions, it is the more active and powerful against God, because it is, as it were, the very spirit and quintessence of enmity. You see it, 1 Cor. 1 how the wisdom of God is foolishness to the wisdom of the world; and then again, that the wisdom of the world is the greatest folly to the only wise God. Men that have many natural advantages beyond others, are at this great disadvantage,—they are more ready to despise godliness, as too base and simple a thing to adorn their natures. As Christ said of rich men, it may be said of wise men, of learned men, of civil and blameless persons, who have a smooth carriage before the world, "how hard is it for such to enter into the kingdom of heaven!" Hard indeed! for they must be stript naked of that, ere they can enter through this narrow gate,—I mean the opinion and conceit of any worth or excellency,—and so diminished in their own eyes, that they may go through this needle's eye without crushing.

The stream of enmity runs under ground often, and so hides itself under some other notion, till at length it burst forth openly. I find it

commonly runs in the secret channel of amity or friendship to some other thing opposite to God. So James 4:4, "The amity of the world is enmity with God;" 1 John 2:15, "He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him." There are two dark and under-ground conduits, to convey this enmity against God, amity to the world, and amity to ourselves, self-love, and creature-love. We cannot denounce war openly against Heaven, but this is the next course,—to join to, or associate with, any party that is contrary to God. And thus, under the covert of friendship to ourselves, and love to the world, we war against God, and destroy our own souls. I say first, amity to the world carries enmity to God in the bosom of it: and if you believe not this, hear the apostle's sharp and pungent question, "You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the amity of the world is enmity with God?" He doth not speak only to persons guilty of that crime, but to all natural men, who are guilty of adultery or whoredom of a more spiritual nature, but as abominable and more dangerous. There is a bond and special tie betwixt all men and God their maker, which obligeth to consecrate and devote themselves, their affections and endeavours, to his honour, especially when the covenant of the gospel is superadded unto that, in which Jesus Christ our Lord reveals himself, as having only right to us and our affections; as willing to bestow himself upon us; and notwithstanding of all the distance between him and wretched sinners, yet filling it up with his infinite love and wonderful condescendency, demitting himself to the form of a servant, out of love, that so he might take us up to be his chaste spouse, and adorn us with his beauty. This he challengeth of us, whoever hear and profess the gospel. This is your profession, if ye understand it, that Jesus Christ shall be your well-beloved, and ye his; that ye shall separate yourselves to him, and admit no stranger in his place; that the choice and marrow of your joy, love and delight, shall be bestowed on him. Now, this bond and tie of a professed relation to that glorious husband, is foully broken by the most part,

by espousing their affections to this base world. Your hearts are turned off him unto strangers, that is, present perishing things: whereas the intendment of the gospel is, "to present you to Christ as pure virgins," 2 Cor. 11:2. Truly your hearts are gone a-whoring after other things. The love of the world hath withdrawn you, or kept you in chains; these present things are as snares, nets, and bands; "as an harlot's hands and heart," Eccl. 7:26. They are powerful enchantments over you, which bewitch you to a base love, from an honourable and glorious love. O that you would consider it, my beloved, what opposition there is betwixt the love of the world and the love of the Father; betwixt amity to that which hath nothing in it, but some present bait to your deceitful lusts, and amity to God, your only lawful husband! Affection is a transforming and conforming thing,—*Si terram amas terra es*. The love of God will purify thy heart, and lift it up to more similitude to him whom thou lovest; but the love of the world assimilates it unto the world, makes it such a base and ignoble piece as the earth is. Do you think marriage affection can be parted? "My well beloved is mine;" therefore the church is the turtle, the dove to Christ, of wonderful chastity. It never joins but to one, and after the death of its marrow, it sighs and mourns ever after, and sits solitary. You must retire, my beloved, and disengage from the love of other things, or you cannot love Christ; and if you love not Christ, you cannot have peace with the Father; and if you have not that peace, you cannot have life. This is the chain of life; the first link begins at the divorcement of all manner of loves and beloved idols. Once the soul must be loosed in desire and delight, and that link must be fastened upon the most lovely and desirable object, Christ, the desire of the nations: and this draws along another link of peace and life with it. Do not mistake it,—religion would not hinder or prejudice your lawful business in this world;—O, it were the most compendious way to advance it, with more ease to your souls! but

certainly it will teach you to exchange the love of these things for a better and more heart contenting love.

Then, amity to ourselves is enmity to God; and truly this is the last stronghold that holds out longest against God, when others may be beaten down or surrendered. Possibly a man may attain to this, to despise these lower things, as below his natural dignity and the excellency of his spirit. Some may renounce much of that friendship with worldly and temporal things, as being sordid and base; but the enmity gets into this strong and invisible tower of darkness,—self-love and pride; and therefore the apostle John makes this the last and chiefest, "the pride of life," 1 John 2:16. When the lusts of the eyes and flesh are in some measure abated, this is but growing; and what decreaseth of these, seems to accresce unto this: as if self-love and pride did feed and nourish itself upon the ashes or consumption of other vices. Yea, it draws sap from graces and virtues, and grows thereby, till at length it kills that which nourished it. And indeed the apostle James seems to proceed to this, verse 5, 6, when he minds us that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Doth the Scripture say this in vain?" saith he. Is not self-amity as well enmity as the amity of the world? And therefore God opposeth himself unto it, as the very grand enmity. Self is the great lord, the arch-rebel, the head of all opposition,—that in which they do all centre; and when all the inferior soldiers are captives, or killed, this is last in the field;—it lives first in opposition, and dies last, *primum vivens, et ultimum moriens*. When a man is separated from many things, yet he may be but more conjoined to himself, and so the further disjoined from God. Of all those vile rags of the old man, this is nearest the skin, and last put off: of all the members, self is the heart,—first alive, and last alive. When enmity is constrained to render up the outward members of the body, to yield them to a more smooth and fair carriage, to a civil behaviour; when the mind itself is

forced to yield unto some light of truth, and knowledge of the gospel; yet the enmity retires into the heart, and fortifies it the stronger, by self-love and self-estimation. As in winter, the encompassing cold makes the heat to combine itself together in the bowels of the earth, and by this means the springs are hotter than in summer; so the surrounding light of the gospel, or education, or natural honesty, drives the heat and strength of enmity inward, where it fortifies itself more. This is that accursed antiperistasis, that is made by the concurrence of some advantages of knowledge and civility, and such like.

The blood of enmity against God gets in about the heart, when it is chased for fear out of the outward man: therefore, the first and fundamental principle of Christianity is, "let a man deny himself, and so he shall be my disciple." He must become a fool in his own eyes, though he be wise, that he may be wise, 1 Cor. 3:18. He must become as ungodly, though godly, that he may be justified by faith, Rom. 4:5. He must forsake himself, that he may indeed find himself, or get a better self in another. He must not eat much honey, that is not good;—it would swell him, though it be pleasant. He must not search his own glory, or reflect much upon it, if he would be a follower and friend of Christ. Look, how much soever you engage to yourselves esteem, or desire to be esteemed of others, to reflect with complacency on yourselves, to mind your own satisfaction and estimation in what you do, so much you disengage from Jesus Christ, for these are contrary points. It is a direct motion towards Christ; it is an inverse and backward motion towards ourselves; and so much as we move that way, we promote not, but lose of our way, and are further from the true end. Ezekiel's living creatures may be an emblem of a Christian's motion,—"he returns not as he goes," he makes a straight line to God, whithersoever he turn him. But nature makes all crooked lines, they seem to go forth in obedience to God,

but they have a secret unseen reflection into its own bosom. And this is the greatest act of enmity, to idolize God, and deify ourselves. We make him a cypher, and sacrifice to ourselves. His peculiar incommunicable property, of Alpha and Omega,—that we do sacrilegiously attribute to ourselves, the beginning of our notions, and end of them too. This is the crooked line, that nature cannot possibly move out of, till a higher Spirit come, and restore her that halted, and make plain her paths.

That which is added, as a reason, explains this enmity more clearly; "because it cannot be subject," &c. Truly these two forementioned amities of the world and of ourselves, do withdraw men wholly from the orderly subjection that they owe to the law of God. Order is the beauty of every thing, of nature, of art, of the whole universe, and of the several parts, kingdoms, and republics of it. This, indeed, is the very beauty of the world,—all things subordinate to him that made them. Only miserable man hath broken this order, and marred this beauty, and he cannot be subject, οὐχ ὑποτάσσεται, cannot come again into that orderly station and subordination he was once in. This is the only gap or breach of the creation; and it is some other engagements that draw him thus far out of course—the base love of the world, and the inordinate love of himself. O these make his neck stiff, that it cannot bow to the yoke of obedience! These have opposite and contrary commands, and no man can serve two masters. When the commands of the great lord, self, come in opposition with the commands of God, then he cannot be subject to the law of God. For a time, in some things, he may resemble a subjection, when the will of self, and the will of God command in one point, as sometimes they do by accident: but that is neither frequent nor constant.

Not only he is not subject, but there is worse in it, he cannot be subject to the law of God. This is certainly to throw down the natural pride of man, that always apprehends some remanent ability in himself. You think still to make yourselves better, and when convinced or challenged for sins, to make amends, and reform your lives. You use to promise these things as lightly and easily as if they were wholly in your power, and as if you did only delay them for advantage; and truly, it seems this principle of self-sufficiency is engraven on men's hearts, when they procrastinate and delay repentance and earnest minding of religion to some other fitter season, as if it were in their liberty to apply to it when they please. And when you are urged and persuaded to some reformation, you take in hand, even as that people, Jer. 42:6, 20, who said, "all that the Lord hath said, we will do." You can strike hands, and engage to serve the Lord, as easily as that people in Joshua 24:18, 19. But we may say, "Oh, that there were such a heart in you!" but, alas, such a heart is not in you! You cannot serve the Lord, for he is holy and jealous, and ye are not only weak but wicked. I beseech you then, believe this one testimony that God hath given of man, even the choicest thing in man, the very wisdom of a natural man, it is not subject to God's law, and it cannot be better, neither can it be subject. Resolution, industry, vows, and covenants will not effect this, till the Most High break and bow the heart. And not only has this enmity against the old law of commandments an antipathy at them, as crossing our lusts, but even against the new and living law of the spirit of life in Christ.

Here is your misery,—you can neither be subject to the law as commanding to obey it, or threatening for disobedience to it, nor to the gospel, as promising to believe and receive it. The law commands, but your law countermands within. The law threatens and sentences you with condemnation, but you have some self-

pleasing delusion and dream in your heads, and bless yourselves in your own hearts, even though ye walk in the imagination of your hearts, contrary to the law, Deut. 29. It is strange that you do not fore-apprehend and fear hell. But it is this delusion possesses the heart, "you shall not die." It was the first act of enmity, not only the transgression of the command, but unbelief of the truth for the curse; and that which first encouraged man to sin, encourages you all to lie in it, and continue in it,—a fancy of escaping wrath. This noise fills the heart,—Satan whispers it in the ear—go on, you shall not die. Thus it appears, that the natural mind cannot be subject to the law of God; no persuasion, no instruction, can enforce this belief of your damnable condition upon you.

But then, when the enmity is beaten out of this fort, and a soul is really convinced of its desperate and lost estate; when the heart is brought down to subjection, to take with that dreadful sentence; yet there is another tower of enmity in the heart, that can keep out against the weapons of the gospel, such as Paul mentions, Rom. 10:3. Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, they went about to establish their own and could not submit to the righteousness of God. There is a natural pride and stiffness of heart, that we cannot endure but to have something in ourselves to rest on, and take pleasure in; and when a soul sees nothing, it rather vexes and torments itself, as grieving because it hath no ornament or covering of its own, nor rejoiceth and delighteth in that righteousness of God revealed in Christ. O the difficulty to bow down so low, as to put on another's righteousness over our nakedness! And should it be called submission? Is it not rather the elevating and exalting of the soul? Yet in respect of our natural posture of spirit, it is a matter of great difficulty to make a self-condemned sinner submit to this, to be saved freely, without money or price, by another's ransom. What empty, vain, and frivolous expiations and satisfactions will souls

invent, rather than trust all to this. How long will poor souls wander abroad from hill to mountain, seeking some inherent qualification to commend them, and leave this garden and paradise of delights, which is opened up in Christ! Souls look every where for help, till all hands fail; and then necessity constrains them to come hither. But, indeed, necessity brought in charity, and amity keeps in, when once he knows what entertainment is in Christ. As for you, who as yet have not stooped to the sentence of wrath, how will you submit to the righteousness of God? But I wonder how you imagine this to be so easy a thing to believe? You say, you did always believe in Christ, and that your hearts are still on him, and that you do it night and day. Now, there need no other argument to persuade that you do not at all believe in the gospel, who have apprehended no more difficulty in it; no more contrariety to your rebellious natures in it. Let this one word go home with you, and convince you of your unbelief, "the natural mind is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can it be." How then do you come so easily by it? Certainly it must be feigned and counterfeit.

XXII

Verse 8—So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God

It is a kind of happiness to men, to please those upon whom they depend, and upon whose favour their wellbeing hangs. It is the servant's happiness to please his master; the courtier's to please his prince: and so generally, whosoever they are that are joined in mutual relations, and depend one upon another. That which makes all pleasant, is this, to please one another. Now, certainly, all the dependencies of creatures one upon another, are but shadows unto

[i.e. in comparison with] the absolute dependance of creatures upon the Creator,—for "in him we live, and move, and have our being." The dependence of the ray upon the sun, of the stream upon the fountain, is one of the greatest in nature; but all creatures have a more necessary connexion with this fountain-being, both in their being and well-being. They are nothing but a flux and emanation of his power and pleasure, and, as the Psalmist expresseth it, he hides his face, and they are troubled, he takes away their breath, and they die, and return to their dust. He sends forth his Spirit, and they are created; and he renews the face of the earth, Psal. 104:29, 30. You may extend this to the being and well being, the happiness and misery of creatures. Our souls which animate our bodies are but his breath which he breathed into the dust, and can retract when he pleaseth. The life of our souls, the peace, and tranquillity, and satisfaction is another breathing of his Spirit, and another look of his countenance, and as he pleases to withdraw it, or interpose between his face and us, so we live or die, are blessed or miserable. Our being or well-being hath a more indispensable dependence on him, than the image in the glass hath upon the living face.

If it be so, then, certainly of all things in the world, it concerns us nearest how to please him, and to be at peace with him. If we be in good terms with him, in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, Dan. 5:23; upon whose countenance our misery or felicity hangs, then certainly we are happy. If we please him, it matters not whom we displease; for he alone hath absolute, uncontrolled, and universal power over us, as our Saviour speaks,—over both soul and body. We may expect that his good pleasure towards us will not be satisfied, but in communicating his fulness, and manifesting his favour to us, especially since the goodness of God is so exundant, as to overflow even to the wicked world, and vent itself as out of superabundance, in a river of goodness throughout the whole earth.

How much more abundantly towards them whom he is well pleased with; and therefore the Psalmist cries out, as being already full in the very hope and expectation of it, that he would burst, if he had not the vent of admiration and praise, "O how great is his goodness, and how excellent his loving kindness laid up for them that fear him!" Psal. 31:19; and 36:7. But, on the other hand, how incomparable is the misery of those who cannot please God, even though they did both please themselves and all others for the present. To be at odds with him, in whom alone they can subsist, and without whose favour is nothing but wretchedness and misery, O that must be the worst and most cursed estate imaginable! To be in such a state, as, do what they can, they cannot please him, whom alone to please is of only concernment, what can be invented to that? Now, if you ask who they are that are such;—the words speak it plainly, in way of inference from the former doctrine, "therefore they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Not they in whom there is flesh; for there are remnants of that in the most spiritual man in this life. We cannot attain here to angelic purity, though it should be the aim and endeavour of every Christian. But "they that are in the flesh, or after the flesh," imports the predomination of that, and an universal thralldom of nature unto it, which, indeed, is the state of all men that are but once born, till a second birth come, by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The ground of this may be taken from the foregoing discourse, and it is chiefly twofold; one is, because they are not in Jesus Christ, in whom his soul is well pleased; another is, because they cannot suit and frame their carriage according to his pleasure. Since all mankind hath fallen under the displeasure of the most high God, by sinning against him, in preferring the pleasure of the flesh, and the pleasure of Satan, to the pleasure of God, there can be no atonement found to pacify him, no sacrifice to appease him, no ransom to satisfy his justice, but that one perfect offering for sin, Jesus Christ, the

propitiation for the sins of the elect world. This the Father accepts, in the name of sinners; and in testimony of his acceptance, he did two several times, by a voice from heaven, declare, first to a multitude, Matt. 3:17, and then to the beloved disciples, Matt. 17:5, and both times with great majesty and solemnity, as did become him,—that this is his well-beloved Son, in whom his soul is well-pleased. It pleased God to make the stream of his love to take another channel after man's sin, and not to run immediately towards wretched man; but he turned the current of his love another way, to his own Son, whom he chose for that end, to reconcile man, and bring him into favour; and his love going about, by that compass, comes in the issue towards poor sinners, with the greater force. He hath appointed Christ the meeting-place with sinners, the daysman to lay his hand on both; and therefore he is God to lay his hand on God, and man to lay his hand on man, and bring both into a peaceable and amicable conjunction. Now then, whoever are not in Jesus Christ, as is spoken, ver. 1, certainly they cannot please God, do what they can; because God hath made Christ the centre, in which he would have the good pleasure of sinners meeting with his good pleasure; and therefore, "without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. 11:6, not so much for the excellency of the act itself, as for the well-pleasing object of it, Christ. The love of the Father is terminated in him—his justice is satisfied in him. His love is well pleased with the excellency of his person,—he finds in him an object of delight, which is nowhere else; and his justice is well pleased with the sufficiency and worthiness of his ransom: and without this compass, there is neither satisfaction to the one nor to the other. So then, whatsoever you are—how high soever your degree in the world—how sweet soever your disposition, let your natures be never so good, your carriage never so smooth; yet certainly there is nothing in all this, that can please God, either by an object of love, or a price for justice. You are under that eternal displeasure, which will fall on and crush you to pieces. Mountains

will not be so heavy as it will appear in that great day of his wrath, Rev. 6. I say, you cannot come from under that imminent weight of eternal wrath, unless you be found in Jesus Christ, that blessed place of immunity and refuge, if you have not forsaken yourselves and your own natures, and denied your own righteousness as dung, to be found in him, clothed with his righteousness and satisfaction. If the delight and pleasure of your soul do not coincide and fall in at one place with the delight and good pleasure of the Father, that is, upon his well-beloved Son, certainly the pleasure and good will of God hath not as yet fallen upon you, and met with you. Therefore, if you would please God, be pleased with Christ; and you cannot do him a greater pleasure than believe in him, John 5:23, that is, absolutely resign yourselves unto him for salvation and sanctification.

The other ground is,—Such as are in the flesh cannot frame their spirits, affections, and ways to God's good pleasure; for their very wisdom, the very excellency that is in them, is enmity to God, and cannot be subject to his law; and therefore they cannot please him. I am sure, you may easily reflect upon yourselves, and find, not with much search, but upon all these, as the prophet, Jer. 2:34, speaks, that it is not the study and business you have undertaken to please God; but the bent and main of your aims and endeavours is to please yourselves, or to please men. This makes many men's pains, even in religion, displeasing to God; because they do not indeed mind his pleasure, but their own or others' satisfaction. What they do, is but to conform to the custom of the time, or commandments of men, or their own humour: and all this must needs be abominable to God. Truly, that which is in great account among men, is an abomination to God, as our Saviour speaks of the very righteousness and professed piety of the Pharisees, Luke 14:25; the more you please yourselves and the world, the further you are from pleasing God. The very beginning of pleasing God, is, when a soul falls in displeasure at

itself, and abhorrence of its own loathsomeness. Therefore it is said, the humble and contrite spirit I will look unto, and dwell with him, and such sacrifices do please God, Isa. 66:2; Psal. 51:17. For the truth is, God never begins to be pleasant and lovely to a soul till it begins to fall out of love with itself, and grow loathsome in its own eyes. Therefore you may conclude this of yourselves, that with many of you God is not well pleased, although you be all baptized unto Christ, and do all eat of that same spiritual meat, and drink of that same spiritual drink. Though you have all church privileges, yet with many of you God is not well pleased, as 1 Cor. 10:2–5, not only because these works of the flesh that are directly opposite to his known will, such as fornication, murmuring, grudging at God's dispensation, cursing and swearing, lying, drunkenness, anger, malice, strife, variance, and such like, abound as much among you as that old people; but even those of you that may be free from gross opposition to his holy will, your nature hath the seed of all that enmity, and you act enmity in a more covered way. You are so well pleased with yourselves, your chief study is to please men. You have not given yourselves to this study, to conform yourselves to the pleasure of God; therefore know your dreadful condition,—you cannot please God, without whose favour and pleasure you cannot but be eternally displeased and tormented in yourselves. Certainly, though now you please yourselves, yet the day shall come that you shall be contrary to yourselves, and all to you, as it is spoken as a punishment of the Jews, 1 Thess. 2:15. And there are some earnest of it in this life. Many wicked persons are set contrary to themselves, and all to them. They are like Ishmael, their hand against all, and all men's hands against them; yea, their own consciences continually vexing them. This is a fruit of that fundamental discord and enmity between men and God; and if you find it not now, you shall find it hereafter.

But as for you that are in Jesus Christ, who, being displeased with yourselves, have fled into the well beloved, in whom the Father is well pleased, to escape God's displeasure; I say unto such,—your persons God is well pleased with in Christ, and this shall make way and place for acceptance to your weak and imperfect performances. This is the ground of your peace and acceptance; and you would take it so, and it shall yield you much peace, when you cannot be pleased with yourselves. But I would charge that upon you, that as you, by believing, are well pleased with Christ, so you would henceforth study "to walk worthy of your Lord unto all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God," Col. 1:10. This is that to which you are called, to such a work as may please him, to conform yourselves even to his pleasure and will. If you love him, you cannot but fashion yourselves so as he may be pleased. O how exact and observant is love of that which may ingratiate itself in the Beloved's favour! It is the most studious thing to please, and most afraid of displeasing. Enoch had a large and honourable testimony as ever was given to man, "that he pleased God," Heb. 11:5. I beseech you be ambitious of this after a holy manner. Labour to know his will, and that for this end, that you may approve it, and prove it, that you may do that good and acceptable will of God. Let his pleasure be your rule, your law, to which all within you may conform itself. Though you cannot attain an exact correspondence with his pleasure, but in many things you will offend; yet certainly this will be the resolved study of your hearts—how to please him; and in as far as you cannot please him, you will be displeased with yourselves. But then, I would advise you, in as far as you are displeased with yourselves for not pleasing God, be as much well pleased with Christ, the pleasing sacrifice and atonement; and this shall please God as much as your obedience could do, or your disobedience can displease him. To him be praise and glory.

XXIII

Ver. 9—But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his

Application is the very life of the word, at least it is a necessary condition for the living operation of it. The application of the word to the hearts of hearers by preaching, and the application of your hearts again to the word by meditation, these two meeting together, and striking one upon another, will yield fire. Paul speaks of "a right dividing of the word of truth," 2 Tim. 2:15, not that ordinary way of cutting it all in parcels, and dismembering it by manifold divisions, which I judge makes it lose much of its virtue, which consists in union, though some have pleasure in it, and think it profitable. Yet I do not see that this was the apostolic way,—that either they preached it themselves, or recommended it to others. But rather he means the real distribution of the food of souls unto their various conditions, as it is the duty of a steward to be both faithful and wise in that,—to give every one his own portion. And as it is the pastor's duty thus to distribute the word of God unto you, so it is your part to apply it home to yourselves, without which application, the the former division of the word aright will not feed your souls. If every man act not the pastor to his own heart it cannot profit. Now indeed, the right application of the word to souls is the difficultest part of preaching, and it is the hardest point of hearing; in which there needs both much affection and much direction, the one to be serious and earnest in it, the other to be wise and prudent in it. Without suitable affection, it will not pass into the substance of the soul to feed it, no

more than the stomach can digest meat that wants convenient heat; and without discretion and wisdom, to chuse our own portion, it will not yield convenient food, but increase humours and superfluities, or distemper our spirits. That which I look at in these words is, the discretion and prudence of this wise steward in God's house. After he hath represented the wretched and woful estate of those "that are in the flesh," how their natures cannot but act enmity against God, how their end is death and destruction, he subjoins in due season a suitable encouragement to believers, "you are not in the flesh," &c. Because there is no man so sensible of that corruption that dwells within, as he that is in part renewed; as pain to a healthful body is most sensible, and as the abundance of light makes a larger discovery of what is disordered and defiled in the house; therefore such, upon the hearing of the accursed estate of men in nature, of their natural rebellion against God, and God's displeasure against them,—they are most ready, I say, to apply such things to themselves, to the weakening of their own hands, and saddening of their hearts, even as the upright hearted disciples were more ready to take with the challenge of betraying Christ, than the falsehearted Judas. Therefore the apostle prevents such an abuse of the doctrine, by making application of the better part unto the Romans; but for you, "ye are not of the flesh," &c. Indeed, self-examination is necessary, and it is like the chewing of the meat before it be sent into the stomach, it is as necessary and precedent before right application. I wish that every one of you would consider well what this living word concerns you. It is the ground of all our barrenness; no man brings this home to himself, which is spoken to all: but truly the Lord speaks to all, that every man may speak to himself, and ask at his own heart, what is my concernment in it? what is my portion? As for you whom the Lord hath put upon this search of yourselves, and hath once made you to find yourselves in the black roll of perdition, under the hazard of the eternal weight of God's displeasure, and there hath shewed

unto your souls a way of making peace with God, and a place of refuge in Jesus Christ, which hath sometimes refreshed and eased your hearts, and only was able to purify your consciences, and calm the storms that did arise in them; if it be henceforth your study to walk to please him, and this engagement be on your hearts, to make no peace with the flesh and corruption that dwells in you, then, I say, the Lord calls and accounts you not carnal but spiritual. Though there be much carnality in you, yet he denominates from the better part, not from the greatest part,—"you are not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Though Isaac be a weak young child, and Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, be a strong man; yet thou art in God's account esteemed according to the promise, which shall be the ground of thy stability. Isaac must abide in the house for ever, and grow stronger and stronger, and Ishmael must be cast out, and grow weaker and weaker. The one is ordained for destruction, and so is called the old man, drawing near to its grave; the other for life, and so is a new man, renewed day by day. Thus they are in God's promise, and you would learn thus to look upon it, not according to their present inequality in strength, but that future inequality and difference, which is wrapt up in the promise of God, and the seed whereof is in you.

As there is a woful penury and scantiness of examination in the most part of men, who are wholly spent without, and take no leisure to recognize their own souls; so there is a miserable excess, and hurtful superfluity of examination and disputation among many of God's children, who are always in reflection, and almost never in action;—so much on knowing what it is, that they take not much leisure to do or pursue what is not. Truly, I think, when the apostle commands us to examine whether we be in the faith, and prove ourselves; he did not mean, to make it our perpetual exercise, or so to press it, as we should not endeavour to be in the faith, till we know whether we be

in it. That were no advancing way, to refuse to go on in our journey, till we know what progress we have made, as the custom is. But simply and plainly, I think, he intended to have Christianity begin at examination, as the first returning of a soul must needs be upon some inquiry and search of the way, and knowledge, upon search, that our former way was wrong,—and this is only right. But if this be the porch to enter in at, will you sit down and dwell in it, and not go on into the palace itself? Because you must begin to search what you have learned wrong, that now you may unlearn it, will you be ever about the learning to know your condition; and by this means never attain to the knowledge of the truth? But when you have, upon any inquiry, found yourselves out of the way, you should not entertain that dispute long, but hearken to the plain voice of the gospel that sounds unto you, "This is the way, walk ye in it." "I am the way," saith Christ,—enter at me, by believing in me. Now, once having found that you are unbelievers by nature,—to suspend believing, till you prove whether you be in the faith, is unreasonable and impossible; for certainly having once found yourselves void of it, you must first have it, before you know that you have it. You must first apply to action, and afterward your examination shall be more easy.

But I would tell a more profitable improvement of such representations of the sinful and miserable estate of the ungodly world, than you use to make of it. And, I think, it is that the apostles intend, in the frequent turning the eyes of saints about to the accursed state of the world; partly consolation, and partly some provocation to suitable walking. Things that are opposite are best known by comparison one with another: each of them casts abroad a light to see the other by. Therefore it is that the apostles do frequently remind the converted Gentiles of the wretched estate the world lies in, and themselves once were in. You see it, 1 Cor. 6:11, "And such were some of you; but now you are washed." And, Eph.

2:1, "You who were dead in sins hath he quickened." There is not any thing will more commend unto a Christian the grace of God towards him, than to look abroad round about him, and take a view of the whole world lying in wickedness; and then to look backward to what himself once was, and compare it with what the free grace of God hath made him. O what a soul-ravishing contemplation is that! 1 John 5:19, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness." How doth this heighten the price of grace, and how much doth it add to a soul's inward contentment, to think what it was of itself, and what it would undoubtedly have been, if not thus wonderfully surprised! One used always to look to those below him, that he might not envy those above him. Truly it might do well here, when a Christian is grieved and disquieted, because he hath not attained to that desired measure of the image of God, and fellowship with him, to cast a look about him to the miserable and hopeless estate of so many thousands, who have the image of Satan so visibly engraven on them, and have no inward stirring after this blessed image: and reflect a little backward, to the hole of the pit whence he was taken, to look upon that primitive estate that grace found him in, so loathsome, as described Ezek. 16. Would not such a double sight, think you, make him break out in admiration, and be powerful to silence and compose his spirit? O to think that I was once in that black roll of those excluded from the kingdom! Such were some of you; and then to consider, that my name was taken out, and washed by the blood of Christ, to be enrolled in the register of heaven. What an astonishing thing is it! You see in nature, God hath appointed contrarieties and varieties to beautify the world; and certainly, many things could not be known how good and beneficial they are, but by the smart and hurt of that which is opposite to them; as you could not imagine the good of light, but by some sensible experience of the evil of darkness. Heat, you could not know the benefit of, but by the vexation of cold. Thus he maketh one to commend another, and both

to beautify the world. It is thus in art, contrariety and variety of colours and lines make up one beauty: diversity of sounds make a sweet harmony. Now, this is the art and wisdom of God, in the dispensation of his grace,—he setteth the misery of some beside the happiness of others, that each of them may aggravate another. He puts light beside darkness, spirit fore-against flesh, that so saints may have a double accession to their admiration at the goodness and grace of God, and to their delight and complacency in their own happiness. He presents the state of men out of Christ, that you may wonder how you are translated, and may be so abundantly satisfied, as not to exchange your portion for the greatest monarch's.

Then, I say, this may provoke us, and persuade us to more suitable walking. Doth he make such a difference? O do not you unmake it again! Do not confound all again, by your walking after the course of the world. Conformity to the world is a confusion of what God hath separated; his infinite grace translated you from that kingdom of darkness to light. O then walk in that light, as children of light? Are you such? Own your stations; consider your relations, and make yourselves ashamed at the very thoughts of sin. He points out the deformed and ugly face of the conversation of the world, that you may fall in love with the beauty of holiness, as the Lacedemonians were wont to let their children see their slaves drunk, that the brutish and abominable posture of such in that sin might imprint in the hearts of their children a detestation of such a vice. Certainly, the Lord calls you to mind often what you have been, and what the world about you is; not to engage you to it, but to alienate your minds from the deformity of sin, and to commend to you the duty of obedience. You would learn to make this holy use and advantage of all the wickedness the world lieth in,—to behold in it, as in a glass, your own image and likeness; that when you use to hate or despise others, you may rather loathe and dislike yourselves, as having that same

common nature; and wonder at the goodness of God, that makes such difference, where none was. This were the way to make gain of the most unprofitable thing in the world, that is, the sins of other men; for ordinarily the seeing and speaking of them doth rather dispose us and incline us to more liberty to sin. Many look on them with delight, some with contempt and hatred of those that commit them, but few know how to speak or look on sin itself with indignation, or themselves, because of the seeds of it within them, with abhorrency. I would think, if we were circumspect in this, the worse the world is, we might be the better; the worse the times are, we might spend it better; the more pride we see, it might make us the more humble; the more impiety and impurity abound, it might provoke us to a further distance from, and disconformity with the world. Thus, if we were wise, we might extract gold out of the dung-hill, and suck honey out of the most poisonable weed. The surrounding ignorance and wickedness of the world might cause a holy antiperistasis in a Christian, by making the grace of God unite itself, and work more powerfully, as fire out of a cloud, and shine more brightly, as a torch in the darkness of the night.

As for you, whose woful estate is here described, who are yet in the flesh, and enemies to God by nature, I would desire you to be stirred up at the considerations of this,—that there are some who are delivered out of that prison, and that some have made peace with God, and are no more enemies but friends, and fellow-citizens of the saints. If the case were left wholly incurable and desperate, you have some ground to continue in your sins and security; but now when you hear a remedy is possible, and some have been helped by it, I wonder that you do not, upon this door of hope offered, bestir yourselves, that you may be those who are here excepted,—but you are not in the flesh. Since some are, why may not I be? Will you awake yourselves with this alarm! If you had any desire after this

estate, certainly such a hope as this would give you feet to come to Jesus Christ; for these are the legs of the soul,—some desire of a better estate, and some probability of it conceived by hope.

XXIV

Verse 9—If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his

But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth! 2 Chron. 6:18. This was the wonder of one of the wisest of men: and indeed, considering his infinite highness above the height of heavens; his immense and incomprehensible greatness, that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; and then the baseness, emptiness, and worthlessness of man, it may be a wonder to the wisest of angels. And what is it, think you, the angels desire to look into, but this incomprehensible mystery, of the descent of the Most High to dwell among the lowest and vilest of the creatures. But as Solomon's temple, and those visible symbols of God's presence, were but shadows of things to come, the substance whereof is exhibited under the gospel; so that wonder was but a shadow or type of a greater and more real wonder,—of God's dwelling on the earth now. It was the wonder,—shall God dwell with man, among the rebellious sons of Adam! But behold a greater wonder since Christ came,—God dwelling in man, first personally in the man Christ, in whom the fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily, then graciously in the seed of Christ in man by his Spirit; and this makes men spiritual, "if so be the spirit of Christ dwell in you." You heard of the first indwelling, ver. 3, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," the inhabitation of the divine nature in our flesh, which had the likeness

of sinful flesh, but without sin; for he sanctified himself for our cause. And truly, this mysterious and wonderful inhabitation is not only a pledge of the other, that God shall dwell in sinful men by his Spirit; but, in order of nature, it hath some influence upon the other, without which God could not have dwelt in us. There is so much distance and disproportion between his majesty and us, that we could not be well united, but by this intervening,—God coming down first a step into the holy nature of the man Christ, that from thence he might go into the sinful nature of other men. Our sinful and rebellious nature behoved to be first sanctified this way,—by the personal indwelling of God in our flesh; and this had made an easy passage into sinful us, for his Spirit to dwell in us powerfully and graciously; therefore the Spirit of Christ is said to dwell in us. "Christ's Spirit," not only because proceeding from him as from the Father; but particularly, because the inhabitation or operation of the Spirit in us is the proper result and fruit of that glorious union of our nature with him. He took our flesh, that he might send us his Spirit. And, O what a blessed exchange was this! He came and dwelt in our nature, that so he might dwell in us. He took up a shop, as it were, in our flesh, that he might work in us, and make us again conformed to God.

We shall not cut this asunder into many parts. You see the words contain plainly the very essential definition of a spiritual man, and of a Christian. You find a spiritual man and a Christian equivalent in this verse; that is to say, they are taken for one and the self-same thing, and so they are reciprocal, of equal extent and restraint. Every Christian is one after the Spirit, and whosoever is after the Spirit is a Christian. One of Christ's, and one after the Spirit, is one thing. Now the definition of the Christian is taken from that which really and essentially constitutes him such,—he is one in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells. That makes him one after the Spirit; that makes him

one of Christ's, because it is the Spirit of Christ. As if you define what a man is, you could not do it better than thus,—he is one endowed with a reasonable soul. So the apostle gives you the very soul and form of a Christian, which differenceth from all others. As the soul is to the body to make up a man, so the Spirit of Christ is to the soul and spirit of a man to make up a Christian. As the absence or presence of the soul makes or unmakes a man, so the absence or presence of this Spirit makes or unmakes a Christian, for you see he makes it reciprocal. If you be Christians, the Spirit dwells in you, but if the Spirit dwell not in you, you are not Christians.

A word then to the first of these, That a Christian and a spiritual man are commensurable one to another. It is true, there are Jews who are not Jews inwardly, but only according to the letter, Rom. 2:28, 29. And so there are Christians so called, who are but so outwardly and in the letter, who have no more of it but the name and visible standing in the church. But we are speaking of that which is truly that which it is called, "whose praise is not of men but of God." The name of a man may be extended to a picture or image, for some outward resemblance it hath of him, but it is not a proper speech; no more is it proper to extend the name of Christians unto the pictures or images of Christians, such as are destitute of this inward life. You may be properly, according to Scripture phrase, members of the visible body; but you cannot have that real and blessed relation to Jesus Christ the head, which shall be the source of happiness to all the living members. I wish you would take it so, and flatter yourselves no more with church-titles, as if these were sufficient evidences for your salvation. You would all be called Christians; but it fears me you know not many of you the true meaning and signification of that word; the most comfortable sense of it is hid from you. The meaning of it is, that a man is renewed by Christ in the spirit of his mind. As Christ and the Spirit are inseparable, so a

Christian and a spiritual nature are not to be found severed. Certainly, the very sound of the name whereby you are called imports another nature and conversation than is to be found in many. You cannot say, that you have a shadow of spirituality either in your affections or actions; or that you have any real design and study that way, but only to please your flesh, and satisfy the custom of the world. Why do you then usurp the name of Christianity? This is a common sacrilege, to give that which is holy unto dogs. Others give it to you, and you take it to yourselves. But know, that though you please yourselves and others in this, yet without such a renovation of your natures, and such a sincere study to be inwardly and outwardly conformed to the profession and name of Christianity, you have not your praise of God, and him whom God praises not and allows not, he cannot bless for ever. I am persuaded, there are some who are not only in the letter, but in the Spirit, whose greatest desire and design is, to be indeed what they profess; and such is their praise of God, and if God praise them now, they shall be made to praise him for ever hereafter. Such are allowed to take the name and honourable style of Christianity unto them. You are Christ's, nearly interested in him: and if you be Christ's own, he cannot be happy without you; for such was his love, that he would not be happy alone in heaven, but came down to be miserable with us. And now that he is again happy in heaven, certainly he cannot enjoy it long alone, but he must draw up his members unto the fellowship of that glory.

Now the other thing, that which gives even being to a Christian, is, "the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him." Of this inhabitation, we shall not say so much as the comparison, being strained, will yield, neither expatiate into many notions about it. I wish rather we went home with some desires kindled in us, after such a noble guest as the Holy Spirit is, and that we were begun once to weary of the base and unclean guests that we lodge within us, to our own destruction. That

which I said, that the Spirit is to a Christian what the soul is to a man, if well considered, might present the absolute necessity and excellency of this unto your eyes. Consider what a thing the body is without the soul, how defiled and how deformed a piece of dust it is, void of all sense and life, loathsome to look upon.

Truly the soul of man by nature is in no better case, till this Spirit enter. It hath no light in it, no life in it; it is a dark dungeon, such as is described, Eph. 4:18. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." You have both in that word darkness and deadness, want of that shining light of God in the mind, so that it cannot discern spiritual things, that makes to our eternal peace. All the plainness and evidence of the gospel, though it did shine as a sun about you, cannot make you see or apprehend either your own misery, or the way to help it, because your dungeon is within; the most part cannot form any sensible notion of spiritual things, that are daily sounding unto them in the word. The eye of the mind is put out, and if it be darkness, how great is that darkness! Certainly the whole man is without light, and your way and walk must be in the dark. And indeed it appears, that it is dark night with many souls, because, if it were not dark, they could not run out all their speed among pits and snares in the way to destruction. And from this woful defect flows the alienation of the whole soul from the life of God: that primitive light being eclipsed, the soul is separated from the influence of heaven; and as Nebuchadnezzar's soul acted only in a brutal way, when driven out among beasts; so the soul of man, being driven out from the presence of the Lord, may act in a way common to beasts, or in some rational way in things that concern this life, but it is wholly spoiled of that divine life of communion with God. It cannot taste, smell, or savour such things. O! if it were visible unto us,—the state of the ruinous soul,—we would

raise a more bitter lamentation over it than the Jews did over Jerusalem, or the kings and merchants have reason to do over fallen Babylon. Truly we might bemoan it thus, "how is the faithful city become a harlot, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers," Isa. 1:21. Man was once the dwelling-place of princely and divine graces and virtues. The Lord himself was there, and then how comely and beautiful was the soul! But now it is like the desolate cities, in which the beasts of the desert lie, and their houses are full of doleful creatures, where owls dwell, and satyrs dance, where wild beasts cry, and dragons in the pleasant places, Isa. 13:21, 22, and Jer. 11:23. So mighty is the fall of the soul of man, as of Babylon, that it may be cried, "it is fallen, and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird," Rev. 18:2. All the beasts flock now to it, all the birds of darkness take their lodging in it, since this noble guest left it, and took away the light from it; for the sun hath not shined on it since that day. All unclean affections, all beastly lusts, all earthly desires, all vain cogitations get lodging in this house; the Bethel is become a Bethaven, the house of God become a house of vanity, by the continued repair of vain thoughts. The house of prayer is turned into a den of thieves and robbers. That which was at first created for the pure service and worship of God, is now a receptacle of all the most rebellious and idolatrous thoughts and affections; the heart of every man is become a temple full of idols.

This is the state of it, and worse than can be told you: now, judge if there be not need of a better guest than these. O what absolute necessity is there of such a Spirit as this, to repair and reform the ruinous spirit of man, to quicken and enlighten the darkened mind of man! Even that Spirit, that made it at first a glorious palace for God; that Spirit that breathed the soul into the formed clay, must repair these breaches and create all again. Now, when the Spirit of Christ

enters into this vile and ruinous cottage, he repairs it, and reforms it; he strikes out lights in the heart, and, by a wonderful eye-salve, makes the eyes open to see. He creates a new light within, which makes him behold the light shining in the gospel; and behold all things are new,—himself new, because now most loathsome and vile; the world new, because now appears nothing but vanity in the very perfection of it; and God new, because another majesty, glory excellency, and beauty shines into the soul, than ever it apprehended. And as the Spirit enlightens, so he enlivens this tabernacle or temple. He kindles a holy fire in his affections, which must never go out. It is such as cannot be kindled if it go out, but by the beams of the sun, as the poet fancied the vestal-fire. The Spirit within the soul is a fire to consume his corruption, to burn up his dross and vanity. Christ comes in like a refiner, with the fire of the Spirit, and purges away earthly lusts, and makes the love of the heart pure and clean, to burn upward toward heaven. This Spirit makes a Christian soul move willingly toward God in the ways that seemed most unpleasant. It is an active principle within him that cannot rest, till it rests in its place of eternal rest and delight in God. And then the Spirit reforms this house, by casting out all those wild beasts that lodged in it, the savage and unruly affections that domineered in man. This strong man entering in, casts them out. There is much rubbish in old waste palaces, Neh. 4:2. O how much pains is it to cleanse them! Our houses are like the houses of those nobles, Jer. 5:27, "Full of deceit, as a cage is full of birds, and our hearts full of wickedness and vanity." Jer. 4:14. Certainly it will be much labour to get your unclean spirits cast out, that is, the grosser and more palpable lusts that reign in you; but when these are gone forth, yet there is much wickedness and uncleanness in the heart, of a more subtle nature, and, by long indwelling, almost incorporated and mingled with the soul; and this will not be gotten out with gentle sweeping, as was done, Luke 11:25. That takes away only the

uppermost filth that lies loosest; but this must be gotten out by much washing and cleansing; and therefore the Spirit enters by blood and water. There are idols in the heart, to which the soul is much engaged; it unites and closes with them, Ezek. 36; and these must be cleansed and washed out. There is much deceit in the heart, and this lies closest to it, and is engrossed in it. And indeed this will take the help of fire to separate it; for that is of the most active nature to separate things of a diverse nature. The Spirit must by these take out your dross. And all this the Spirit will not do alone, but honours you with the fellowship of this work; and therefore you must lay your account, that the operation and reformation of this house, for so glorious a guest, will be laborious in the mean time. But O how infinitely is that compensated! One hour's fellowship with him alone, when all strangers are cast out, will compensate all, will make all to be forgotten. The pain of mortification will be swallowed up in the pleasure of his inhabitation: "When I shall awake I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." When he shall take up house fully in you, it will satisfy you to the full. In the mean time, as he takes the rule and command of your house, so for the present he provides for it, the provision of the soul is incumbent on this divine guest. And O how sweet and satisfying is it! O the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost, which are the entertainment that he gives a soul, where he reigns, and hath brought in righteousness! Rom. 14:17. What a noble train doth the Spirit bring alongst with him, to furnish this house! Many rich and costly ornaments hang over it, and adorn it, to make it like the king's wife, "all glorious within;" such as the ornament "of a meek and quiet spirit," 1 Pet. 3:4, which is a far more precious and rich hanging, than the most curious or precious contexture of corruptible things; the clothing of humility, simple in shew, but rich in substance, 1 Pet. 5:5, which enriches and beautifies the soul that hath it, more than all Solomon's glory could do in his person; for "better is it to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than divide the spoil with

the proud," Prov. 16:19; in a word, the Spirit makes all new, puts a new man, a new fashion and image on the soul, which suits the court of heaven, the highest in the world; and is conformed to the noblest and highest pattern, the holiness and beauty of the greatest king. And being lodged within, O what sweet fruits is the Spirit daily bringing forth to feed and delight the soul withal! Gal. 5:22, 23. And he is not only a Spirit of sanctification, but of consolation too; and therefore of all, the most worthy to be received into our hearts, for he is a bosom comforter, John 14:16, when there is no friend nor lover without, but a soul in that posture of Heman, Psal. 88:18; and in that desolate estate of the churches, Lam. 1:2, "Among her lovers she hath none to comfort her," Ver. 17, "Spreading forth her hands, and none to comfort her." Ver. 21, "Sighing, and none to comfort her." In such a case, to have a living and overrunning spring of comfort within, when all external and lower consolations, like winter brooks that dry up in summer, have dried up and disappointed thy expectation, sure this were a happy guest, that could do this. O that we could open our hearts to receive him!

XXV

Verse 9—If so be, that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his

There is a great marriage spoken of, Eph. 5 that hath a great mystery in it, which the apostle propoundeth as the sample and archetype of all marriages, or rather as the substance, of which all conjunctions and relations among the creatures are but the shadows. It is that marriage between Christ and his church, for which it would appear this world was builded, to be a palace to celebrate it in; and

especially the upper house, heaven, was made glorious for that great day, where it shall be solemnized. The first in order of time was made by God himself in Paradise, certainly to represent a higher mystery, the marriage of the second Adam with his spouse, which is taken out of his bloody side, as the apostle imports, Eph. 5. Now there is the greatest inequality and disproportion between the parties, Christ and sinners; so that it would seem a desperate matter to bring two such distant and unequal natures to such a near union as may cast a copy to all unions and relations of the creatures. But he, who at first made a kind of marriage between heaven and earth, in the composure of man, and joined together an immortal spirit in such a bond of amity with corruptible dust, hath found out the way to help this and make it feasible. And truly, we may conceive the Lord was but making way for this greater mystery of the union of Christ with us, when he joined the breath of heaven with the dust of the earth. In this he gave some representation of another more mysterious conjunction. Now, the way that the wisdom and love of God hath found out to bring about this marriage, is this: Because there was such an infinite distance between the only-begotten Son of God, who is the express character of his image, and the brightness of his glory, and us sinful mortal creatures, whose foundation is in the dust; therefore it pleased the Father, out of his good will to the match, to send his Son down among men, and the Son, out of his love, to take on our flesh, and to fill up that distance with his low condescendence, to be partaker of flesh and blood with the children. And now, what the Lord spoke of man fallen, in a holy kind of irony or mock, "behold he is become as one of us," that men may truly say of the Son of God, not fallen down from heaven, but come down willingly, "Lo! he is become as one of us; like us in all things, except sin," which hath made us unlike ourselves. This bond of union you have in the 3d verse—Christ so infinitely above sinners, and higher than the heavens, coming down so low, to be as like sinners as might be, or

could be profitable for us, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," &c. But yet this bond is not near enough,—that conjunction seemeth but general and infirm; both because it is in some manner common to all mankind, who shall not be all advanced to this privilege. By taking on our nature, he cometh nearer to human nature, but not to some beyond others; and besides, the distance is not filled up this way, because there is a great disproportion between that nature in Christ and in us. In him, it is holy and undefiled, and separated from sin; but in us, it is unclean and immersed in sin; so that, albeit he be nearer us as a man, yet he is far distant and unlike us, a holy, a perfect man. Now, what fellowship can be between light and darkness? As Paul speaketh of the marriage of Christians with idolaters; much greater distance and disagreement is between Christ and us. Therefore, it seemeth that some of us must be changed and transformed: but he it may not be. He cannot become liker us than by partaking of our flesh; for if he had become a sinner indeed, he would have become so like us, that he could not help himself nor us either; this would eclipse the glory and happiness of the marriage. But in that he came as near as could be, without disabling himself, to make us happy; and so he was contented to come in the place of sinners, and take on their debt, and answer to God's justice for it; yea, and in his own person he submitted to be tempted to sin, though it had been evil for us had he been overcome by it; yet this brings him a step lower and nearer us, and maketh the union more hopeful. But since he can come no lower, and can be made no liker us in the case we are in; then certainly, if the match hold, we must become liker him, and raised up out of our miserable estate to some suitableness to his holy nature. And therefore, in the love and wisdom of God,—to fill up the distance completely, and effectuate this happy conjunction, that the creation seemeth to groan for, (for, verse 22 the whole creation is pained till it be accomplished,)—he hath sent his blessed Spirit to dwell in us, and to transform our natures, and

"make them partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. 1:4, as Christ was partaker of human nature. And thus the distance shall be removed;—when a blessed Spirit is made flesh, and a fleshly man made spirit, then they are near the day of espousals; and this indwelling of the Spirit is the last link of the chain that fastens us to Christ, and maketh our flesh in some measure like his holy flesh. By taking on our flesh, Christ became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. But the union becometh mutual, when we receive the Spirit. We become bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, as it is expressed, Eph. 5:30, in allusion to the creation of Eve, and her marriage to Adam. The ground of the marriage is, that near bond of union, because she was taken out of man, and therefore because of his flesh and bone she was made one flesh with him. Even so the sinner must be partaker of the Spirit of Christ, as Christ is partaker of the flesh of sinners; and these two concurring, these two knots interchanging and woven through other, we become one flesh with him. And this is a great mystery indeed, to bring two, who were so far asunder, so near each other. Yea, it is nearer than that too; for we are said, not only to be one flesh with Christ, but one spirit—1 Cor. 6:17, "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit," because he is animated and quickened by one Spirit, that same Spirit of Christ. And indeed spirits are more capable of union, and more fit to embosom one with another than bodies; therefore the nearest union conceivable is the union of spirits by affection. This maketh two souls one, for it transports their spirit out of the body where it lives, and settleth it there where it loveth.

Now, my beloved, you see what way this great marriage, that heaven and earth are in a longing expectation after, shall be brought about. Christ did forsake his Father's house, when he left that holy habitation, his Father's bosom, a place of marvellous delight, Prov. 8:30, "and descended into the lower parts of the earth," Eph. 4:9. And he came out from the Father into the world, John 16:28. This

was a great journey to meet with poor sinners. But, that there may be a full and entire meeting, you must leave and forsake your father's house too, and forget your own people, Psal. 45:10. You must give an entire renounce to all former lovers, if you would be his; all former bonds and engagements must be broken, that this may be tied the faster. And to hold to the subject in hand, you must forsake and forget the flesh, and be possessed of his holy Spirit; as he came down to our flesh, you must rise up to meet him in the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ must indeed prevent you, and take you out of that natural posture you are born in, and bring you a great journey from yourselves, that you may be joined unto him.

This Spirit of Christ is his messenger and ambassador sent beforehand to fit you and suit you for the day of espousals; and therefore he must have a dwelling and constant abode in you. This indwelling imports,—a special familiar operation, and the perpetuity or continuance of it. The Spirit is every where in his Being, and he worketh every where too; but here he hath a special and peculiar work in commission,—to reveal the love of God in Christ, to engage the soul to love him again, to prepare all within for the great day of espousals, to purify and purge the heart from all that is displeasing to Christ, to correspond between Christ and his spouse, between heaven and earth, by making intercession for her when she cannot pray for herself, as you find here, ver. 26, and so sending up the news of the soul's panting and breathing after Christ, sending up her groans and sighs to her Beloved, giving intelligence of all her necessities to him, who is above, in the place of an advocate and interceder: and then bring back from heaven, light and life, direction from her head (for the Spirit must lead into all truth) and consolation; for Christ hath appointed the Spirit to supply his absence, and to comfort the soul in the meantime till he come again. You have this mutual and reciprocal knot in 1 John 4:13, "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in

us, by the Spirit that he hath given." It is much nearness to dwell one with another, but much greater, to dwell one in another. And it is reciprocal, such a wonderful interchange in it,—we in him and he in us: for the Spirit carries the soul to heaven, and brings Christ, as it were, down to the earth. He is the messenger that carries the letters between both: our prayers to him, and his prayers for us, and love-tokens to us, the anointing that teacheth us all things, from our Husband, 1 John 2:27, "and revealing to us the word of God," 1 Cor. 2:12,—giving us the first fruits of that happy and glorious communion we must have with Christ in heaven, as you see, ver. 23 of this chapter, and sealing us to the day of redemption, Eph. 1:13, and 4:30. Supplying us with divine power against our spiritual enemies, fetching along from heaven that strength whereby our Lord and Saviour overcame all, Eph. 3:16; Gal. 5:17. This is a presence that few have, such a familiar and love abode: but certainly, all that are Christ's must have it in some measure. Now, whosoever hath it, it is perpetual,—the Spirit dwells in them. It is not a sojourning for a season, not a lodging for a season, not a night, as some have—fits and starts of seeking God, and some transient motions of conviction or joy, but return again to the puddle. These go through them as lightning, and do not warm them or change them, but this is a constant residence. Where the Spirit takes up house he will dwell. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, and abide for ever, John 14:16, 17. If the Son abide in the house for ever, John 8:35, much more the master of the house must abide. Now, the Spirit where he dwells hath gotten the command of that house; all the power is put in his hand, and resigned to him; for where he dwells he must rule, as good reason is. He is about the greatest work that is now to do in the world,—the repairing and renewing of the ruins and breaches of man's spirit, which was the first breach in the creation, and the cause of all the rest. He is about the cleansing and washing this temple, and we may be persuaded, "that he who hath begun this good work will

perform it until the day of Christ, till we be presented blameless and without spot to our Husband," Phil. 1:5, 6. And this is the grand consolation of believers, that they have this presence assured to them by promise; that the Spirit is fixed here by an irrevocable and unchangeable covenant or donation and will not wholly depart from them though he may withdraw and leave you comfortless for a season, Isa. 59:21.

Therefore I would shut up all in a word of exhortation to you,—that since we have the promise of so noble and happy a guest, you would apply yourselves to seek him, and then keep him; to receive him, and then retain him. It is true, that he must first prevent us; for as no man can say, that Jesus is the Christ but by the Spirit of God, so no man can indeed pray for the Spirit, but by the Spirit's own intercession within him. Where God hath bestowed anything of this Spirit, it is known by the kindly and fervent desires after more of it. Now, since we have such a large and ample promise, Ezek. 34:27; Joel 2:28, of the pouring out of the Spirit, and that in as absolute and free a manner as can be imagined; and this renewed by Christ, and confirmed by his prayer to the Father for the performance of it, John 14:16, 17, and then we have a sweet and affectionate promise propounded in the most moving and loving manner that can be, Luke 11:13, where he encourageth us to pray for the Spirit, and that from this ground, that our heavenly Father, who placed that natural affection in other fathers toward their children, whereby they cannot refuse them bread when they cry for it; he, who was the author of all natural affection, must certainly transcend them infinitely in his love to his children, as the Psalmist argues, Shall not he that planted the ear, hear, and he that formed the eye, see? So may a poor soul reason itself to some confidence. Shall not he, who is the fountain of all natural love in men and beasts, have much more himself? And if my father will not give me a stone when I seek bread, certainly he will far

less do it. Therefore, "if we, being evil, know how to give good things to our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give his Spirit to them that ask him." Alas! that we should want such a gift for not asking it! My beloved, let us enlarge our desires for this Spirit, and seek more earnestly; and no doubt affection and importunity will not be sent away empty. Is it any wonder we receive not, because we ask not, or we ask too coldly, that we teach him in a manner to deny us, *qui timide rogat*, I may say, *frigide*, *docet negare*. Ask frequently, and ask confidently, and his heart cannot deny. O that we could lay this engagement on our own hearts—to be more in prayer! Let us press ourselves to this, and we need not press him. Albeit the first grace be wholly a surprisal; yet certainly he keeps this suitable method in the enlargements of grace, that when he gives more, he enlargeth the heart more after it. He openeth the mouth wider to ask and receive, and according to that capacity, so is his hand opened to fill the heart. O why are our hearts shut when his hand is open! Again, I would exhort you in Jesus Christ, to entertain the Spirit suitably, and this shall keep him. To this purpose are these exhortations: "Grieve not the Spirit," Eph. 4:30, and "quench not the Spirit," 1 Thess. 5:19. There is nothing can grieve him but sin; and if you entertain that, you cannot retain him. He is a Spirit of holiness, and he is about the making you holy. Then do not mar him in his work. Labour to advance this, and you do him a pleasure. If you make his holy temple an unclean cage for hateful birds, or a temple for idols, how can it but grieve him? And if you grieve the Spirit, certainly the Spirit will grieve you, will make you repent it at the heart. Please him, by hearkening to his motions, and following his direction, and he shall comfort you. His office is to be a spring of consolation to you; but if you grieve him by walking in the imagination of your hearts, and following the suggestions of the flesh, his enemy, no doubt that spring will turn its channel another way, and dry up for a season toward you. It is not every sin or

infirmity that grieves him thus, if so be that it grieve thee; but the entertaining of any sin and making peace with any of his enemies, that cannot but displease him. And, O what loss you have by it! You displease your greatest friend to please your greatest enemy: you blot and blunder that seal of the Spirit, that you shall not be able to read it till it be cleansed and washed again. Now, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his"—he is not a Christian. Take this along with you, who aim at nothing but the external and outward shew or visible standing in the church. If you have not this Spirit found on you, Christ will not know you for his in that day of his appearing.

XXVI

Verse 10—And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin: but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness

God's presence is his working. His presence in a soul by his Spirit is his working in such a soul in some special manner, not common to all men, but peculiar to them whom he hath chosen. Now, his dwelling is nothing else but a continued, familiar, and endless working in a soul, till he have conformed all within to the image of his Son. The soul is the office-house or work-house that the Spirit hath taken up, to frame in it the most curious piece of the whole creation, even to restore and repair that masterpiece which came last from God's hand, *ab ultima manu*, and so was the chiefest; I mean, the image of God, in righteousness and holiness. Now, this is the bond of union between God and us, Christ is the bond of union with God, but the Spirit is the bond of union with Christ. Christ is the peace between God and us, that makes of two one, but the Spirit is

the link between Christ and us, whereby he hath immediate and actual interest in us, and we in him. I find the union between Christ and a soul shadowed out in the Scripture by the nearest relations among creatures,—for truly these are but shadows, and that is the body or substance—and because an union that is mutual, is nearest, it is often so expressed, as it imports an interchangeable relation, a reciprocal conjunction with Christ. The knot is cast on both sides to make it strong: Christ in us, and we in him; God dwelling in us, and we in him; and both by this one Spirit,—1 John 4:13, "Hereby we know that God dwelleth in us, and we in him, by his Spirit which he hath given us." You find it often in John, who being most possessed with the love of Christ, and most sensible of his love, could best express it: "I in them, and they in me. He that keepeth his commands dwelleth in him, and he in him." As the names of married persons are spelled through other, so doth he spell out this indwelling. It is not cohabitation, but inhabitation; neither that alone singly, but mutual inhabitation, which amounts to a kind of penetration, the most intimate and immediate presence imaginable. Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith; and we dwell in Christ by love, Ephes. 1:7, and 1 John 4. Death bringeth him into the heart; for it is the very application of a Saviour to a sinful soul. It is the very applying of his blood and sufferings to the wound that sin hath made in the conscience: the laying of that sacrifice propitiatory to the wounded conscience, is that which heals it, pacifies it, and calms it. A Christian, by receiving the offer of the gospel cordially and affectionately, brings in Christ offered into his house, and then salvation comes with him. Therefore believing is receiving, John 1, the very opening of the heart to let in an offered Saviour; and then Christ, thus possessing the heart by faith, works by love, and "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Love hath this special virtue in it, that it transports the soul in a manner out of itself, to the beloved, Cant. 1:9. *Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat.*

The fixing and establishing of the heart on God is a dwelling in him; for the constant and most continued residence of the most serious thoughts and affections will be their dwelling in their all-fulness and richness of grace in Jesus Christ. As the Spirit dwelleth where he worketh, so the soul dwelleth where it delighteth. Its complacency in God making a frequent issue or outgiving to him in desires and breathings after him: and by means of this same, God dwelleth in the heart; for love is the opening up of the inmost chamber of the heart to him,—it brings in the Beloved into the very secrets of his soul "to lie all night betwixt his breasts, as a bundle of myrrh," Cant. 1:13. And indeed all the sweet odours of holy duties, and all the performing of good works and edifying speeches, spring out only, and are sent forth from this bundle of myrrh that lies betwixt the breasts of a Christian, in the inmost of his heart, from Christ dwelling in the affections of the soul.

Now, this being the bond of union betwixt Christ and us, it follows necessarily, that whoever hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And this is subjoined for prevention or removal of the misapprehension and delusions of men in their self-judgings: because self-love blinds our eyes, and maketh our hearts deceive themselves. We are given to this self-flattery,—to pretend and claim to an interest in Jesus Christ, even though there be no more evidence for it, than the external relations that we have to Christ, as members of his visible body, or partakers of a common influence of his Spirit. There are some external bonds and ties to Christ, which are like a knot that may easily be loosed, if any thing get hold of the end of it; as by our relation to Christ by baptism, hearing the word, your outward covenanting to be his people. All these are loose unsure knots. It is as easy to untie them, as to tie them, yea, and more easy; and yet many have no other relation to Christ than what these make. But it is only the Spirit of Christ given to us that entitles and

interesteth us in him and him in us. It is the Spirit working in your souls mightily and continually, making your hearts temples for the offering of the sacrifice of prayer and praises, casting out all idols out of these temples, that he alone may be adored and worshipped, by the affectionate service of the heart, purging them from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; it is the Spirit, I say, thus dwelling in men, that maketh them living members of the true body of Christ, lively joined to the head, Christ. This maketh him yours, and you his. By virtue of this he may command you as his own, and you may use and employ him as your own. Now, for want of this in most part of men, they also want this living saving interest in Christ. They have no real, but an imaginary and notional propriety and right to the Lord Jesus; for Christ must first take possession of us by his Spirit, before we have any true right to him, or can willingly resign ourselves to him, and give him right over us. What shall it profit us, my beloved, to be called Christians, and to esteem ourselves so, if really we be none of Christ's? Shall it not heighten our condemnation so much the more, that we desire to pass for such, and give out ourselves for so, and yet have no inward acquaintance and interest in him, whose name we love to bear? Are not the most part shadows and pictures of true Christians, bodies without the soul of Christianity, that is, the Spirit of Christ,—whose hearts are treasures of wickedness and deceit, and store-houses of iniquity and ignorance. It may be known what treasure fills the heart, by that which is the constant and common vent of it, as our Saviour speaks, Matt. 15:19, and 12:34, 35, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks," the feet walk, and the hand works,—consider then, if the Spirit of God dwelleth in such unclean habitations and dark dungeons; certainly no uncleanness or darkness of the house can hinder him to come in; but it is a sure argument and evidence that he is not as yet come in, because the prince of darkness is not yet cast out of many souls, nor yet the unclean spirits that lodge within. These haunt your hearts, and are as

familiar now as ever. Sure I am, many souls have never yet changed their guests, and it is as sure that the first guest that taketh up the soul is darkness and desperate wickedness, with unparalleled deceitfulness. There is an accursed trinity, instead of that blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and when this holy Trinity cometh in to dwell, that other of hell must go out. Now, my beloved, do you think this a light matter,—to be disowned by Jesus Christ? Truly the word of Christ, which is the character of all our evidences and rights for heaven, disowns many as bastards and dead members, withered branches; and certainly, according to this word he will judge you. "The word that I have spoken shall judge you in the last day." O that is a heavy word! You have the very rule and method of proceeding laid down before you now, which shall be punctually kept at that great day. Now, why do you not read your ditty and condemnatory sentence here registered? If you do not read it now, in your consciences, he will one day read it before men and angels, and pronounce this, "I know you not for mine, you are none of mine." But if you would now take it to your hearts, there might be hope that it should go no further, and come to no more public hearing. There were hope that it should be repealed before that day, because the first entry of the Spirit of Christ is to convince men of sin, that they are unbelievers, and without God in the world. And if this were done, then it were more easy to convince you of Christ's righteousness, and persuade you to embrace it; and this would lead in another link of the chain, the conviction of judgment, to persuade you to resign yourselves to the Spirit's rule, and renounce the kingdom of Satan. This were another trinity, a trinity upon earth, three bearing witness on the earth that you have the Spirit of God.

Verse 10—"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin," &c. All the preceding verses seem to be purposely set down by the apostle for the comfort of Christians against the remnants of sin and

corruption within them; for in the preceding chapter, he personates the whole body of Christ militant, shewing in his own example how much sin remains in the holiest in this life. And this he rather instances in his own person than another, that all may know that matter of continual sorrow and lamentation is furnished to the chiefest of saints. And yet in this chapter, he propounds the consolation of Christians more generally, that all may know, that these privileges and immunities belong even to the meanest and weakest of Christians; that as the best have reason to mourn in themselves, so the worst want not reason to rejoice in Jesus Christ. And this should always be minded, that the amplest grounds of the strongest consolation are general to all that come indeed to Jesus Christ, and are not restricted unto saints of such and such a growth and stature. The common principles of the gospel are more full of this milk of consolation, if you would suck it out of them, than many particular grounds which you are laying down for yourselves. God hath so disposed and contrived the work of our salvation, that in this life he that hath gathered much, in some respect hath nothing over, that is to say, hath no more reason to boast than another, but will be constrained to sit down and mourn over his own evil heart and the emptiness of it; and he that hath gathered less, hath in some sense no want; I mean, he is not excluded and shut out from the right to those glorious privileges, which may express gloriation and rejoicings from the heart,—that there might be an equality in the body. He maketh the stronger Christian to partake with the weaker in his bitter things, and the weaker with the stronger in his sweet things; that none of them may conceive themselves either despised, or alone regarded; that the eunuch may not have reason to say, "I am a dry tree," Isa. 56:3. For, behold the Lord will give, even to such, a place in his house, and a name better than of sons and daughters. The soul that is in sincerity aiming at this walk, and whose inward desires stir after more of his Holy Spirit,—he will not refuse to such

that name and esteem, that they dare not take to themselves, because of their seen and felt unworthiness. Now, in this verse he proceeds further, to the fruits and effects of sin dwelling in us, to enlarge the consolation against that too. Now, "If Christ be in you, the body," &c. Seeing the word of God hath made such a connection between sin and death, and death is the wages of sin, and that which is the just recompense of enmity and rebellion against God,—the poor troubled soul might be ready to conceive, that, if the body be adjudged to death for sin, the rest of the wages shall be paid, and sin having so much dominion as to kill the body, it shall exercise its full power to destroy all. Seeing we have a visible character of the curse of God engraven on us in the mortality of our bodies, we may look with such a visage on the soul's trouble for sin, as if it were but earnest of the full curse and weight of wrath, and that sin were not fully satisfied for, nor justice fully contented by Christ's ransom. Now, he opposes this misconception, the strongest ground of consolation, "if Christ be in you, though your bodies must die for sin," because sin dwelleth in them, yet that Spirit of life that is in you, hath begun eternal life in your souls. Your spirits are not only immortal in being, but that eternal happy being is begun in you. The seeds of it are cast into your souls, and shall certainly grow up to perfection of holiness and happiness, and this through the righteousness of Christ, which assureth that state unto you. The comfort is, it is neither total, for it is only the death of your bodies; nor is it perpetual, for your bodies shall be raised again to life eternal, ver. 11. And not only is it only in part, and for a season, but it is for a blessed end and purpose. It is that sin may be wholly cleansed out, that this tabernacle is taken down, as the leprous houses were to be taken down under the law, and as now we use to cast down pest-lodges, the better to cleanse them of the infection. It is not to prejudge him of life, but to instal him in a better life. Thus you see that it is neither total nor perpetual,

but it is medicinal and profitable to the soul. It is but the death of the body for a moment, and the life of the soul for ever.

XXVII

Verse 10—And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin

This is the high excellency of the Christian religion, that it contains the most absolute precepts for an holy life, and the greatest comforts in death. For from these two, the truth and excellency of religion is to be measured,—if it have the highest and most perfect rule of walking, and the chiefest comfort withal. Now, the perfection of Christianity you saw in the rule, how spiritual it is! How reasonable! How divine! How free from all corrupt mixture! How transcending, all the most exquisite precepts and laws of men, deriving a holy conversation from the highest fountain, the Spirit of Christ, and conforming it to the highest pattern, the will of God. And indeed, in the first word of this verse, there is something of the excellent nature of Christianity holden out,—“if Christ be in you,” which is the true description of a Christian, one in whom Christ is, which imports, the divine principle and the spiritual subject of Christianity. The principle is Christ in a man, Christ by his Spirit dwelling in him. This great apostle knew this well in his own experience, and therefore he can speak best in this style, “I live, yet not I, but Christ in me,” Gal. 2:20—importing, that Christ and his Spirit is to the soul what the soul is to the body: that there is a living influence from heaven, that acts and moves the soul of a Christian as powerfully, yet as sweet and pleasantly, as if it

were the natural motion of the soul. And truly it is the natural motion of the soul; it is that primitive life which was most connatural to the soul of man, which sin did deprive us of. All the powerful constraint and violence that Christ uses in drawing the souls of men to him, and after him, is as kindly unto them, and perfects them as much, as that impulse by which the soul moves and turns the body;—a sweet compulsion and blessed violence! Now this should make Christians often to reflect upon another principle of their life than themselves, that by looking on him, who is the resurrection and the life, who is the true vine, and abiding in him by faith, their life may be continued and increased. It is certainly much reflection on him, who is All in All; and less upon ourselves, that maintains this life. And therefore, the most part of men being wholly strangers to this, whether in purposes or practices, or judgments of both, unacquainted with any higher look in religion than they use in their natural and civil actings,—it doth give ground to assure us, that they are strangers alienated from the life of God, without God, without Christ in the world.

But then, the spiritual subject of Christianity is here,—Christ in you, not Christ without you, in ordinances, in profession, in some civil carriage; but Christ within the heart of a man that is a Christian. It is the receiving of Christ into the soul, and putting him on upon the inner man, and renewing it, that makes a Christian. Not being externally clothed with him, or compassed about with him in the administration of the ordinances. It fears me, most part of us who bear the name of Christianity, have no character of it within, if we were looked and searched. Many are like the sepulchres Christ speaks of,—without, painted and fair, within nothing but rottenness and dead bones. What have many of you more of Christ, than what a blind man hath of light? It is round about him, not within him. The light hath shined in darkness, but your darkness cannot comprehend

it. You are environed with the outward appearances of Christ in his word and ordinances, and that is all; but neither within you, nor upon many of you, is there anything either of his light or life. Not so much as any outward profession or behaviour, suitable to the revelation of Christ, about you. As if you were ashamed to be Christians, you maintain gross ignorance, and practise manifest rebellion against his known will, in the very light of the gospel. How few have so much tincture of Christ, so much as to cover the external man, or to clothe it with any blamelessness of walking, or form of religion! How few are so much as Christians in the letter! For you are not either acquainted with letter or spirit, either with knowledge, or affection, or practice. But suppose that some have put on Christ on their outward man, and colour over themselves with such performances of religious duties, and smooth themselves with civility in carriage; yet, alas! how few are they who are renewed in the spirit of their mind, and have put on Christ in their inward man, who have opened the secrets of their hearts, and received him to lie all night between their breasts? How few are busied about their hearts, to have any new impression and dye upon their affections, to mould them after a new manner, to kill the love of this world, and the lusts of it, and cast out the rottenness and superfluity of naughtiness which abides within! But some there are who are persuaded thus to do, to give up their spirits to religion; and all their business and care is, to have Christ within, as well as without. Now, if the rest of you will not be persuaded to be of this number, consider what you prejudge yourselves of,—of all the comfort of religion; and then religion is no religion, and to no purpose, if you have no benefit by it. And certainly, except Christ be in you, as a King to rule you, and a Prophet to teach you, to subdue your lusts, and dispel your darkness when he appears, he cannot appear to your comfort and salvation. You are deprived of this great cordial against death, and death must seize upon all that is within you, soul and body, since Christ, the

Spirit of life, is not within you. Happiness without you will not make you happy. Salvation round about you will not save you. If you would be saved, there must be a near and immediate union with happiness: Christ in the heart, and salvation cometh with him. A Christian is not only Christ without, not imputing his sins to him, clothing him with his righteousness; but Christ within too, cleansing the heart from the love of sin, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Do not think you have any share in Christ without you, except you receive Christ within you; because Christ is one within and without, and his gifts are undivided. Therefore true faith receives whole Christ, as a complete Saviour; even as he is entirely offered, so he is undividedly received. As he is without saving us, and within sanctifying us,—Christ without, delivering from wrath, and Christ within, redeeming from all iniquity,—these cannot be parted, more than his coat that had no seam. It is a heavy and weighty word of this apostle's, 2 Cor. 13:5, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; know you not your own selves, that Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" I wish you would lay it to heart, who have never yet returned to your hearts: if Christ be not formed in you, as Gal. 4:19, you are as yet among the refuse, dross, and that must be burnt with fire. You cannot but be cast away in the day when he makes up his jewels. Where Christ is, he is the hope of glory, he is an immortal seed of glory. How can you hope for Christ, who have nothing of him within you?

Now, the other touch-stone of true religion is, the great comfort it furnishes to the soul: and of all comforts the greatest is that which is a cordial to the heart against the greatest fears and evils. Now, certainly the matter of greatest fear is death, not so much because of itself, but chiefly because of that eternity of unchangeable misery, that naturally it transmits them unto. Now, it is only Christian religion possessing the heart that arms a man completely against the

fear either of death itself or the consequents of it. It giveth the most powerful consolation, that not only overcometh the bitterness, and taketh out the sting of death, but changeth the nature of it so far, as to make it the matter of triumph and gloriation.

There is something here supposed:—the worst that can befall a Christian, is the death of a part of him, and that the worst and ignoblest part only,—“the body is dead because of sin.” Then, that which is opposed by way of comfort to counterbalance it is,—the life of his better and more noble part. And, besides, we have the fountains both of that death and this life,—man's sin the cause of bodily death, Christ's righteousness the fountain of spiritual life.

Of death many have had sweet meditations, even among those that the light of the word hath not shined upon. And indeed they may make us ashamed who profess Christianity, and so the hope of the resurrection from the dead, that they have accounted it only true wisdom and sound philosophy to meditate often on death; and made it the very principal point of living well, to be always learning to die, and have applied their whole studies that way, neglecting present things that are in the by, have given themselves to search out some comfort against death, or from death. Yea, some have so profited in this, that they have accounted death the greatest good that can befall man, and persuaded others to think so. Now, what may we think of ourselves, who scarce apprehend mortality, especially considering that we have the true fountain of it revealed to us, and the true nature and consequents of it.

All men must needs know, that death is the most universal king in the world,—that it reigns over all ages, sexes, conditions, nations, and times. Though few be willing to entertain thoughts of it; yet sooner or later they must be constrained to give it lodging upon their

eyelids, and suffer it to storm the very strongest tower, the heart, and batter it down, and break the strings of it, having no way either to fly from it or resist it. Now, the consideration of the general inundation of death over all mankind, and the certain approaching of it to every particular man's door, hath made many serious thoughts among the wise men of the world. But being destitute of this heavenly light that shineth to us, they could not attain to the original of it; but have conceived that it was a common tribute of nature, and an universal law imposed upon all mankind by nature, having the same reason that other mutations and changes among creatures here below have; and so have thought it no more a strange thing than to see other things dissolved in their elements. Now indeed, seeing they could apprehend no other bitter ingredient in it, it was no wonder that the wisest of them could not fear it, but rather wait and expect it as a rest from their labours, as the end of all their miseries.

But the Lord hath revealed unto us, in his word, the true cause of it, and so the true nature of it. The true cause of it is sin,—“sin entered into the world, and death past upon all, for that all have sinned,” Rom. 5:12. Man was created for another purpose, and upon other conditions, and a law of perpetual life and eternal happiness was past in his favour, he abiding in the Father, and obeying the will of him that gave him life and being. Now, sin interposing, and separating between man and God, loosing that blessed knot of union and communion, it was this other law that succeeded, as a suitable recompense,—“thou shalt die.” It is resolved in the council of heaven, that the union of man shall be dissolved, his soul and body separated, in just recompense of the breaking the bond of union with God. This is it that hath opened the sluice to let in an inundation of misery upon mankind. This was the just occasion of that righteous but terrible appointment, “It is appointed that all men once shall die, and after death come to judgment,” Heb. 9:27. That since the body

had enticed the soul, and suggested unto it such unnatural and rebellious motions of withdrawing from the blessed Fountain of life, to satisfy its pleasure, the body should be under a sentence of deprivation and forfeiture of that great benefit and privilege of life it had by the soul's indwelling, and condemned to return to its first base original, the dust, and to be made a feast of worms, to lodge in the grave, and be a subject of the greatest corruption and rottenness, because it became the instrument, yea, the incitement of the soul to sin against that God that had from heaven breathed a spirit into it, and exalted it above all the clay or dust in the world. Now, my beloved, do we not get many remembrances of our sins? Is not every day presenting our primitive departure from God, our first separation from the fountain of life by sin, to our view, and in such sad and woful effects pointing out the heinousness of sin? Do you not see men's bodies every day dissolved, the tabernacle of earth taken down, and the soul constrained to remove out of it? But what influence hath it upon us, what do the multiplied funerals work upon us? It may be, sorrow for our friends, but little or no apprehension of our own mortality and base impression of sin, that separates our souls from God. Who is made sadly to reflect upon his original, or to mind seriously that statute and appointment of heaven,—"in that day thou shalt die?" It is strange that all of us fear death, and few are afraid of sin, that carries death in its bosom; that we are so unwilling to reap corruption in our bodies, and yet we are so earnest and laborious in sowing to the flesh. Be not deceived, for you are daily reaping what you have sown. And, O that it were all the harvest! But death is only the putting in of the sickle of vengeance, the first cut of it. But, to think on what follows, would certainly restrain men, and cool them in their fervent pursuits after sin!

XXVIII

Verse 10—And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin: but the Spirit is life because of righteousness

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," saith our apostle, 1 Cor. 15:56. These two concur to make man mortal, and these two are the bitter ingredients of death. Sin procured it, and the law appointed it: and God hath seen to the exact execution of that law in all ages; for what man liveth and shall not taste of death? Two only escaped the common lot, Enoch and Elias; for they pleased God, and God took them. And besides, it was for a pledge, that at the last day all shall not die, but be changed. The true cause of death is sin, and the true nature of it is penal, to be a punishment for sin. Take away this relation to sin, and death wants the sting. But in its first appointment, and as it prevails generally over men, *aculeata est mors*, it hath a sting that pierceth deeper, and woundeth sorer, than to the desolation of the body,—it goeth into the innermost parts of the soul, and woundeth that eternally. The truth is, the death of the body is not either the first death or the last death. It is rather placed in the middle between two deaths: and it is the fruit of the first, and the root of the last. There is a death hath immediately ensued upon sin, and it is the separation of the soul from God, the fountain of life and blessedness. And this is the death often spoken of, "you who were dead in sins and trespasses," &c. Eph. 2:1. "Being past feeling, and alienated from the life of God," Eph. 4:18, 19. And truly, this is worse in itself than the death of the body simply, though not so sensible, because spiritual. The corruption of the best part in man, in all reason, is worse than the corruption of his worse part. But this death which consists especially in the loss of that blessed communion with God, which made the soul happy, cannot be found

till some new life enter, or else till the last death come, which adds infinite pain to infinite loss. Now the death of the body succeeds this soul's death, and that is, the separation of the soul from the body, most suitable, seeing the soul was turned from the fountain spirit to the body, that the body should by his command return to dust, and be made the most defiled piece of dust. Now, this were not so grievous, if it were not a step to the death to come, and a degree of it introductive to it. But that statute and appointment of heaven hath thus linked it,—“after death comes judgment.” Because, the soul in the body would not be sensible of its separation from God, but was wholly taken up with the body, neglecting and miskening that infinite loss of God's favour and face, therefore the Lord commands it to go out of the body, that it may then be sensible of its infinite loss of God, when it is separated from the body; that it may then have leisure to reflect upon itself, and find its own surpassing misery. And then indeed infinite pain and infinite loss conjoined—eternal banishment from the presence of that blessed Spirit, and eternal torment within itself; these two concurring, what posture do you think such a soul will be in! There are some earnest of this in this life, when God reveals his terror, and sets men's sins in order before their face. O how intolerable is it, and more unsupportable than many deaths! They that have been acquainted with it, have declared it,—the terrors of God are like poisonable arrows sunk into Job's spirit, and drinking up all the moisture darts of it. Such a spirit as is wounded with one of those shot from heaven, who can bear it? Not the most patient and most magnanimous spirit, that can sustain all other infirmities, Prov. 18:14. Now, my beloved, if it be so now, while the soul is in the body, drowned in it, what will be the case of the soul separated from the body, when it shall be all one sense, to reflect and consider itself.

This is the sting of death indeed, worse than a thousand deaths, to a soul that apprehends it; and the less it is apprehended the worse it is; because it is the more certain and must shortly be found, when there is no brazen serpent to heal that sting. Now, what comfort have you provided against this day? What way do you think to take out this sting? Truly, there is no balm for it, no physician for it but one; and that the Christian is only acquainted with. He in whom Christ is, he hath this sovereign antidote against the poison of death, he hath the very sting of it taken out by Christ, death itself killed, and of a mortal enemy made the kindest friend. And so he may triumph with the apostle, "O death where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory!" "Thanks be to God in Jesus Christ, who giveth us the victory," 1 Cor. 15:55. The ground of his triumph, and that which a Christian hath to oppose to all the sorrows, and pains, and fears, of death, mustered against him, is threefold,—one, that death is not real; a second that it is not total, even that which is; and then that it is not perpetual. This last is contained in the next verse, the second expressed in this verse, and the first may be understood or implied in it. That the nature of death is so far changed, that of a punishment it is become a medicine, of a punishment for sin it is turned into the last purgative of the soul from sin: and thus the sting of it is taken away,—that relation it did bear to the just wrath of God. And now the body of a Christian under appointment to die for sin, that is, for the death of sin, the eternal death of sin. Christ having come under the power of death, hath gotten power over it, and spoiled it of its stinging virtue. He hath taken away the poisonable ingredient of the curse, that it can no more hurt them that are in him, and so it is not now vested with that piercing and wounding notion of punishment. Though it be true that sin was the first inlet of death, that it first opened the sluice to let it enter and flow in upon mankind; yet that appointment of death is renewed, and bears a relation to the destruction of sin, rather than the punishment of the sinner, who is forgiven in Christ.

And, O how much solid comfort is here,—that the great reason of 'mortality that a Christian is subject unto, is, that he may be made free of that which made him at first mortal! Because sin hath taken such possession in this earthly tabernacle, and is so strong a poison, that it hath infected all the members, and by no purgation here made, can be fully cleansed out, but there are many secret corners it lurks into, and upon occasion vents itself. Therefore it hath pleased God, in his infinite goodness, to continue the former appointment of death, but under a new and living consideration, to take down this infected and defiled tabernacle as the houses of leprosy were taken down under the law, that so they might be the better cleansed; and this is the last purification of the soul from sin. And therefore, as one of the ancients said well, "That we might not be eternally miserable, mercy hath made us mortal." Justice hath made the world mortal, that they might be eternally miserable; but to put an end to this misery Christ hath continued our mortality,—else he would have abolished death itself, if he had not meant to abolish sin by death. And indeed, it would appear this is the reason why the world must be consumed with fire at the last day, and new heavens and earth succeed in its room; because, as the little house, the body, so the great house, the world, was infected with this leprosy, and so subjoined to vanity and corruption because of man's sin. Therefore, that there might be no remnant of man's corruption, and no memorial of joy to interrupt his eternal joy, the Lord will purify and change all. All the members that were made instruments of unrighteousness, all the creatures that were servants to man's lusts, a new form and fashion shall be put on all, that the body being restored, may be a fit dwelling-place for the purified soul, and the world renewed, may be a fit house for righteous men. Thus you see, it is not the death of a Christian, but the death of sin his greatest enemy. It is not a punishment, but the enlargement of the soul.

Now, the next comfort is that which is but partial,—it is but the dissolution of the lowest part in man, his body; so far from prejudging the immortal life of his spirit, that it is rather the accomplishment of that. Though the body must die, yet eternal life is begun already within the soul, for the Spirit of Christ hath brought in life, the righteousness of Christ hath purchased it, and the Spirit hath performed it, and applied it to us. Not only is there an immortal being in a Christian that must survive the dust, for that is common to all men, but there is a new life begun in him, an immortal well-being in joy and happiness, which only deserves the name of life, that cometh never to its full perfection, till the bodily and earthly house be taken down. If you consider seriously what a new life a Christian is translated unto, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and the ministration of the word, it is then most active and lively, when the soul is most retired from the body in meditation. The new life of a Christian is most perfect in this life, when it carrieth him the furthest distance from his bodily senses, and is most abstracted from all sensible engagements, as you heard. For indeed it restores the spirit of a man to its native rule and dominion over the body, so that it is then most perfect, when it is most gathered within itself, and disengaged from all external entanglements.

Now, certain it is, since the perfection of the soul in this life consists in such a retirement from the body, that when it is wholly separated from it, then it is in the most absolute state of perfection; and its life acts most purely and perfectly, when it hath no body to communicate with, and to entangle it either with its lusts or necessities. The Spirit is life. It hath a life now which is then best when furthest from the body; and therefore it cannot but be surpassing better when it is out of the body; and all this is purchased by Christ's righteousness. As man's disobedience made an end of his life, Christ's obedience hath made our life endless. He suffered death to sting him, and by this

hath taken the sting from it. And now, there is a new statute and appointment of heaven published in the gospel, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." Now indeed, this hath so entirely changed the nature of death, that it hath now the most lovely and desirable aspect on a Christian, that it is no more an object of fear, but of desire,—amicable, not terrible unto him. Since there is no way to save the passenger but to let the vessel break, he will be content to have the body splitted, that himself, that is, his soul, may escape. For truly a man's soul is himself; the body is but an earthly tabernacle that must be taken down, to let the inhabitant win [i.e. get] out to come near his Lord. The body is the prison-house that he groans to have opened, that he may enjoy that liberty of the sons of God. And now to a Christian, death is not properly an object of patience, but of desire rather,—*"I desire to be dissolved and be with Christ,"* Phil. 1:23. He that hath but advanced little in Christianity will be content to die. But because there is too much flesh, he will desire to live. But a Christian that is riper in knowledge and grace, will rather desire to die, and only be content to live. He will exercise patience and submission about abiding here; but groanings and pantings about removing hence, because he knoweth that there is no choice between that bondage and this liberty.

XXIX

Verse 10—And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness

It was the first curse and threatening, wherein God thought fit to comprehend all misery,—*"Thou shalt die the death in that day thou eatest."* Though the sentence was not presently executed according to

the letter, yet from that day forward man was made mortal; and there seemeth to be much mercy and goodness of God intervening to plead a delay of death itself, that so the promise of life in the second Adam might come to the first and his posterity, and they might be delivered from the second death, though not from the first. Always we bear about the marks of sin in our bodies to this day; and in so far the threatening taketh place, that this life that we live in the body is become nothing else but a dying life. The life that the ungodly shall live out of the body is a living death; and either of these is worse than simple death or destruction of being. The serious contemplation of the miseries of this life, made wise Solomon to praise the dead more than the living, contrary to the custom of men, who rejoice at the birth of a man-child, and mourn at his death. Yea, it pressed him further, to think those which have not at all been, better than both; because they have not seen the evil under the sun. This world is such a chaos, such a mass of miseries, that if men understood it before they came into it, they would be far more loath to enter into it, than they are now afraid to go out of it. And truly we want not remembrances and representations of our misery every day, in that children come weeping into the world, as it were, bewailing their own misfortune, that they were brought forth to be sensible subjects of misery. And what is all our life-time, but a repetition of sighs and groans, anxiety and satiety, loathing and longing, dividing our spirits and our time between them? How many deaths must we suffer before death come! For the absence or loss of any thing much desired, is a separation no less grievous to the hearts of men than the parting of soul and body. For affection to temporal perishing things unites the soul so unto them, that there is no parting without pain, no dissolution of that continuity without much vexation; and yet the soul must suffer many such tortures in one day, because the things are perishing in their own nature, and uncertain. What is sleep, which devours most part of our time, but the very image and picture

of death, a visible and daily representation of the long cessation of the sensitive life in the grave? And yet truly it is the best and most innocent part of our time, though we accuse it often. There is both less sin and less misery in it; for it is almost the only liniment and refreshment we get in all our miseries. Job sought it to assuage his grief, and ease his body: but it was the extremity of his misery that he could not find it. Now, my beloved, when you find that which is called life subject to so much misery, that you are constrained often to desire you had never been born; you find it a valley of tears, a house of mourning, from whence all true delight and solid happiness is banished. Seeing the very officers and sergeants of death are continually surrounding us, and walk amongst with us, though unpleasant company, in our greatest contentments, and are putting marks upon your doors, as in the time of the plague upon houses infected, "Lord have mercy upon us," and are continually bearing this motto to our view, and sounding this direction to our ears, cito, procul, diu, to get soon out of Sodom, that is appointed for destruction, to fly quickly out of ourselves, to the refuge appointed of God, even one that "was dead and is alive, and hath redeemed us by his blood;" and to get far off from ourselves, and take up our dwelling in the blessed Son of God, through whose flesh there is access to the Father; seeing all these, I say, are so, why do not we awake ourselves upon the sound of the promise of immortality and life, brought to our ears in the gospel? Mortality hath already seized upon our bodies, but why do you not catch hold of this opportunity of releasing your souls from the chains and fetters of eternal death? Truly, my beloved, all that can be spoken of torments and miseries in this life, suppose we could imagine all the exquisite torments invented by the most cruel tyrants since the beginning to be combined in some one kind of torture, and would then stretch our imagination beyond that, as far as that which is composed of all torments surpasseth the simplest death; yet we do not conceive nor express unto you that

death to come. Believe it, when the soul is out of the body, it is a most pure activity, all sense, all knowledge: and seeing where it is dulled and damped in the body, it is capable of so much grief or joy, pleasure or pain, we may conclude, that being loosed from these stupifying earthly chains, it is capable of infinitely more vexation, or contentation, in a higher or purer strain.

Therefore, we may conclude with the apostle, that all men by nature are miserable in life, but infinitely more miserable in death; only the man who is in Jesus Christ, in whose spirit Christ dwells, and hath made a temple of his body, for offering up reasonable service in it, that man only is happy in life, but far happier in death:—happy that he was born, but infinitely more happy that he was born mortal, born to die; for "if the body be dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." Men commonly make their accounts, and calculate their time so, as if death were the end of it. Truly, it were happiness in the generality of men, that that computation were true, either that it had never begun, or that it might end here; for that which is the greatest dignity and glory of a man, his immortal soul, is truly the greatest misery of sinful men, because it capacitates them for eternal misery. But if we make our accounts right, and take the right period, truly death is but the beginning of our time, of endless and unchangeable endurance, either in happiness or misery; and this life in the body, which is only in the view of the short-sighted sons of men, is but a strait and narrow passage into the infinite ocean of eternity; but so inconsiderable is it, that according as the spirit in this passage is fashioned and formed, so it must continue for ever; "for where the tree falleth, there it lieth." There may be hope that a tree will sprout again, but truly there is no hope that ever the damned soul shall see a spring of joy; and no fear that ever the blessed spirits shall find a winter of grief. Such is the evenness of eternity, that there is no shadow of change in it.

O then, how happy are they in whose souls this life is already begun, which shall then come to its meridian, when the glory of the flesh falls down like withered hay into the dust! The life as well as the light of the righteous is progressive. It is shining more and more till that day come,—the day of death, only worthy to be called the present day, because it brings perfection. It mounts the soul in the highest point of the orb, and there is no declining from that again. The spirit is now alive in some holy affections and motions, breathing upwards, wrestling towards that point. The soul is now in part united to the fountain of life, by loving attendance and obedience, and it is longing to be more closely united. The inward senses are exercised about spiritual things, but the burden of this clayey mansion doth much dull and damp them, and proves a great remora to the spirit. The body indisposes and weakens the soul. There is life as in an infant: though a reasonable soul be there, yet, overwhelmed with the incapacity of the organs, this body is truly a prison of restraint and confinement to the soul, and often loathsome and ugly through the filthiness of sin; but when the spirit is delivered from this necessary burden and impediment, O! how lively is that life it then lives. Then the life, peace, joy, love, and delight of the soul, surmount all that is possible here, further than the highest exercise of the soul of the wisest men surpasses the brutish-like apprehensions of an infant; and indeed then, the Christian comes to his full stature, and is a perfect man, when he ceaseth to be a man.

How will you not be persuaded, beloved in the Lord, to long after this life, to have Christ formed in your hearts! For truly the generality have not so much as Christ fashioned in their outward habit, but are within darkness, earthiness, and wickedness, and without impiety and profanity! Will you not long for this life? For now you are dead while you live, as the apostle speaks of widows that live in pleasure. The more the soul be satisfied with earthly things, it is the deeper

buried in the grave of the flesh, and the further separated from God. Alas! many of you know no other life than that which you now live in the body. You neither apprehend what this new birth is, nor what the perfect stature of it shall be afterwards; but truly while it is thus, you are but walking shadows, breathing clay, and no more. A godly man used to calculate the years of his nativity from his second birth, his conversion to God in Christ: and truly, this is the true period of the right calculation of life, of that life which shall not see death. True life hath but one period, that is, the beginning of it; for end it hath none. I beseech you reckon your years thus, and I fear that you reckon yourselves, many of you, yet dead in sins and trespasses. Is that life, I pray you, to eat, to drink, to sleep, to play, to walk, to work? Is there any thing in all these worthy of a reasonable soul, which must survive the body, and so cease from such things for ever? Think within yourselves, do you live any other life than this? What is your life, but a tedious and wearisome repetition of such brutish actions, which are only terminated on the body? O then, how miserable are you, if you have no other period to reckon from than your birth-day! If there be not a second birth-day before your burial, you may make your reckoning to be banished eternally from the life of God.

As for you, Christians, whom God hath quickened by the Spirit of his Son, be much in the exercise of this life, and that will maintain and advance it. Let your care be about your spirits; and to hearten you in this study, and to beget in you the hope of eternal life, look much, and lay fast hold on that life-giving Saviour, who by his righteous life, and accursed death, hath purchased by his own blood, both happiness to us, and holiness. Consider what debtors you are to him, who loved not his own life, and spared it not to purchase this life to us. Let our thoughts and affections be occupied about this high purchase of our Saviour's, which is freely bestowed on them that will have it, and believe in him for it. If we be not satisfied with such a

low and wretched life as is in the body, he will give a higher and more enduring life, and only worthy of that name.

XXX

Verse 11—But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you

It is true, the soul is incomparably better than the body; and he is only worthy the name of a man and of a Christian, who prefers this more excellent part, and employs his study and time about it, and regards his body only for the noble guest that lodges within it. And therefore it is one of the prime consolations that Christianity affords, that it provides chiefly for the happy estate of this immortal piece in man; which truly were alone sufficient to draw our souls wholly after religion, suppose the body should never taste of the fruits of it, but die, and rise no more, and never be awaked out of its sleep. Yet it were a sufficient ground of engagement to godliness, that the life and well-being of the far better part in man is secured for eternity, which is infinitely more than all things beside can truly promise us, or be able to perform. Certainly, whatsoever else you give your hearts to, and spend your time upon,—it either will leave you in the midst of your days, and at your end you shall be a fool; or you must leave it in the end of your days, and find yourselves as much disappointed. Or to speak more properly, because, when your time is ending, your life and being is but at its beginning, you must bid an eternal adieu to all these things whereupon your hearts are set, when you are but beginning truly to be. But this is only the proper and true good of the soul,—Christ in it;—most portable, and easily caried about with you; yea, that which makes the soul no burden to itself, and helps it to carry all things easily; and then most inseparable, for Christ in the

soul is the spring of a never-ending life of peace, joy, and contemplation in the fountain of an infinite goodness, and it outwears time and age, as well as the immortal being of the soul. Yea, such is the strength of this consolation, that then the soul is most closely united, and fully possessed of that which is its peculiar and satisfying good, when it leaves the body in the dust, and escapes out of this prison, unto that glorious liberty.

But yet there is besides this an additional comfort comprehended in the verse read,—that the sleep of the body is not perpetual, that it shall once be awakened and raised up to the fellowship of this glory; for though a man should be abundantly satisfied if he possess his own soul, "yet no man hateth his own flesh." The soul hath some kind of natural inclination to a body suitable unto it, and in this it differs from an angel; and therefore the apostle, when he expresseth his earnest groan for the intimate presence of his soul with Christ, he subjoins this correction, "not that we desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon it," 2 Cor. 5:1, 2, 3. If it were possible, says he, we would be glad to have the society of the body in this glory, we would not desire to cast off those clothes of flesh, but rather that the garment of glory might be spread over all, if it were not needful, because they are old and ragged, and would not suit well; and our earthly tabernacle is ruinous, and would not be fit for such a glorious guest to dwell in, and therefore it is needful to be taken down. Well, then, here is an overplus, and, as it were, a surcharge of consolation, that seeing for the present it is expedient to put off the present clothing of flesh, and take down the present earthly house; yet that the day is coming, that the same clothes renewed, shall be put on, and the same house, repaired and made suitable to heaven, shall be built up; that this mortal body shall be quickened with that same Spirit that now quickens the soul, and makes it live out of the body; and so the sweet and beloved friends, who parted with so much pain

and grief, shall meet again with so much pleasure and joy; and as they were sharers together in the miseries of this life, shall participate also in the blessedness of the next, like Saul and Jonathan, lovely and pleasant in their lives, and though for a time separated in death, yet not always divided. Now this is the highest top of happiness, to which nothing can be added; it is comprehensive of the whole man, and it is comprehensive of all that can be imagined to be the perfective good of man.

It is no wonder then, that the apostle reckons this doctrine of the resurrection amongst the foundations of Christianity, Heb. 6:1, 2; for truly these two, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the mortal body, are the two ground-stones, or pillars of true religion, which, if they be not well settled in the hearts of men, all religion is tottering and ruinous and unable to support itself. That the soul cannot taste death, or see corruption, and that the body shall but taste it, and, as it were, salute it, and cannot always abide under the power of it, these are the prime foundations upon which all Christian persuasion is built; for without these be laid down in the lowest and deepest part of the heart, all exhortations to an holy and righteous life are weak and ineffectual, all consolations are empty and vain; in a word, religion is but an airy speculation, that hath no consistence but in the imaginations of men: it is an house upon sand, that can abide no blast of temptation, no wave of misery, but must straightway fall to the ground. From whence is it, I pray you, that the persuasions of the gospel have so little power upon men, that the plain and plentiful publication of a Saviour is of so small virtue to stir up the heart of men to take hold on him? How comes it to pass, that the precepts and prohibitions of the Most High God, coming forth under his authority, lay so little restraint on men's corruptions? That so few will be persuaded to stop their course, and come off the ways that they are accustomed to? That men pull away the shoulder and

stop the ear, and make their hearts as adamant, incapable of being affected with either the authority or love of the gospel? That when he pipes unto us, so few dance, and when he mourns, so few lament? Is it not because these two foundations are not laid, and men's hearts not digged deep by earnest consideration, to receive these ground-stones of Christianity,—the belief of their soul's eternal survivance after the dust, and of the revivance and resurrection of the body, after it hath slept a while in the dust? I remember heathens have had some noble and rare conceptions about virtue, and some have laboured to enamour men with the native beauty of it, and to persuade them that it was a sufficient reward to itself. And truly it would far more become a Christian, who knoweth the high and divine pattern of holiness to be God himself, and so must needs behold a far surpassing beauty and excellency in the image of God, than in all earthly things; I say, it will become him to accustom himself to a dutiful observance of religion, even without all respect to the reward of it. He would train his heart to do homage to God, out out of a loyal affection and respect to his Majesty, and from the love of the very intrinsic beauty of obedience, without borrowing always from such selfish considerations of our own happiness or misery. Notwithstanding, such is the posture of man's spirit now, that he cannot at all be engaged to the love of religion, except some seen advantage conciliate it; and therefore the Lord makes use of such selfish principles in drawing men to himself, and keeping them still with him. And truly, considering man's infirmity, this is the spirit and life of all religion,—immortality and resurrection; that which gives a lustre to all, and quickens all; that which makes all to sink deep, and that which makes a Christian stedfast and immoveable, 2 Cor. 5:8. It is certainly hope that is the key of the heart, that opens and shuts it to any thing. There the apostle Peter, 1st Epistle, first blesseth God heartily for the new birth, and in the expressing of it, makes hope the very term of that generation, and so it must be a

substantial thing,—“Blessed be God, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope.” Hope hath a quickening power in it. It makes all new where it comes, and is full of spirit. It is the helmet and anchor of a Christian,—that which bears the dint of temptation, and makes him steady in religion. No man will put in his plough in this ground, or sow unto the Spirit, but in hope; for he that soweth must sow in hope, else his plough will not go deep, 1 Cor. 9:10. This, then, is the very spirit and life of religion, “the resurrection of the dead,” without which “our faith were in vain,” and men would continue still in their sins. Certainly, it is the deep inconsideration of this never-ending endurance of our souls, and restitution of our bodies to the same immortality, that makes the most part of men so slight and superficial in religion, else it were not possible, if that were laid to heart, but men would make religion their business, and chief business.

We have here the two genuine causes of the resurrection of the bodies of Christians,—the resurrection of Christ, and the inhabitation of his Spirit. The influence that the resurrection of Christ hath on ours, is lively and fully holden out by this apostle, 1 Cor. 15, against them who deny the resurrection from the dead,—“If Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain, you are yet in your sins, and they that are asleep are perished.” Religion were nothing but a number of empty words of show; preaching were a vanity and imposture; faith were a mere fancy, if this be not laid down as the ground-stone,—Christ raised, not as a natural person, but as a common politic person, as “the first fruits of them that sleep,” vers. 17–20, where he alludes to the ceremony of offering the first fruits of their harvest, Lev. 23:10; for under the law they might not eat of the fruits of the land till they were sanctified; all was counted profane till they were someway consecrated to the Lord. Now, for this end, the Lord appointed them to bring one sheaf for all, and that was the representative of all the

rest of the heap, and this was waved before the Lord, and lifted up from the earth. Now, according to the apostle's argument, Rom. 11:16, "If the first fruits be holy, so is the lump," for it represents all the lump; and therefore Jesus Christ, the chief of all his brethren, was made the first fruits from the dead, and lifted up from the grave, as the representer of all the lump of his elect; and so it must needs follow, that they shall not continue in the grave, but must in due time partake of that benefit which he has first entered in possession of, in their name, and for them: for if this first fruits be holy, so the whole lump must be holy; and if the first fruits be risen, so must the lump. You see, then, the force of the present reason, "if the Spirit that raised Christ dwell in you, he shall also raise you," namely, because he raised up Christ, the very first fruits of all the rest; so that Christ's resurrection is a sure pledge and token of yours, and both together are the main basis and groundwork of all your hope and salvation, the neglect and inconsideration whereof makes the most part of pretended Christians to walk according to that Epicurean principle, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die." As if there were no life to come, they withhold nothing from their carnal minds, that can satisfy or please their lusts. But for you who desire a part in this resurrection, and dare scarcely believe so great a thing, or entertain such a high hope, because of the sight of your unworthiness; as you would be awakened by this hope to "righteousness, and to sin no more," verse 34 of that chapter, so you may encourage yourselves to that hope, by the resurrection of Christ; for it is that which hath the mighty influence to beget you to a lively hope, 1 Pet. 1:3. Look upon this as the grand intent and special design of Christ's both dying and rising again,—that he might be the first fruits to sanctify all the lump. Nevertheless, it is not the defect of your bodies, for they are often a great impediment and retardment to the spirit, and lodgeth the enemy within their walls, when he is chased out of the mind by the law of the Spirit of life; but it is the great design of God, through the

whole work of redemption, and the desert of Christ your head: and therefore you may entertain that hope, but take heed to walk worthy of it, and that is,—if we have this hope, let us purify ourselves, let us who believe that we are risen with Christ, set our affections on things above, else we dishonour him that is risen in our name, and we dishonour that temple of the Holy Ghost, which he will one day make so glorious.

XXXI

Verse 11—But if the Sprit of him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you

As there is a twofold death, the death of the soul, and the death of the body, so there is a double resurrection, the resurrection of the soul from the power of sin, and the resurrection of the body from the grave. As the first death is that which is spiritual, then that which is bodily; so the first resurrection is of the spirit, then the second of the body, and these two have a connexion together; therefore, saith the apostle John, "Blessed are they who have part in the first resurrection, for on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests to God," &c. Rom. 2:6. Although death must seize on their bodies, yet the sting wherein the strength of it lies, is taken away by Christ; that it hath no power to hurt him whose spirit is raised out of the grave of sin. And truly it is hard to tell which is the greatest change, or the most difficult,—to raise a body out of corruption to life, or to raise a soul out of sin to grace. But both are the greatest changes that can be, and shadowed out under the

similitude of the greatest in nature; for our conversion to God is a new birth, a new creation, and a resurrection in Scripture style; and so both require one and the same power, the almighty power of his Spirit,—“you who were dead in sin hath he quickened,” &c. O what a notable change! It maketh them no longer the same men, but new creatures; and therefore it is the death of sin, and the resurrection of the soul; for as long as it is under the chains of darkness and power of sin, it is free among the dead,—it is buried in the vilest sepulchre. Old graves, and these full of rottenness and dead men's bones, are nothing to express the lamentable case of such a soul; and yet such are all by nature. Whatsoever excellency or endowment men may have from their birth or education, yet certainly they are but apparitions rather than any real substances; and, which is worse, their bodies the sepulchre of their souls; and if the corruption of a soul were sensible, we would think all putrefactions of bodily things but shadows of it; and therefore no sooner is there any inward life begotten in a soul, but this is the very first exercise of it,—the abhorreny of the soul upon the sight and smell of its own loathsomeness.

Now, there is no hope of any reviving. Though all the wisdom and art of men and angels were employed in this business, there is nothing able to quicken one such soul, until it please the Lord to speak such a word as he did to Lazarus, “arise, come forth,” and send his Spirit to accomplish his word, and this will do it. When the Spirit cometh into the soul, he quickeneth it, and this is the first resurrection. O blessed are they who have part in this! whose souls are drawn out of the dungeon of darkness and ignorance, and brought forth to behold this glorious light that shineth in the gospel, and raised out of the grave of the lusts of ignorance, to live unto God henceforth. For such—they have their part in the second resurrection to life, for you see these are conjoined, “If the Spirit dwell in you, he shall raise you,” &c. You see

here two grounds and reasons of the resurrection of the body,—Christ's rising, and the Spirit's indwelling. Now I find these in the Scripture made the two fountains of all Christianity, both of the first and second resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ is an evidence of our justification, the cause of our quickening or vivification, and the ground and pledge of our last resurrection: and all these are grounds of strong consolation. The first you have, Rom. 4:25, "Christ died for our sins, and rose for our justification;" and the 34th verse of this chapter, "Christ is dead, yea rather, has risen again;" who then shall condemn? Here is a clear evidence that he hath paid the debt wholly, and satisfied justice fully. Since he was under the power of death, imprisoned by justice, certainly he would not have won [i.e. got] free, if he had not paid the uttermost farthing: therefore his glorious resurrection is a sure manifestation of his present satisfaction,—it is a public acquittance and absolution of him from all our debt, and so by consequence, of all he died for; for their debt was laid upon him, and now he is discharged; and therefore the believing soul may tremblingly boast, who shall condemn me; for it is God that justifieth? Why? because all my sins were laid on Christ, and God hath in a most solemn manner acquitted and discharged him from all, when he raised him from the dead; and therefore he cannot, and none other can sue for me, or prosecute a plea against me, since my Cautioner is fully exonerated of this undertaking, even by the great Creditor, God himself. But then, his resurrection is a pawn or pledge of the spiritual raising of the soul from sin. As the death of Christ is made the pledge of our dying to sin, so his rising, of our living to God, Rom. 6:4, 5. These are not mere patterns and examples of spiritual things, but assured pledges of the divine virtue and power, which he, being raised again, should send abroad throughout the world. For, as there are coronation gifts, when kings are solemnly installed in office, so there are coronation

mercies, triumphal gifts;—when Christ rose and ascended, he bestowed them on the world, Eph. 4. And certainly these are the greatest,—the virtue of his death to kill the old man, and the power of his resurrection to quicken the new; and by faith, a believer is united and ingrafted into him, as a plant into a choice stock, and by virtue and sap coming from Christ's death and resurrection, he is transformed into the similitude of both. He groweth into the likeness of his death, by dying to sin, by crucifying these inward affections and inclinations to it; and he groweth up into the similitude of his resurrection, by newness of life, or being alive to God, in holy desires and endeavours after holiness and obedience. And thus the first resurrection of the soul floweth from Christ's resurrection.

But add unto this, that Christ's rising is the pledge and pawn of the second resurrection, that is, of the body; for he is the head, and we are the members. Now, it is most incongruous, that the head should rise and not draw up the members after him. Certainly he will not cease till he have drawn up all his members to him. If the head be above water, it is a sure pledge that the body will win [i.e. get] out of the water; if the root be alive, certainly the branches will shoot out in spring time,—they shall live also. There is that connexion between Christ and believers, that wonderful communication between them, that Christ did nothing, was nothing, and had nothing to him, but what he did, and was, and suffered, personating them; and all the benefit and advantage redounds to them. He would not be considered of as a person by himself, but would rather be still taken in with the children. As for love, he came down and took flesh to be like them, and did take their sin and misery off them, and so was content to be looked upon by God as in the place of sinners, as the chief sinner; so he is content and desirous that we should look on him as in the place of sinners, as dying, as rising for us, as having no excellency or privilege incommunicable to us. And this was not hid

from the church of old, but presented as the grand consolation,—"thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body they shall rise;" and therefore may poor souls awake and sing, though they must dwell in the dust, yet as the dew and influence of heaven maketh herbs to spring out of the earth, so the virtue of this resurrection shall make the earth and sea and air, to cast out and render their dead, Isa. 26:19. Upon what a sure and strong chain hangs the salvation of poor sinners! I wish Christians might salute one another with this, "Christ is risen," and so "comfort one another with these words;" or rather, every one would apply this cordial to his own heart, "Christ is risen:" and you know what a golden chain this draweth after it, therefore we must rise and live.

The other cause which is more immediate, and will actively accomplish it, is the Spirit dwelling in us; for there is a suitable method here too. As the Lord first raised the head, Christ, and will then raise the members,—and he that doth the one cannot but do the other,—so the Spirit first raiseth the soul from the woful fall into sin which killed us, and so maketh it a temple, and the body too, for both are bought with a price, and therefore the Spirit possesseth both. But the inmost residence is in the soul, and the bodily members are made servants of righteousness, which is a great honour and dignity, in regard of that base employment they had once. And so it is most suitable, that he who hath thus dwelt in both, repair his his own dwelling-house: for here it is ruinous, and therefore must be cast down. But because it was once a temple for the Holy Ghost, therefore it will be repaired and built again. For he that once honoured it with his presence, will not suffer corruption always to dwell in it; for what Christ by his humiliation and suffering purchased, the Spirit hath this commission to perform; and what is it but the restitution of mankind to a happier estate in the second Adam, than ever the first was? Now, since our Lord, who pleased to take on our flesh, did not

put it off again, but admits it to the fellowship of the same glory in heaven,—in that he died, he dies no more, death hath no more dominion over him,—he will never be wearied or ashamed of that human clothing of flesh; and therefore certainly, that the children may be like the father, the followers their captain, the members not disproportioned to the head, the branches not different and heterogeneous to the stock, and that our rising in Christ may leave no footstep of our falling, no remainder of our misery; therefore the Spirit of Christ will also quicken the mortal bodies of believers, and make them like Christ's glorious body.

This must be done with divine power,—and what more powerful than the Spirit? For it is the spirits or subtile parts in all creatures that causeth all motions, and worketh all effects. What, then, is that almighty Spirit not able to do? You have shadows of this in nature, yea, convincing evidences: for what is the spring, but a resurrection of the earth? Is not the world every year renewed, and riseth again out of the grave of winter? as you find it elegantly expressed, Psal. 107; and doth not the grains of seed die in the clods before they rise to the harvest, 1 Cor. 15. All the vicissitudes and alterations in nature, give us a plain draught of this great change, and certainly it is one Spirit that effects all.

But though there be the same power required, to raise up the bodies of the godly and ungodly; yet, O what infinite distance and difference in the nature and ends of their resurrection! There is the resurrection of life, and the resurrection of condemnation, John 5:29. O happy they who rise to life that ever they died! But, O miserable, thrice wretched are all others, that they may not be dead for ever! The immortality of the soul was infinite misery, because it is that which eternizes their misery; but when this overplus is added, the incorruptibility of the body, and so the whole man made an

inconsumable subject, for that fire to feed upon perpetually, what heart can conceive it without horror? And yet we hear it often without any such affection. It is a strange life, that death is the only refreshment of it; and yet this may not be had,—"they shall seek death, and it shall fly from them." Now, my beloved, I would desire this discourse might open way for the hearty and cordial entertainment of the gospel, and that you might be persuaded "to awake unto righteousness, and sin no more." 1 Cor. 15:34, "Be not deceived, my brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Certainly, if you have no other image than what you come into the world withal, you cannot have this hope,—to be conformed one day to the glorious body of Christ. What will become of you in that day, who declare now, by the continued vent of your hearts, that this holy Spirit dwells not in you? And, alas! how many are such! O pity yourselves, your souls and bodies both! If, for love to your bodies, you will follow its present lusts, and care only for the things of the body, you act the greatest enmity and hostility against your own bodies. Consider, I beseech you, the eternal state of both, and your care and study will run in another channel. And for you who have any working of the Spirit in you, whether convincing you of sin and misery, and of righteousness in Christ; or sometimes comforting you by the word applied to your heart; or teaching you another way than the world walks in, I recommend unto you that of the apostle's, 1 Cor. 15:58, "Wherefore, my brethren, be stedfast, &c. always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing your labour is not in vain."

Verse 12—Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh, &c.

All things in Christianity have a near and strait conjunction. It is so entire and absolute a piece, that if one link be loosed, all the chain falls to the ground, and if one be well fastened upon the heart, it brings all alongst with it. Some speak of all truths, even in nature, that they are knit so together, that any truth may be concluded out of every truth, at least by a long circuit of deduction and reasoning. But whatsoever be of that, certainly religion is a more entire thing, and all the parts of it more nearly conjoined together, that they may mutually enforce one another. Precepts and promises are thus linked together, that if any soul lay hold indeed upon any promise of grace, he draws alongst with it the obligation of some precept to walk suitable to such precious promises. There is no encouragement you can indeed fasten upon, but it will join you as nearly to the commandment; and no consolation in the gospel, that doth not carry within its bosom an exhortation to holy walking. Again, on the other hand, there is no precept, but it should lead you straightway to a promise; no exhortation, but it is environed before and behind with a strong consolation, to make it pierce the deeper, and go down the sweeter. Therefore you see how easily the apostle digresseth from the one to the other, how sweetly and pertinently these are woven in his discourse. The first word of the chapter is a word of strong consolation, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ;" and this, like a flood, carries all down with it, all precepts and exhortations, and the soul of a believer with them. And therefore he subjoins an exhortation to holy and spiritual walking upon that very ground. And because commandments of this nature will not float, so to speak, unless they have much water of that kind, and cannot have such a swift course, except the tide of such encouragements flow fast; therefore he openeth that spring again in the preceding words, and

letteth the rivers of consolation flow forth, even the "hope of immortality and eternal life." And this certainly will raise up a soul that was on ground, and carry him above in motion of obedience; and therefore he may well, in the next place, stir them up to their duty, and mind them of their obligation, "therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh." To make this the more effectual, he drops it in with affection, in a sweet compellation of love and equality, "brethren." There is nothing so powerful in persuasion as love,—it will sweeten a bitter and unpleasant reproof, and make it go down more easily. Though it maketh less noise than threatenings, and severity and authority, yet it is more forcible; for it insinuates itself, and in a manner surpriseth the soul, and so preventeth all resistance. As when the sun made the traveller part with his cloak, whereas the wind and rain made him hold it faster, so affection will prevail, where authority and terror cannot. It will melt that which a stronger power cannot break. The story of Elijah, 1 Kings 19, may give some representation of this,—"The Lord was not in the strong wind, nor in the terrible earthquake, nor yet in the fire, but in the calm still voice." The Lord hath chosen this way of publishing his grace in the gospel, because the sum of it is "love to sinners, and good will towards men." He holds it forth in the calm voice of love, and those who are his ambassadors should be clothed with such an affection, if they intend to prevail with men, to engage their affections. O that we were possessed with that brotherly love one towards another, for the salvation one of another! especially, that the preachers of the gospel might be thus kindly affectioned toward others, and that you would take it thus, the calling you off the ways of sin, as an act of the greatest love. But then consider the equality of this obligation, for there is nothing pressed upon you, but what lieth as heavily upon them that presseth it. This debt binds all. O that the ministers of the gospel could carry the impression of this on their hearts, that when they persuade others, they may withal persuade themselves; and

when they speak to others, they may sit down among the hearers! If an apostle of so eminent dignity levelleth himself in this consideration, "therefore, brethren, we are debtors;" how much more ought pastors and teachers to come in the same rank and degree of debt and obligation with others. Truly, this is the great obstruction of the success of the gospel, that those who bind burdens on others, do not themselves touch them with one of their fingers; and while they seem serious in persuading others, yet withal declare by their carriage, that they do not believe themselves what they bear upon others; so that preaching seemeth to be an imposture, and affected persuading of others, to be borrowed, as it were in a scene, to be laid down again out of it. But then again, there is a misconceit among people, that this holy and spiritual walking is not of common obligation, but peculiar to the preachers of the gospel. Many make their reckoning so, as if they were not called to such high aims and great endeavours; but truly, my beloved, this is a thing of common concernment. The Holy Ghost hath levelled us all in this point of duty, as he hath equally exalted all in the most substantial dignities and privileges of the gospel. This bond is upon the highest and upon the lowest; greatness doth not exempt from it, and meanness doth not exclude from it. Though commonly great persons fancy an immunity from the strictness of a holy conversation, because of their greatness, and often mean and low persons pretend a freedom from such a high obligation, because of their lowness; yet certainly all are debt-bound this way, and must one day give account. You that are poor and unlearned, and have not received great things of that nature from God, do not think yourselves free; do not absolve yourselves, for there is infinite debt besides that. You will have no place for that excuse, that you had no great parts, were not learned, and so forth; for as the obligation reaches you all, so there is as patent a way to the exercise of religion in the poorest cottage, as in the highest palace. You may serve God as acceptably in little as

others may do in much. There is no condition so low and abject, that layeth any restraint on this noble service and employment. This jewel loses not its beauty and virtue, when it lieth in a dunghill, more than when it is set in gold.

But let us inquire into this debt,—“we are debtors,” saith he; and he instanceth what is not the creditor, by which he giveth us to understand, who is the true creditor: “not the flesh,” and therefore to make out the just opposition, it must be “the Spirit:” we are debtors then to the Spirit. And what is the debt we owe to him? We may know it that same way, we owe not to the flesh so much as to make us live after its guidance and direction, and fulfil its lusts; then, by due consequence, we owe so much to the Spirit, as that we should live after the Spirit, and resign ourselves wholly to him, his guidance and direction. There is a twofold kind of debt upon the creature, one remissible and pardonable, another irremissible and unpardonable, so to speak,—the debt of sin, and that is the guilt of it, which is nothing else than the obligation of the sinner over to eternal condemnation, by virtue of the curse of God. Every sinner cometh under this debt to divine justice, the desert of eternal wrath, and the actual ordination, by a divine sentence, to that wrath. Now indeed, this debt was insoluble to us, and utterly unpayable, until God sent his Son to be our cautioner, and he hath payed the debt in his own person, by bearing our curse, and so made it pardonable to sinners, obtained a relaxation from that woful obligation to death; and this debt, you see, is wholly discharged to them that are in Christ, by another sentence repealing the former curse; verse 1, “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.” But there is another debt which I may call a debt of duty and obedience, which, as it was antecedent to sin, even binding innocent Adam; so the obligation of the debt of sin hath been so far from taking it away, that it is rather increased exceedingly, and this debt is unpardonable and

indispensable; the more of the debt of sin be pardoned, and the more the curse be dispensed with, the more the sinner owes of love and obedience to God. "She loved much because much was forgiven;" and the more was forgiven of sin, the more she owed of love, and the more debt was discharged, the more she was indebted to him. And therefore, after this general acquittance of all believers, verse 1, he presseth this obligation the more strongly, "therefore, brethren, we are debtors." It is like that debt spoken of, Rom. 12. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another," which is not meant that it is unlawful to be debtors to men, but rather, what ye owe, or all things else, pay it, and ye are free, your debt ceases, and your bond is cancelled; but as for the debt of love and benevolence, you must so owe that to all men, as never to be discharged of it, never to be freed from it. When you have done all, this hath no limitation of time or action. Even so it is here. Other debts, when paid, men cease to be debtors, then they are free; but here the more he pays, the more he is bound to pay,—he oweth, and he oweth eternally. His bond is never cancelled as long as he continues a creature subsisting in God, and abides a redeemed one in Christ; for these continuing, his obligation is eternally recent and fresh as the first day. And this doth not all obscure the infinite grace of God, or diminish the happiness of saints, that they are not freed from this debt of love and obedience, but rather illustrates the one, and increases the other; for it cannot be supposed to consist with the wisdom and holiness of God to loose his creature from that obligation of loving obedience and subjection which is essential to it; and it is no less repugnant to the happiness of the creature to be free from righteousness, unto sin.

Now, this debt of duty and obedience hath a threefold bond, which, because they stand in vigour uncanceled from all eternity, therefore the obligation arising from them is eternal too. The bond of creation, the bond of redemption, and the bond of sanctification,—these are

distinguished according to the persons of the Trinity who appear most eminently in them.

We owe our being to the Father, in whom we live and move and have our being; for he made us, and not we ourselves, and we are all the works of his hands. Now the debt accruing from this is infinite. If men conceive themselves so much obliged to others for a petty courtesy, as to be their servants; if they owe more to their parents, the instruments of their bringing forth into the world, O how infinitely more owe we to God, of whom we are, and have all! Doth the clay owe so much to the potter, who doth not make it, but fashion it only? And what owe we to him that made us of nothing, and fashioned us while we were yet without form! Truly, all relations, all obligations vanish when this cometh forth; because all that a man hath is less than himself, than his immortal spirit, and that he oweth alone to God; and, besides, whatsoever debt there is to other fellow-creatures in any thing, God is the principal creditor in that bond. All the creatures are but the servants of this King, which at his sole appointment bring along his gifts unto us; and therefore we owe no more to them than to the hands of the messenger that is sent. Now, by this account, nothing is our own, not ourselves, not our members, not our goods, but all are his, and to be used and bestowed, not at the will and abutment of creatures, but to be absolutely and solely at his disposal, who hath the sole sovereign right to them; and therefore, you may take up the heinousness of sin, how monstrous and misshapen a thing it is, that breaks this inviolable law of creation, and withdraws the creature from subjection to him, in whom alone it can subsist. O how disordered are the courses and lives of men! Men living to themselves, their own lusts, after their own will, as if they had made themselves; men using their members as weapons of unrighteousness against God, as if their tongues, and hands, and feet were their own or the devil's, and not God's. Call to

mind this obligation, "Remember thy Creator,"—that memento would be a strong engagement to another course than most take. How absurd would you think it, to please yourselves in displeasing him, if you but minded the bond of creation. But when there are other two superadded,—what we owe to the Son, for coming down in the likeness of sinful flesh for us, and what we owe to the Holy Ghost for quickening our spirits, and afterward for the resurrection of our bodies,—whose hearts would not these overcome and lead captive to his love and obedience!

XXXIII

Vers. 12, 13—Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, &c.

Was it not enough to contain men in obedience to God, the very essential bond of dependence upon God as the original and fountain of his being! And yet man hath cast away this cord from him, and withdrawn from that allegiance he did owe to his Maker, by transgressing his holy commandments. But God, not willing that all should perish, hath confirmed and strengthened that primitive obligation, by two others as strong, if not more. If the Father did most eminently appear in the first, the Son is manifested in the second; and that is the work of the redemption of man, no less glorious than his first creation. He made him first, and then he sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to make him again by his Spirit: and now a threefold cord is not easily broken. It seems this should bind invincibly, and constrain us not to be our own, but the Lord's: and now truly, they who are in Jesus Christ, are thrice

indebted wholly to God. But the two last obligations are the most special, and most wonderful,—that God sent his Son for us, to redeem us from sin and misery, and to restore man to happiness, took on a miserable and accursed habit; that so glorious a person gave himself for so base an one; that so excellent a Lord became a servant for the rebel; that he whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, did empty himself of all to supply us; and, in a word, the most wonderful exchange he made that ever the sun saw,—God for men, his life a ransom for their life. All the rare inventions, and fancied stories of men, come infinitely short of this. The light never saw majesty so abased, and love so expressed, as in this matter; and all to this purpose,—that we who had undone ourselves, might be made up again, and the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us. At first he made us, but it cost him nothing but a word; but now, to buy that which was taken captive by sin, and at so dear a rate,—"ye are bought with a price," and this price more precious than the sum of heaven and earth could amount to. Suppose by some rare alchemy the earth were all converted into gold, and the heavens into precious stones; yet these corruptible and material things come as far short of this ransom, as an heap of dung is unproportioned to a mass of gold or heap of jewels. Now, you that are thus bought, may ye not conclude, "therefore we are debtors;" and whereof? Of ourselves, for we, our person, estates, and all, were sold, and all are bought with this price; therefore we are not our own, but the Lord's, and therefore we ought "to glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are his," 1 Cor. 6:20. Should we henceforth claim an interest and property in ourselves? Should we have a will of our own? Should we serve ourselves with our members? O how monstrous and absurd were that! Certainly, a believing heart cannot but look upon that as the greatest indignity and vilest impiety that ever the sun shined upon. Ingratitude hath a note of ignominy, even among heathens, put upon it; they esteemed the reproach of it the compend of all

reproaches, *ingratum si dixeris, omnia dixeris*. And truly it hath the most abominable visage of any vice; yea, it is all sins drawn through other in one table. Certainly, a godly heart cannot but account this execrable and detestable, henceforth to have any proper and peculiar will and pleasure, and cannot but devote itself wholly to his will and pleasure, for whose pleasure all were first created, and who then redeemed us by the blood of his Son. I wish we could have this image of ingratitude always observant to our eyes and minds, when we are enticed with our lusts to study our own satisfaction. But there is another bond superadded to this, which mightily aggravates the debt. He hath given us his Spirit to dwell within, as well as his Son for us. And O the marvellous and strange effects that this Spirit hath in the favours of men! He truly repairs that image of God, which sin broke down; he furnisheth the soul, and supplies it in all its necessities; he is a light and life to it, a spring of everlasting life and consolation; so that to the Spirit we owe that we are made again after his image, and the precious purchase of Christ applied unto our souls; for him hath our Saviour left to execute his latter-will in behalf of his children. And these things are but the first fruits of the Spirit. Any peace, or joy, or love, or obedience, are but an earnest of that which is coming. We shall be yet more beholden to him. When the walls of flesh are taken down, he will carry forth the soul into that glorious liberty of the sons of God; and not long after he shall quicken our very dust, and raise it up in glory to the fellowship of that happiness. Now, my beloved, consider what all this tends to. Mark the inference you should make from it, "therefore we are debtors," debtors indeed, under infinite obligations for infinite mercies. But what is the debt we owe? Truly it might be conceived to be some rare thing, equivalent to such inconceivable benefits. But mark what it is, "to live after the Spirit, and not after the flesh,"—to conform our affections and actions, and the tenor of our way and course, to the direction of the Spirit,—to have our spirits led and

enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and not to follow the indictment of our flesh and carnal minds. Now truly, it is a wonder that it is no other thing than this, for this is no other thing than what we owe to ourselves, and to our own natures, so to speak; for truly there is a conformity and suitableness of some things to the very nature of man, that is beautiful. Some things are decent and becomes it, other things are undecent and uncomely, unsuitable to the very reasonable being of man, so that they put a stain and blot upon it.

Now, indeed, there is nothing can be conceived more agreeable to the very constitution of man's nature than this,—that the far better and more excellent part should lead and command, and the baser and earthly part should obey and follow,—that the flesh should minister and serve the Spirit; doth not even nature itself teach it? And yet, no heavier yoke is put upon us, than what our own nature hath put upon us already, which indeed is wonderful. And certainly this wonderful attempering of his laws unto the very natural exigence of the spirit of man, makes the transgression of them so much the more heinous.

Now, all these three forementioned bonds do jointly bind on this law upon man; in general, they oblige strongly to subjection and obedience to the will of God; but particularly, they have a constraining influence upon this living after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. Our very creation speaks this forth. When God made man after his own image, when he beautified the spirit of man with that divine similitude and likeness, in that he breathed a spirit from heaven, and took a body out of the dust, and then exalted that heavenly piece to some participation of his own nature; doth not all this cry aloud upon us, that the order of creation is now dissolved, that the beauty of it is marred, that all is turned upside down, when men's passions and senses are their only guides, and the principles of light in their conscience are choked and stifled? Doth not all this

teach us plainly that we should not live after the flesh? That we owe not so much to this brutish part, as to enthrone it and empower it over us? That it were vilest anarchy, and most intolerable confusion and usurpation, to give it the power over us, as most men do? That there can be no order or beauty in man, till the spirit be unfettered from the chains of fleshly lusts, and restored to the native dignity and pre-eminency, and so keep the body in subjection? And indeed Paul was so, 1 Cor. 9:27, "I keep my body in subjection, and beat it down," because it is an imperious slave, an usurping slave, and will command if not beaten and kept under.

Again, Christ hath put a bond upon us to this very same. He hath strengthened this obligation with a new cord, in that he gave his precious life a ransom for the souls of men. This was the principal thing he paid for, the body being only an accessory and appendix to the soul, for it is said, "The redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever," Psal. 49:8; and, "What can a man give in exchange for his soul," Mark 8:37. For what material thing can equalize a spirit? Many things may be had more precious and fine than the body, but all of them have no proportion to a spiritual being. Now then, in that so dear a ransom, and so infinite a price must be given for the spirit of man, it declares the infinite worth and excellency of it above the body, and above all visible things: and here is indeed the greatest confirmation that can be imagined. God hath valued it he hath put the soul of man in the balance, to find something equal in weight of dignity and worth, and when all that is in heaven and earth is put in the other scale, the soul is down weight by far. There is such distance, that there is no proportion. Only the life and blood of his own Son weighs it down, and is an overvalue. And thus in our redemption we have a visible demonstration, as it were, of the infinite obligation of this law, not to live after that contemptible part, our flesh, but to follow after the motions and directions of an

enlightened spirit; not to spend our thoughts, care, and time upon the body, and making provision for the lusts thereof, as most men do, and all by nature are now inclined to do, but to be taken up with the immortal precious jewel that is within, how to have it rubbed and cleansed from all the filth that sin and the flesh hath cast upon it; and restored to that native beauty, the image of God in righteousness and holiness. If you in your practice and affection turn the scales otherwise, and make the body and the things of the body, suppose the whole world, down weigh in your affection and imagination, you have plainly contradicted the just measure of the sanctuary, and in effect you declare that Christ died in vain, and gave his life out of an error and mistake of the worth of the soul. You say, he needed not have given such a price for it, seeing every day you weigh it down with every trifle of momentary fleshly satisfaction.

Lastly, the Spirit binds this fast upon us; for the soul of man he hath chosen for his habitation, and there he delights to dwell, in the heart of the contrite and humble; and this he intends to beautify and garnish, and to restore it to that primitive excellency it once had. The spirit of man is nearer his nature, and more capable of being conformed unto it; and therefore his peculiar and special work is about our spirits. First, to enlighten and convince them; then, to reform, and direct, and lead them. And this binds as forcibly, and constraineth a believer certainly to resign himself to the Spirit; to study how to order his walk after that direction, and to be more and more abstracted from the satisfaction of his body; else he cannot choose but grieve the Spirit, his best friend, which alone is the fountain of joy and peace to him, and being grieved, cannot but grieve himself next.

Now, my beloved, consider, if you owe so much to the flesh, whether or not it be so steadable and profitable unto you. And if you think it

can give you a sufficient reward to compensate all your pains in satisfying it, go on; but I believe you can reckon no good office that ever it did you, and your expectation is less. What fruit have you of all, but shame and vexation of conscience? And what can you expect but death, the last fruits of it? What then do you owe unto it? Are you debtors to its pleasure and satisfaction, which hath never done you good, and will do you eternal hurt? Consider whether you are so much bound and obliged to it, as to lose your souls for it? One of them must be; and whether or not you be not more obliged to God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, to live after the Spirit, though for the present it should be painful to beat down your body. You are debtors indeed, but you owe nothing to the flesh but stripes and mortification.

XXXIV

Ver. 13—For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live

Though the Lord, out of his absolute sovereignty, might deal with man in such a way as nothing should appear but his supreme will and almighty power: he might simply command obedience, and without any more persuasions, either leave men to the frowardness of their own natures, or else powerfully constrain them to their duty; yet he hath chosen that way that is most suitable to his own wisdom, and most connatural to man's nature, to lay out before him the advantages and disadvantages, and to use these as motives and persuasives of his Spirit. For since he hath by his first creation, implanted in man's soul such a principle as moveth itself upon the presentation of good or evil; that this might not be in vain, he

administers all the dispensations of the law and gospel in a way suitable to that, by propounding such powerful motives as may incline and persuade the heart of man. It is true, there is a secret drawing withal, necessary. They pull off the Father's arm, and power of the Holy Ghost; yet that which is visible or sensible to the soul is the framing of all things so as to engage it upon rational terms. It is set between two contraries, death and life,—death, which it naturally abhorreth, and life, which it naturally loveth. An even balance is holden up before the light of the conscience, in which obedience and sin are weighed, and it is found even to the convincing of the spirit of man, that there are as many disadvantages in the one as advantages in the other.

This was the way that God used first with man in paradise. You remember the terms run so, "what day thou eatest thou shalt die." He hedged him on one side by a promise of life, on the other by a threatening of death: and these two are very rational restraints, suited to the soul of man, and in the inward principles of it, which are a kind of instinct to that which is apprehended good or gainful.

Now, this verse runs even so in the form of words, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die." You see this method is not changed under the gospel; for indeed it is natural to the spirit of man, and he hath now much more need of all such persuasions, because there is a great change of man's inclination to the worst side. All within is so disordered and perverse, that a thousand hedges of persuasive grounds cannot do that which one might have done at first. Then they were added out of superabundance, but now out of necessity. Then they were set about man to preserve him in his natural frame and inclinations, but now they are needful to change and alter them quite, which is a kind of creation; therefore saith David, "create in me a new spirit." And therefore the gospel abounds in variety of motives

and inducements, in greater variety of far more powerful inducements than the law. Here is that great persuasion taken from the infinite gain or loss of the soul of man, which if any thing be able to prevail, this must do, seeing it is seconded with some natural inclination in the soul of man to seek its own again. Yet there is a difference between the nature of such like promises and threatenings in the first covenant and in the second. In the first covenant, though life was freely promised, yet it was immediately annexed to perfect obedience, as a consequent reward of it,—it was firstly promised unto complete righteousness of men's persons. But in the second covenant, firstly and principally life, eternal grace and glory, is promised to Jesus Christ and his seed, antecedent to any condition or qualification upon their part. And then again, all the promises that run in way of condition, as "he that believeth shall not perish," &c —"if ye walk after the Spirit ye shall live;" these are all the consequent fruits of that absolute gracious disposition and resignation of grace and life to them whom Christ hath chosen; and so their believing, and walking, and obeying, cometh in principally as parts of the grace promised, and as witnesses and evidences, and confirmations of that life which is already begun, and will not see an end. Besides that, by virtue of these absolute promises made to the seed of Christ, and Christ's complete performance of all conditions in their name, the promises of life are made to faith principally, which hath this peculiar virtue, to carry forth the soul to another's righteousness and sufficiency, and to bottom it upon another; and in the next place, to holy walking, though mixed with many infirmities, which promise in the first covenant was only annexed to perfect and absolute obedience.

You heard in the preceding verse a strong inducement taken from the bond, debt, and duty we owe to the Spirit, to walk after it, and the want of all obligation to the flesh. Now, if honesty and duty will not

suffice to persuade you, as you know in other things it would do with any honest man,—plain equity is a sufficient bond to him,—yet consider what the apostle subjoins from the damage, and from the advantage which may of itself be the topics of persuasion, and serves to drive in the nail of debt and duty to the head. If you will not take with this debt you owe to the Spirit, but still conceive there is some greater obligation lying on you, to care for your bodies and satisfy them; then, I say, behold the end of it, what fruit you must one day reap of the flesh and service of sin—"if ye live after the flesh, you shall die." But then consider the fruit you shall reap of the Spirit and holy walking,—"you shall live." It is true, the flesh may flatter you more for the present, but the end of it will be bitter as death, *amplectitur ut strangulet*, "the flesh embraces you that it may strangle you;" and so if you knew all well, you would not think you owed it anything but enmity, and hatred, and mortification. If your duty will not move you, let the love of yourselves and your souls persuade you, for it is an irrevocable statute, "the wages of sin is death." Every way you choose to fulfil the lusts of your flesh, and to make provision for it, neglecting the eternal welfare of your souls, certainly it shall prove to you the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it shall be as the forbidden fruit, which, instead of performing what was promised, will bring forth death, the eternal separation of the soul from God. Adam's sin was a breviary or epitome of the multiplied and enlarged sins of mankind. You may see in this tragedy all your fortunes, so to speak. You may behold in it the flattering insinuations and deceitful promises of sin and Satan, "who is a liar and murderer from the beginning." and murdered man at first by lying to him. You find the hook covered over with the varnished bait of an imaginary life and happiness: satisfaction promised to the eye, to the taste, and to the mind; and upon these enticements, man bewitched and withdrawn from his God, after these vain and empty shadows; which, when he caught hold upon, he himself was caught

and laid hold upon by the wrath of God, by death and all the miseries before it or after it. Now, here is the map of the world; for all that is in the world, is but a larger volume of that same kind, "the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life!" Albeit they have been known and found to be the most notable and gross deceivers; and every man, after he hath spent his days in pursuit and labour for them, is constrained to acknowledge at length, though too late, that all that is in the world is but an imposture, a delusion, a dream, and worse; yet every man hearkens after these same flatteries and lies, that hath cast down so many wounded, and made so many strong ones to fall by them. Every man trusts the word and his own flesh, as if they were of good report, and of known integrity: and this is men's misery, that no man will learn wisdom upon other expenses, upon the woful and tragical example of so many others, but go on as confidently now, after the discovery of these deceivers, as if this were the first time they had made such promises, and used such fair words to men. Have they not been these six thousand years almost deluding the world? And have we not as many testimonies of their falsehood, as there hath been persons in all ages before us? After Adam hath tasted of this tree of pleasure, and found another fruit growing on it, that is, death, should the posterity be so mad as to be meddling still with the forbidden tree, and therefore forbidden, because destructive to ourselves.

Know then and consider, beloved in the Lord, that you shall reap no other thing of all your labours and endeavours after the flesh, all your toiling and perplexing cares, all your excessive pains in the making provision for your lusts, and caring for the body only,—you shall reap no other harvest of all, but death and corruption. Death, you think, that is a common lot, and you cannot eschew it however. Nay, but the death here meant is of another sort, in respect of which you may call death life. It is the everlasting destruction of the soul

from the presence of God, and the glory of his power. It is the falling of that infinite weight of the wrath of the Lamb upon you, in respect of which, mountains and hills will be thought light, and men would rather wish to be covered with them, Rev. 6:16. Suppose now you could swim in a river of delights and pleasures, (which yet is given to none, for truly upon a just reckoning, it will be found that the anxiety, and grief, and bitterness, that is intermingled with all earthly delights, swallows up the sweetness of them); yet it will but carry you down, e'er you be aware, into the sea of death and destruction, as the fish that swim and sport for a while in Jordan, are carried down into the dead sea of Sodom, where they are presently suffocated and extinguished. Or, as a malefactor is carried through a pleasant palace to the gallows; so men walk through the delights of their flesh to their own endless torment and destruction.

Seeing then, my beloved, that your sins and lusts which you are inclined and accustomed to, will certainly kill you, if you entertain them; then nature itself would teach you the law of self-defence, to kill e're you be killed, to kill sin e're it kill you, to mortify the deeds and lusts of the body, which abound among you, or they will certainly mortify you, that is, make you die. Now, if self-love could teach you this, which the love of God cannot persuade you to; yet it is well, for being once led into God, and moved to change your course, upon the fear and apprehension of the infinite danger that will ensue; certainly if you were but a little acquainted with the sweetness of this life, and goodness of your God, you would find the power of the former argument a debito, from debt and duty, upon your spirit. Let this once lead you unto God, and you will not want that which will constrain you to abide, and never to depart from him.

"If you mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live." As sin decays, you increase and grow; as sins die, your souls live, and it shall be a

sure pledge to you of that eternal life. And though this be painful and laborious, yet consider, that it is but the cutting off of a rotten member, that would corrupt the whole body, and the want of it will never maim or mutilate the body; for you shall live perfectly when sin is perfectly expired, and out of life; and, according as sin is nearer expiring and nearer the grave, your souls are nearer that endless life. If this do not move us, what can be said next? "What shall he do more to his vineyard?"

XXXV

Vers. 13, 14—For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God

The life and being of many things consists in union; separate them, and they remain not the same, or they lose their virtue. It is much more thus in Christianity. The power and life of it consists in the union of those things that God hath conjoined, so that if any man pretend to one thing of it, and neglect the other, he hath really none of them. And to hold to the subject in hand, there are three things, which, joined together in the hearts of Christians, have a great deal of force: the duty of a Christian, and his reward, and his dignity. His work and labour seems hard and unpleasant, when considered alone; but the reward sweetens it, when it is jointly believed. His duty seems too high, and his labour great, yet the consideration of the real dignity he is advanced unto, and privilege he has received, will raise up the spirit to great and high attempts, and to sustain great labours. Mortification is the work and labour; life, eternal life, is the reward;

following the spirit is the Christian's duty, but to be the son of God, that is his dignity.

Mortification sounds very harsh at first: the hearts of men say, "It is a hard saying, who can bear it?" And indeed I cannot deny but it is so to our corrupt nature; and therefore so holden out in Scripture. The words chosen to press it, express much pain and pains, much torment and labour. It is not so easy and trivial a business to forsake sin, or subdue it, as many think, who only think it easy, because they have never tried it. It is a circumcision of the foreskin of the heart, and you know how it disabled a whole city, Gen. 34, and how it enraged the heart of a tender mother, Exod. 4:26. It is the excision or cutting off a member, and these the most dear and precious, be it the right hand or right foot, which is a living death, as it were, even to kill a man while he is alive. It is a new birth, and the pains and throes of the birth are known. Regeneration certainly hath a travailing pain within it, in so much that Paul travailed in pain till it were accomplished in those, Gal. 4:19. Though men conceive sin in pleasure, yet they cannot be rid of that deadly burden without throes and pains; and to halve his work, or to be remiss or negligent in it, is as foolish and unwise, as for a child to stay long in the place of breaking forth, as the Lord complains of Ephraim, Hos. 13:13, "He is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of breaking forth of children." It is one of the greatest follies, not to labour by all means to be rid of the incumbrances of sin. Much violence offered to it, and a total resignation of ourselves to God, may be great pain, but it is short pain; then the pleasure is greater and continues. But now Christians lengthen their pain, and draw out their cross and vexation to a great extent, because they deal negligently in the business. They suffer the Canaanites to live, and these are thorns and briers in their sides continually. Then this business is called mortification, as the word is here, and Col. 3:5, which imports a higher degree of pain, for

the agonies of death are terrible. And to hold it out yet more, the most painful and lingering kind of death is chosen to express it,—crucifixion, Gal. 5:24. Now indeed, that which makes the forsaking of sin so grievous to flesh and blood, is, the engagement of the soul to it, the oneness that is between it and our natures, as they are now fallen; for you know pain ariseth upon the dissolution or division of any thing that is continued or united; and those things that are so nearly conjoined, it is hard to separate them without much violence. And truly, as the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, so we must offer violence to ourselves, to our lusts and inclinations, who are almost ourselves. And if you would be truly Christians, this must be your business and employment,—to cut off those things that are dearest unto you, to cast out the very idols your hearts sacrifice unto, and if there be any thing more one with you than another, to endeavour to break the bond with that, and to be at the furthest distance with it. It is easy to persuade men to forsake some sins and courses, that they are not much inclined to, and find not much pleasure or profit by them. You may do that and be but dead in sins; but if you aim at true mortification indeed, you would consider what are the chief idols and predominant inclinations of your heart, and as to set yourself impartially against all known so particularly against the most beloved sin, because it interrupts most the communion of God, and separates from your beloved, and the dearer it be, the more dangerous certainly it is.

But to encourage and hearten you to this, I would have you look back to that former victory that Christ hath gained in our name, and look about to the assistance you have for the present, the Spirit to help you. Truly, my beloved, this will be a dead business, if you be not animated and quickened by these considerations, that Christ died to sin, and lived to God, and that in this he was a public person representing you, that so you may conclude with Paul, "I am

crucified with Christ," Gal. 2:20; "we are buried with him by baptism into his death," Rom. 6:4. Consider that mystical union with Christ crucified, and life shall spring out of his cross, out of his grave, to kill sin in you. That the great business is done already, and victory gained in our head,— "this is our victory, even faith." Believe, and then you have overcome, before you have overcome; and this will help you to overcome in your own persons. And then consider and look round about to the strong helper you have,— "the Spirit, if you through the Spirit mortify," &c. Stronger is he that is in you, than he that is in the world; though he does not vent all his power to you, yet you may believe that there is a secret latent virtue in the seed of grace, that it cannot be wholly overcome or conquered, and there is one engaged in the warfare with us, who will never leave us nor forsake us, who of set purpose withdraweth his help now and then, to discover our weakness to us, that we may cleave the faster to him, who never letteth sin get any power, or gather any strength, but out of wisdom, to make the final victory the more glorious; in a word, he leads us through weaknesses, infirmities, faintings, wrestlings, that his strength may be perfected in weakness, "that when we are weak, then we may be strongest in him," 2 Cor. 12:9. Our duty then is to follow this Spirit wheresoever he leadeth us. Christ, the captain of our salvation, when he went to heaven, sent the Spirit to be our guider, to lead us thither where he is; and therefore we should resign and give up ourselves to his guidance and direction. The nature of a creature is dependence, so the very essence of a Christian consists in dependence and subordination to the Spirit of God. Nature itself would teach them that wisdom, to commit themselves to those that have it, and not to carry the reins of their own life themselves.

Truly, not only the sense of our own imperfection, of our folly and ignorance in those things that belong to life, should make us willing to yield ourselves over to the Spirit of God, as blind men to their

leader, as children to their nurses, as orphans to their tutors; but also, because the Spirit is made our tutor and leader. Christ our Father hath left us to the Spirit in his latter will; and therefore, as we have absolute necessity, so he hath both willingness and ability, because it is his office. "O Lord I know," saith Jeremiah, "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in him that walketh to direct his steps," Jer. 10:23. O! it were a great point of wisdom, thus to know our ignorance and folly; and this is the great qualification of Christ's disciples,—simple as children, as little children, as void of conceit of their own wisdom, Mark 10:15. And this alone capacitates the soul to receive the impressions of wisdom; as an empty table is fittest to write upon, so a soul emptied of itself: whereas self-conceit draweth a number of foolish senseless draughts in the mind, that it cannot receive the true image of wisdom. Thus then, when a soul finds that it hath misled itself, being misguided by the wildfire of its lusts, and hath hardly escaped perishing and falling headlong into the pit, this disposes the soul to a willing resignation of itself to one wiser and more powerful,—the Spirit of God. And so he giveth the Spirit the string of his affections and judgment to lead him by, and he walketh willingly in that way to eternal life, since his heart was enlarged with so much knowledge and love. And now having given up yourselves thus, you would carefully eye your leader, and attend all his motions, that you may conform yourself to them. Whensoever the Spirit pulleth you by the heart, draweth at your conscience, to drive you to prayer, or any such duty, do not resist that pull, do not quench the Spirit, lest he let you alone, and do not call you, nor speak to you. If you fall out thus with your leader, then you must guide yourselves, and truly, you will guide it into the pit, if left to yourselves; therefore make much of all the impulses of your conscience, of all the touches and inward motions of light and affection, to entertain these, and draw them forth in meditation and action, for these are nothing else but the Spirit your leader plucking at you to follow him, and if you sit

when he riseth to walk, if you neglect such warnings, then you may grieve him, and this cannot but in the end be bitterness to you. Certainly, many Christians are guilty in this, and prejudge themselves of the present comfort and benefit of this inward anointing, that teacheth all things, and of this bosom guide that leadeth in all truth; because they are so heavy and lumpish to be led after him. They drive slowly, and take very much pressure and persuasion to any duty; whereas we should accustom ourselves to willing and ready obedience upon the least signification of his mind. Yea, and which is worse, we often resist the Holy Ghost; he draweth, and we hold beloved sins; he pulleth, and we pull back from the most spiritual duties. There is so much perverseness and frowardness yet in our natures, that there needs the almighty draught of his arm to make it straight, as there is need of infinite grace to pardon it.

Now, my beloved, if you have in your desires and affections resigned yourselves over to the guidance of this Spirit, and this be your real and sincere endeavour to follow it, and in as far as you are carried back, or contrary, by temptation and corruption, or retarded in your motion, it is your lamentation before the Lord; I say unto you, cheer your hearts, and lift them up in the believe of this privilege conferred upon you,—you are the sons of God. For he giveth this tutor and pedagogue to none but to his own children,—"as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God." Suppose you cannot exactly follow his motions, but are often driven out, or turned back; yet hath not the Spirit the hold of your heart? Are you not detained by the cord of your judgment, and the law of your mind? And is there not some chain fastened about you, which maketh it outstrip the practice by desires and affections? "You are the sons of God," that is truly the greatest dignity and highest privilege, in respect of which all relations may blush and hide their faces. What are all the splendid and glittering titles among men, but empty shows and evanishing

sounds, in respect of this. To be called the son of a gentleman, of a nobleman, of a king, how much do the sons of men pride themselves in it? But truly, that putteth no intrinsic dignity in the persons themselves. It is a miserable poverty to borrow praise from another; and truly he that boasts of his parentage, *aliena laudat non sua*, "he praiseth that which is another's, not his own." But this dignity, it is truly a dignity, it puts intrinsic worth in the person, and puts a more excellent spirit in them, than that which is in the world, as is said of Caleb; and besides it entitles to the greatest happiness imaginable.

XXXVI

Vers. 14, 15—For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, &c.

Children do commonly resemble their parents, not only in the outward proportion and feature of their countenances, but also in the disposition and temper of their spirits; and generally they are inclined to imitate the customs and carriage of their parents; so that they sometimes may be accounted the very living images of such persons, and in them men are thought to outlive themselves. Now, indeed, they that are the sons of God are known by this character, that "they are led by the Spirit of God." And there is the more necessity, and the more reason too, of this resemblance of God, and imitation of him in his children; because that very divine birth that they have from heaven consists in the renovation of their natures, and assimilation to the divine nature; and therefore they are possessed with an inward principle, that carries them powerfully towards a conformity with their heavenly Father; and it becometh

their great study and endeavour to observe all the dispositions and carriage of their heavenly Father, which are so honourable and high, and suitable to himself, that they at least may breathe and halt after the imitation of him. Therefore our Lord exhorts us, and taketh a domestic example and familiar pattern to persuade us the more by, —"Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," Matt. 5:48. And there is one perfection he especially recommends for our imitation, mercifulness and compassion towards men, opposed to the violence, fury, and implacableness; to the oppression, and revenge, and hatred that abound among men, Luke 6:36. And generally in all his ways of holiness and purity, of goodness and mercy, we ought to be followers of him, as dear children who are not only obliged by the common law of sympathy between parents and children, but, moreover, engaged by the tender affection that he carrieth to us, Eph. 5:1. Now, because God is high as heaven, and his way, and thoughts, and dispositions are infinitely above us, the pattern seems to be so far out of sight, that it is given over as desperate by many to attempt any conformity to it. Therefore it hath pleased the Lord to put his own Spirit within his own children, to be a bosom-pattern and example; and it is our duty to resign ourselves to his leading and direction. The Spirit brings the copy near hand us, and though we cannot attain, yet we should follow after. Though we cannot make out the lesson, yet we should be scribbling at it; and the more we exercise ourselves this way, setting the Spirit's direction before our eyes, the more perfect shall we be.

It is high time, indeed, to pretend to this, to be a son or a daughter of God. It is a higher word than if a man could deduce his genealogy from an uninterrupted line of a thousand kings and princes. There is more honour, true honour in it, and more profit too. It is that which enriches the poorest, and ennobles the basest, inconceivably beyond all the imaginary degrees of men. Now, my beloved, this is the great

design of the gospel, to bestow this incomparable privilege upon you, "to become the sons of God." But it is sad to think how many souls scarce think upon it, and how many delude themselves in it. But consider, that "as many as are the sons of God, are led by the Spirit of God." They have gotten a new leader and guider, other than their own fancy or humour, which once they followed in the ignorance of their hearts. It is lamentable to conceive how the most part of us are acted, and driven, and carried headlong, rather than gently led, by our own carnal and corrupt inclinations; men pretending to Christianity yet hurried away with every self-pleasing object, as if they were not masters of themselves, furiously agitated by violent lusts, miscarried continually against the very dictates of their own reason and conscience. And I fear there is too much of these, even in those who have more reason to assume this honourable title of sonship. I know not how we are exceedingly addicted to self-pleasing in every thing, whatsoever our fancy or inclination suggests to us, that we must do without more bands, if it be not directly sinful. Whatsoever we apprehend, that we must vent and speak out though to little or no edification. Like that of Solomon we deny our hearts nothing they desire, except the grossness of it restrains us. Now, certainly, if we knew what we are called to, who are the sons of God, we could not but disengage more with ourselves, even in lawful things, and give over the conduct of our hearts and ways to the Spirit of our Father, whom we may be persuaded of, that he will lead us in the ways of pleasantness and peace.

Now, the special and peculiar operations of the Spirit are expressed in the following words. There are some workings of the Spirit of God that are but introductory and subservient to more excellent works; and therefore they are transient, not appointed to continue long, for they are not his great intendment. Of this kind are those terrible representations of sin and wrath, of the justice of God, which put the

soul in a fear, a trembling fear; and while such a soul is kept within the apprehension of sin and judgment, it is shut up, as it were, in bondage. Now, though it be true, that in the conversion of a sinner, there is always something of this in more or less degrees: yet because this is not the great design of the gospel, to put men in fear, but rather to give them confidence; nor the great intendment of God in the dispensation of the law, to bring a soul in bondage under terror, but rather by the gospel to free them from that bondage; therefore he hath reason to express it thus, "ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear," &c. But there are other operations of the Spirit, which are chiefly intended, and principally bestowed, as the great gift of our Father, to express his bounty and goodness towards us; and from these he is called the Spirit of adoption, and the Spirit of intercession. The Spirit of adoption, not only in regard of that witness-bearing and testification to our consciences of God's love and favour, and our interest in it, as in the next verse, but also in regard of that child-like disposition of reverence, and love, and respect that he begets in our hearts towards God, as our Father. And from both these flows this next working, "crying, Abba Father," aiding and assisting us in presenting our necessities to our Father, making this the continued vent of the heart in all extremities, to pour out all that burdens us in our Father's bosom. And this gives marvellous ease to the heart, and releases it from the bondage of carefulness and anxiety, which it may be subject to, after the soul is delivered from the fear and bondage of wrath.

Let us speak then to these in order. The first working of the Spirit is, to put a man in fear of himself, and such a fear as mightily straitens and embondages the soul of man. And this, though in itself it be neither so pleasant nor excellent, as to make it come under the notion of any gift from God, it having rather the nature of a torment and punishment, and being some sparkle of hell already kindled in

the conscience; yet hath made it beautiful and seasonable in its use and end, because he makes it to usher in the pleasant and refreshing sight of a Saviour, and the report of God's love to the world in him. It is true, all men are in bondage to sin and Satan, and shut up in the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, and bound in the fetters of their own lusts, which are as the chains that are put about malefactors before they go to prison. "He that commits sin is a servant of sin," John 8:34; and to be a servant of sin, is slavery under the most cruel tyrant. All these things are, yet how few souls do apprehend it seriously, or are weary of their prison! How few groan to be delivered! Nay, the most part account it only liberty, to hate true delivery as bondage. But some there are, whose eyes the Spirit of God opens, and lets them see their bondage and slavery, and how they are concluded under the most heavy and weighty sentence that ever was pronounced,—the curse and wrath of the everliving God, that there is no way to flee from it or escape it for any thing they can do or know. Now, indeed, this serious discovery cannot choose but make the heart of a man to tremble, as David, "My heart trembles because of thy judgments, and I am afraid of thee," Psal. 119:120. Such a serious representation will make the stoutest and proudest heart to fall down and faint for fear of that infinite intolerable weight of deserved wrath; and then the soul is in a sensible bondage, that before was in a real but insensible bondage. Then it is environed about with bitter accusations, with dreadful challenges. Then the law of God arrests and confines the soul within the bounds of its own accusing conscience; and this is some previous representation of that eternal imprisonment and banishment from the presence of God. Albeit, many of you are free from this fear, and enjoy a kind of liberty to serve your own lusts, and are not sensible of any thralldom of your spirits; yet certainly the Lord will some time arrest you, and bring you to this spiritual bondage, when he shall make the iniquities of your heart encompass you about, and the curses of his law surround

you,—when your conscience accuseth, and God condemneth, it may be, too late, and out of date.

Alas, then! what will you do, who now put your conscience by, and will not hearken to it, or be put in fear by any thing can be represented to you? We do not desire to put you in fear, where no fear is; but where there is infinite cause of fear, and when it is possible that fear may introduce faith, and be the forerunner of those glad tidings that will compose the soul: we desire only you may know what bondage you are really in, whether it be observed or not, that you may fear, lest you be enthralled in the chains of everlasting darkness, and so may be persuaded to flee from it before it be irrecoverable. What a vain and empty sound is the gospel of liberty by a Redeemer to the most part who do not feel their bondage? Who believes its report, or cares much for it? Because it is necessity that casts a beauty and lustre upon it, or takes the scales off our eyes, and opens our closed ears.

Now, for you, who either are, or have been detained in this bondage, under the fearful apprehension of the wrath of God, and the sad remembrance of your sins, know that this is not the prime intent and grand business to torment you, as it were, before the time. There is some other more beautiful and satisfying structure to be raised out of this foundation. I would have you improve it thus, to commend the necessity, the absolute necessity of a Redeemer, and to make him beautiful in your eyes. Do not dwell upon that as if it were the ultimate or last work; but know that you are called in this rational way, to come out of yourselves into this glorious liberty of the sons of God, purchased by Christ, and revealed in the gospel. Know, "you have not received the spirit of bondage only to fear," but to drive you to faith in a Saviour; and then you ought so to walk, as not to return to that former thralldom of the fear of wrath, but believe his love.

XXXVII

Vers. 14, 15—For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father

The life of Christianity, take it in itself, is the most pleasant and joyful life that can be, exempted from those fears and cares, those sorrows and anxieties, that all other lives are subject unto; for this of necessity must be the force and efficacy of true religion, if it be indeed true to its name, to disburden and ease the heart, and fill it with all manner of consolation. Certainly it is the most rich subject, and most completely furnished with all variety of delights to entertain a soul, that can be imagined. Yet, I must confess, while we consult with the experience and practice of Christians, this bold assertion seems to be much weakened, and too much ground is given to confirm the contrary misapprehensions of the world, who take it to be a sullen, melancholic, and disconsolate life, attended with many fears and sorrows. It is, alas! too evident, that many Christians are kept in bondage, almost all their lifetime, through fear of eternal death. How many dismal representations of sin and wrath, are in the souls of some Christians, which keep them in much thralldom! At least, who is it that is not once and often brought in bondage after conversion, and made to apprehend fearfully their own estate; who hath such constant uninterrupted peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, or lies under such direct beams of divine favour, but it is sometimes eclipsed, and their souls filled with the darkness of horror and terror? And truly the most part taste not so much sweetness in

religion, as makes them incessant and unwearied in the ways of godliness. Yet notwithstanding of all this, we must vindicate Christianity itself, and not impute these things unto it, which are the infirmities and faults of the followers of it, who do not improve it unto such an use, or use it so far as in itself it is capable. Indeed, it is true that often we are brought to fear again, yet withal it is certain, that our allowance is larger, and that we have received the Spirit, not to put us in bondage again to fear, but rather to seal to our hearts that love of God, which may not only expel fear, but bring in joy. I wish that this were deeply considered by all of us, that there is such a life as this attainable; that the word of God doth not deceive us in promising fair things, which it cannot perform, but that there is a certain reality in the life of Christianity, in that peace and joy, tranquillity and serenity of mind that is holden out, and that some have really found it, and do find it; and that the reason why all of us do not find it in experience, is not because it is not, but because we have so little apprehension of it, and diligence after it. It is strange, that all men who have pursued satisfaction in the things of this life, being disappointed, and one generation witnessing this to another, and one person to another, that notwithstanding, men are this day as fresh in the pursuit of that, as big in the expectations as ever. And yet in this business of religion, and the happiness to be found in it, though the oracles of God in all ages have testified from heaven, how certain and possible it is, though many have found it in experience, and left on record to others; yet there is so slender belief of the reality and certainty of it, and so slack pursuit of it, as if we did not believe it at all. Truly, my beloved, there is a great mistake in this, and it is general too. All men apprehend other things more feasible and attainable than personal holiness and happiness in it; but truly, I conceive there is nothing in the world so practicable as this, nothing made so easy, so certain to a soul that really minds it.

Let us take it so then. The fault is not religion's, that those who profess it are subject to so much fear and care, and disquieted with so much sorrow; it is rather because Christianity doth not sink into the hearts and souls of men, but only puts a tincture on their outside, or because the faith of divine truths is so superficial, and the consideration of them so slight, that they cannot have much efficacy and influence on the heart, to quiet and compose it. Is it any wonder that some souls be subject again to the bondage of fear and terror, when they do not stand in awe to sin? Much liberty to sin will certainly embondage the spirit of a Christian to fear. Suppose a believer in Jesus Christ be exempted from the hazard of condemnation; yet he is the greatest fool in the world that would on that account venture on satisfaction to his lusts. For though it be true, that he be not in danger of eternal wrath, yet he may find so much present wrath in his conscience, as may make him think it was a foolish bargain. He may lose so much of the sweetness of the peace and joy of God as all the pleasures of sin cannot compensate. Therefore to the end that you whose souls are once pacified by the blood of Christ, and composed by his word of promise, may enjoy that constant rest and tranquillity, as not to be enthralled again to your old fears and terrors, I would advise and recommend to you these two things. One is, that ye would be much in the study of that allowance which the promises of Christ afford. Be much in the serious apprehension of the gospel, and certainly your doubts and fears would vanish, at one puff of such a rooted and established meditation. Think what you are called to, not to fear again, but to love rather, and honour him as a father. And then take heed to walk suitably, and preserve your seal of adoption unblotted, unruined. You would study so to walk, as you may not cast dirt upon it, or open any gap in the conscience for the re-entry of those hellish-like fears and dreadful apprehensions of God. Certainly it is impossible to preserve the Spirit in freedom, if a man be not watchful against sin and

corruption. David prays, "re-establish me with thy free Spirit;" as if his spirit had been abased, embondaged, and enthralled by the power of that corruption. If you would have your spirits kept free from the fear of wrath, study to keep them free from the power of sin, for that is but a fruit of this: and it is most suitable that the soul that cares not to be in bondage to sinful lusts, should, by the righteousness of God, tempered with love and wisdom, be brought under the bondage he would not, that is, of fear and terror; for by this means the Lord makes him know how evil the first is, by the bitterness of the second.

It is usual, on such a Scripture as this, to propound many questions, and debate many practical cases; as, whether a soul, after believing, can be under legal bondage? and wherein these differ, the bondage of a soul after believing, and in its first conversion? and how far that bondage of fear is preparatory to faith? And many such like; but I chuse rather to hold forth the simple and naked truth for your edification, than put you upon, or entertain you in such needless janglings and contentions. All I desire to say to a soul in bondage, is, to exhort him to come to the Redeemer, and to consider that his case calls and cries for a delivery. Come, I say, and he shall find rest and liberty to his soul. All I would say to souls delivered from this bondage, is, to request and beseech them to live in a holy fear of sin, and jealousy over themselves, that so they may not be readily brought under the bondage of the fear of wrath again. Perfect love casts out the fear of hell, but perfect love brings in the fear of sin: "Ye that love the Lord, hate ill;" and if ye hate it, ye will fear it in this state of infirmity and weakness wherein we are. And if at any time ye, through negligence and carelessness of walking, lose the comfortable evidence of the Father's love, and be reduced again to our old prison of legal terror, do not despair for that, do not think that such a thing could not befall a child of God, and from that ground do not raze

former foundations; for the Scripture saith not, that whosoever believes once in Christ, and receives the spirit of adoption, cannot fear again; for we see it otherwise in David, in Heman, in Job, &c., all holy saints: but the Scripture saith, "ye have not received the spirit of bondage for that end," to fear again. It is not the allowance of your Father. Your allowance is better and larger, if you knew it, and did not sit below it.

Now, the great gift, and large allowance of our Father, is expressed in the next words, "But ye have received the spirit of adoption," &c. Which spirit of adoption is a spirit of intercession, to make us cry to God as our Father. These are two gifts,—adoption, or the privilege of sons, and the spirit of adoption revealing the love and mercy of God to the heart, and framing it to a soul-like disposition. Compare the two states together, and it is a marvellous change,—a rebel condemned, and then pardoned, and then adopted to be a son of God;—a sinner under bondage, a bound slave to sin and Satan, not only from that intolerable bondage, but advanced to this liberty,—to be a son of God! This will be the continued wonder of eternity, and that whereabout the song of angels and saints will be. Accursed rebels, expecting nothing but present death, sinners arraigned and sentenced before his tribunal, and already tasting hell in their consciences, and in fear of eternal perishing, not only to be delivered from that, but to be dignified with this privilege,—to be the sons of God! To be taken from the gibbet to be crowned,—that is the great mystery of wisdom and grace revealed in the gospel, the proclaiming whereof will be the joint labour of all the innumerable companies above for all eternity. Now, if you ask how this estate is attainable, himself tells us, John 1:12, "As many as believed, or received, to them he gave the privilege to be the sons of God." The way is made plain and easy,—Christ the Son of God, the natural and eternal Son of God, became the son of man. To facilitate this, he hath taken on the

burden of man's sin, the chastisement of our peace; and so of the glorious Son of God he became like the wretched and accursed sons of men; and therefore God hath proclaimed in the gospel, not only an immunity and freedom from wrath, to all that in the sense of their own misery cordially receive him as he is offered; but the unspeakable privilege of sonship and adoption, for his sake who became our elder brother, Gal. 4:4, 5. Men that want children, use to supply their want by adopting some beloved friend in the place of a son; and this is a kind of supply of nature for the comfort of them that want. But it is strange that God, having a Son so glorious, the very character of his person, and brightness of his glory, in whom he delighted from eternity; strange, I say, that he should in a manner lose and give away his only-begotten Son, that he might by his means adopt others, poor, despicable creatures, yea, rebellious, to be his sons and daughters. Certainly, this is an act infinitely transcending nature, such an act that hath an unsearchable mystery in it, into which angels desire to look, and never cease looking, because they never see the bottom of it. It was not out of indigency he did it, not for any need he had of us, or comfort expected from us, but absolutely for our necessity and consolation, that he might have upon whom to pour the riches of his grace.

XXXVIII

Verse 15—But ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath shewed unto us, that we should be called the sons of God," 1 John 3:1. It is a wonderful expression of love, to advance his own creatures, not only infinitely

below himself, but far below other creatures, to such a dignity. "Lord, what is man that thou so magnifiest him!" But it surpasseth wonder, that rebellious creatures, his enemies, should have not only their rebellions freely pardoned, but this privilege of sonship bestowed upon them! that he should take enemies, and make sons of them; and not only sons, but heirs, co-heirs with his only-begotten Son. And then, how he makes them sons is as wonderful as the thing itself, that he should make his own Son our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and make him spring out as a branch or rod out of the dry stem of Jesse, who himself was the root of all mankind. This is the way, "God sent his Son, made of a woman, under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. 4:5. The house of heaven marries with the earth, with them who have their foundation in the dust. The chief heir of that heavenly family joineth in kindred with our base and obscure family, and by this means we are made of kin to God: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus," 1 Cor. 1:30. It behoved Christ, in a manner, to lose his own sonship as to men, to have it veiled and darkened by the superadded interest in us, and his nearness to us. He was so properly a son of man, subject to all human infirmities, except sin, that without eyes of faith, men could not perceive that he was the Son of God. And by this wonderful change are we made the sons of God. Whoever, in the apprehension of their own enmity and distance from God, receive Jesus Christ, offered as the peace, the bond of union between the two families of heaven and earth, that were at an infinite odds and distance; whoever, I say, believes thus in him, and flies to him, desirous to lay down the weapons of their warfare,—their peace is not only made by that marriage which Christ made with our nature, but they are blessed with this power and privilege, to be the sons and daughters of the Most High. And from thence may conclude, that if God be your Father, you can want nothing that is good. But the determination of what is good for you, whether in spiritual

enlargements, or in the things of this life, you must refer to his wisdom: for his love indeed is strong as death, nothing can quench it, in the point of reality and constancy. There is nothing to shadow it out among men. The love of women is earnest and vehement, but that is nothing to it, Isa. 49:15, for they may forget, but he cannot. Yet his love is not a foolish dotage, like a man that is often miscarried with fancy and lust, but it is a rational and wise affection, administered and expressed with infinite reason and wisdom; and therefore, he chooses rather to profit us than to please us in his dealings; and we who are not so fit to judge and discern our own good, should commit all to his fatherly and wise providence. Therefore, if you be tempted to anxiety and carefulness of mind, either through the earthliness of your dispositions, or the present straits of time, you who have resigned yourselves to Jesus Christ, would call to mind that your heavenly Father careth for you; and what need you care too? Why not,—use your lawful callings, be diligent in them: this is not to prejudge that; but if you believe in God, then you are obliged by that profession to abate from the superfluous tormenting thoughtfulness that is good for nothing but to make you more miserable than your troubles can make you, and to make you miserable before you be miserable, to anticipate your sorrows. If you say, God is our Father, you are tied to devolve yourselves over on him, and trust in his good will and faithfulness, and to sit down quietly as children that have parents to provide for them.

Now, the other gift is great too,—“The spirit of adoption, and because ye are sons, therefore hath he given you the Spirit of his Son,” saith this apostle, Gal. 4:6. And so it is a kind of confectary of the great privilege and blessed estate of adoption. They who adopt children use to give them some kind of token to express their love to them: but as the Lord is higher than all, and this privilege to be his son or

child is the greatest dignity imaginable, so this gift of his Spirit suits the greatness and glory and love of our Father. It is a Father's gift indeed, a gift suitable to our heavenly Father. If a father that is tender of the education of his child, and would desire nothing so much as that he might be of a virtuous and gracious disposition, and good engine; I think if he were to express his love in one wish, it would be this, that he might have such a spirit in him, and this he would account better than all he could leave him. But if it were possible to transmit a gracious, well-disposed understanding spirit one from another, and if men could leave it, as they do their inheritance, to their children, certainly, a wise and religious parent would first make over a disposition of that to his children. As Elisha sought a double measure of Elijah's spirit, so a father would wish such a measure to his children, and, if it were possible, to give it. But that may not be. All that can be done is to wish well to them, and leave them a good example for imitation. But in this our heavenly Father transcends all, that he can impart his own Spirit to his adopted children, and this Spirit is in a manner the very essential principle that maketh them children of the Father. Their natures, their dispositions are under his power,—he can as well reform them, as you can change your children's garments. He can make of us what he will. Our hearts are in his hand, as the water, capable of any impression he pleaseth to put on it. And this is the impression he putteth on his children: He putteth his Spirit in their hearts, and writeth his law in their inward parts: a more divine and higher work than all human persuasion can reach. This Spirit they receive as an earnest of the inheritance, and withal, to make them fit for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Now, the working of this Spirit of adoption, I conceive to be threefold, beside that of intercession expressed in the verse. The first work of the Spirit of adoption, that wherein a father's affection seems

to break first from under ground, is, the revealing to the heart the love and mercy of God to sinners. I do not say, to such a soul in particular, for that application is neither first, nor universal. But herein the Spirit of adoption first appears from under the cloud of fear; and this is the first opening of the prison of bondage, wherein a soul was shut, when the plain way of reconciliation to God in Christ, and delivery from the bondage of sin and wrath, is holden out; when such a word as this comes into the soul, and is received with some gladness, "God so loved the world, that he gave his Son," &c—"This is a true and faithful saying," &c—"Come, ye that labour and are weary, and I will give rest to your souls." When a soul is made to hear the glad tidings of liberty preached to captives,—of light to the blind,—of joy to the heavy in spirit,—of life to the dead;—though he cannot come that length as to see his own particular interest, yet the very receiving affectionately and greedily such a general report as good and true, gives some ease and relaxation to the heart. To see delivery possible, is some door of hope to a desperate sinner; but to see it, and espy more than a possibility, even great probability, though he cannot reach a certainty, that will be as the breaking open of a window of light in a dark dungeon, it will be as the taking off of some of the hardest fetters and the worst chains, which makes a man almost to think himself at liberty. Now this is the great office of the Spirit of the Father,—to beget in us good thoughts of him, to incline us to charitable and favourable constructions of him, and make us ready to think well of him, to beget a good understanding between us and him, and correct our jealous misapprehensions of him. For certainly we are naturally suspicious of God, that he deals not in sad earnest with us. Whenever we see the height of our provocation and weight of deserved indignation, we think him like ourselves, and can hardly receive without suspicion, the gospel that lays open his love in Christ to the world.

Now, this is the Spirit's work,—to make us entertain that honourable thought of God, that he is most inclinable to pardon sinners; and that his mercy is infinitely above man's sin, and that it is in no prejudice to his holiness or justice; and to apprehend seriously a constant reality and solid truth in the promises of the gospel, "and so to convince a soul of righteousness," John 16 that there is a way of justifying a sinner and ungodly person, without wrong to God's righteousness; and this being well pondered in the heart, and received in love, the great business is done. After that, particular application is more easy, of which I shall not speak now, because occasion will be given in the next verse, about the Spirit's witnessing with our spirits, which is another of the Spirit's workings. Only I say this, that which makes this so difficult is a defect in the first. But the common principles of the gospel are not really, and so seriously apprehended, because many souls do not put to their seal to witness to the promises and truth of it; therefore the Lord often denies his seal and witness to our comfort. It is certainly a preposterous way Satan puts souls upon, first, to get such a testimony from the Spirit before they labour to get such a testimony to Christ, and echo or answer in their hearts to his word. This way seems shortest; for it would leap into the greater liberty at the first hand. But certainly it is the farthest about, because it is impossible for souls to leap immediately out of bondage to assurance, without some middle step. They cannot pass thus from extremes to extremes, without going through the middle state of receiving Christ, and laying his word up in the heart; and therefore it proves the way furthest about, because when souls have long wearied themselves, they must at length turn in hither.

But there is another working of the Spirit I wish you were acquainted with. As the first work is to beget a suitable apprehension of God's mind and heart towards sinners, so the next is, to beget a suitable

disposition in our hearts towards God as a Father. The first apprehends his love, the next reflects it back again with the heart of a sinner to him. The Spirit first brings the report of the love and grace of God to us, and then he carries the love and respect of the heart up to God.

You know how God complains in Malachi, "If I be a father, where is my fear and honour?" For these are the only fitting qualifications of children, such a reverent, respective observance of our heavenly Father, such affectionate and humble carriage towards him, as becometh both his majesty and his love. As these are tempered one with another in him, his love not abasing his majesty, and his majesty not diminishing his love; so we ought to carry, as reverence and confidence, fear and love, may be contempered one with another; so as we may neither forget his infinite greatness, nor doubt of his unspeakable love. And this inward disposition, engraven on the heart, will be the principle of willing and ready obedience. It will in some measure be our meat and drink to do our Father's will; for Christ gave us an example how we should carry towards him: how humble and obedient was he, though his only begotten Son!

XXXIX

Verse 15—Whereby we cry, Abba, Father

As there is a height of grace in bestowing such incomparably high dignities and excellent gifts on poor sinners, such as, to make them the sons of God, who were the children of the devil, and heirs of a kingdom, who were heirs of wrath; so there is a depth of wisdom in the Lord's allowance and manner of dispensing his love and grace in

this life. For though the love be wonderful, that we should be called the sons of God; yet as that apostle speaks, "it doth not yet so clearly appear what we shall be, by what we are," 1 John 3:1. Our present condition is so unlike such a state and dignity, and our enjoyments so unsuitable to our rights and privileges, that it would not appear by the mean, low, and indigent state we are now in, that we have so great and glorious a Father. How many infirmities are we compassed about with? How many wants are we pressed withal? Our necessities are infinite, and our enjoyments no ways proportioned to our necessities. Notwithstanding, even in this the love and wisdom of our heavenly Father shews itself, and oftentimes more gloriously in the theatre of men's weakness, infirmities, and wants, than they could appear in the absolute and total exemption of his children from necessities. Strength perfected in weakness, grace sufficient in infirmities, hath some greater glory than strength and grace alone. Therefore he hath chosen this way as most fit for the advancing his glory, and most suitable for our comfort and edification, to give us but little in hand, and environ us with a crowd of continued necessities and wants within and without, that we may learn to cry to him as our Father, and seek our supplies from him. And withal he hath not been sparing, but liberal in promises of hearing our cries, and supplying our wants; so that this way of narrow and hard dispensation, that at first seems contrary to the love and bounty and riches of our Father, in the perfect view of it, appears to be the only way to perpetuate our communion with him, and often to renew the sense of his love and grace, that would grow slack in our hearts, if our needs did not every day stir up fresh longing, and his returns by this means are so much the more refreshing. There is a time of children's minority, when they stand in need of continual supplies from their parents or tutors, because they are not entered into possession of their inheritance; and while they are in this state, there is nothing more befitting them, than in all their wants to address

to their father, and represent them to him. And it is fit they should be from hand to mouth, as you say, that they may know and acknowledge their dependence on their father. Truly, this is our minority, our presence in the body, which, because of sin that dwells in it, and its own natural weakness and incapacity, keeps us at much distance with the Lord, that we cannot be intimately present with him. Now, in this condition, the comely and becoming exercise of children, is, to cry to our Father, to present all our grievances; and thus to entertain some holy correspondence with our absent Father, by the messenger of prayer and supplication, which cannot return empty, if it be not sent away too full of self-conceit. This is the most natural breathing of a child of God in this world. It is the most proper acting of his new life, and the most suitable expiration of that spirit of adoption that is inspired into him, since there is so much life as to know what we want, and our wants are infinite. Therefore that life cannot but beat this way, in holy desires after God, whose fulness can supply all wants. This is the pulse of a Christian, that goeth continually, and there is much advantage to the continuity and uninterruptedness of the motion, from the infiniteness and inexhaustedness of our needs in this life, and the continual assaults that are made by necessity and temptation on the heart. "But we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry," &c. He puts in his own name in the latter part, though theirs was in the former part. When he speaks of a donation or privilege, he applies to the meanest, to show that the lowest and most despised creature is not in any incapacity to receive the greatest gifts of God. And then, when he mentions the working of that Spirit in way of intercession, because it imports necessity and want, he cares not to commit some incongruity in the language, by changing the person, that he may teach us, that weakness, infirmities, and wants, are common to the best and chiefest among Christians; that the most eminent have continual need to cry, and the lowest and most obscure believers have as good

ground to believe the hearing and acceptance of their cries; that the highest are not above the weakest and lowest ordinance; and that the lowest are not below the comfort of help and acceptation in him. Nay, the growth and increase of grace is so far from exempting men from, or setting them above this duty of constant supplication, that by the contrary, this is just the measure of their growth and altitude in grace. As the degrees of the height of the water Nilus in its overflowing are a sure sign of the fertility or barrenness of that year; so the overflowings of the spirit of prayer in one gives a present account how the heart is, whether barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, or fruitful and lively and vigorous in it. It is certain that contraries do discover one another, and the more the one be increased, that is not only the more incompatible and inconsistent with the other, but gives the most perfect discerning of it. When grace is but as twilight in the soul, and as the dawning of the day only, gross darkness and uncleanness is seen; but the more it grows to the perfect day, the more sin is seen, and the more its hated wants are discovered that did not appear; and therefore it exerciseth itself the more in opposition to sin, and supplication to God. To speak the truth, our growth here is but an advancement in the knowledge and sense of our indigency. It is but a further entry into the idolatrous temple of the heart, which makes a man see daily new abominations worse than the former; and therefore you may easily know that such repeated sights and discoveries will but press out more earnest and frequent cries from the heart, and such a growth in humility, and faith in God's fulness, will be but as oil to the flame of supplication. For what is prayer indeed, but the ardency of the affection after God, flaming up to him in cries and requests?

To speak of this exercise of an holy heart, would require more of the spirit of it than we have. But truly this is to be lamented, that though there be nothing more common among Christians in the outward

practice of it, yet that there is nothing more extraordinary and rare, even among many that use, than to be acquainted with the inward nature of it. Truly, the most ordinary things in religion, are the greatest mysteries, as to the true life of them. We are strangers to the soul and life of those things, which consist in the holy behaviour and deportment of our spirits before the Father of spirits.

These words give some ground to speak of some special qualifications of prayer, and the chief principle of it. The chief principle and original of prayer is, the spirit of adoption received into the heart. It is a business of a higher nature than can be taught by precepts, or learned by custom and education. There is a general mistake among men, that the gift of prayer is attained by learning, and that it consists in the freedom and plenty of expression. But O how many doctors and disputers of the world, that can defend all the articles of faith against the opposers of them, yet how unacquainted are they with this exercise, that the poor and unlearned, and nothings in the world, who cannot dispute for religion,—yet they send up a more savoury and acceptable sacrifice, and sweet incense to God daily, when they offer up their soul's desires in simplicity and sincerity! Certainly this is a spiritual thing, derived only from the fountain of spirits. This grace of pouring out our souls unto him, and keeping communication with him,—the variety of words, and riches of expressions, it is but the shell of it, the external shadow; and all the life consists in the frame of the heart before God: and this none can put in frame, but he that formed the spirit of man within him. Some, through custom of hearing and using it, attain to a habit of expressing themselves readily in it, it may be, to the satisfaction of others, but, alas! they may be strangers to the first letters and elements of the life and spirit of prayer. I would have you who want both, look up to heaven for it. Many of you cannot be induced to pray in your family, (and I fear little or none in secret, which is indeed a

more serious work) because you have not been used, or not learned, or such like. Alas! beloved, this cometh not through education, or learning, it cometh from the spirit of adoption: and if ye cannot pray, "ye say ye have not the Spirit, and if ye have not the Spirit, ye are not the sons of God." Know what is in the inevitable sequel of your own confessions.

But I haste to the qualifications of this divine work,—fervency, reverence, and confidence, in crying Abba, Father; for these two suit well towards our Father. The first, I fear, we must seek it elsewhere than in prayer,—I find it spent on other things of less moment. Truly, all the spirit and affection of men runs in another channel, in the ways of contention and strife, in the way of passion and miscalled zeal; and because these things whereabout we do thus earnestly contend, have some interest or coherence with religion, we not only excuse but approve our vehemency. But O much better were that employed in supplications to God,—that were a divine channel! Again, the marrow of other men's spirits is exhausted in the pursuit of things in the world, the edge of their desires is turned that way, and it must needs be blunted and dulled in spiritual things, that it cannot pierce into heaven, and prevail effectually. I am sure, many of us useth this excuse, who are so cold in it, that we do not warm ourselves; and how shall we think to prevail with God? Our spirits make little noise when we cry all the loudest. We can scarce hear any whisper in our hearts, and how shall he hear us? Certainly, it is not the extension of the voice pleaseth him, it is the cry of the heart that is sweet harmony in his ears. And you may easily perceive that, if you but consider that he is an infinite Spirit, that pierceth into all the corners of our hearts, and hath all the darkness of it as light before him, how can you think that such a spirit can be pleased with lip-cries?

How can he endure such deceit and falsehood, (who hath so perfect a contrariety with all false appearances) that your heart should lie so dead and flat before him, and the affection of it turned quite another way? There were no sacrifices without fire in the Old Testament, and that fire was kept in perpetually; and so no prayer now without some inward fire conceived in the desires, and blazing up and growing into a flame in the presenting of them to God.

The incense that was to be offered on the altar of perfume, Exod. 30, behoved to be beaten and prepared. And truly, prayer would do well to be made out of a beaten and bruised heart, and contrite spirit, a spirit truly sensible of its own unworthiness and wants; and that beating and pounding of the heart will yield a good fragrant smell, as some spices do not till beaten. The incense was made of divers spices, intimating to us, that true prayer is not one grace alone, but a compound of graces. It is the joint exercise of all a Christian's graces, seasoned with all—every one of them gives some particular fragrancy to it, as humility, faith, repentance, love, &c. The acting of the heart in supplication is a kind of compend and result of all these, as one perfume made up of many simples. But, above all, as the incense, our prayers must be kindled by fire on the altar; there must be some heat and fervour, some warmness conceived by the holy Spirit in our hearts, which may make our spices send forth a pleasant smell, as many spices do not till they get heat. Let us lay this engagement on our hearts, to be more serious in our addresses to God the Father of spirits; above all, to present our inward soul before him, before whom it is naked and open, though we do not bring it. And certainly frequency in prayer will much help us to fervency, and to keep it when we have it.

XL

Verse 15—Whereby we cry, Abba, Father

All that know anything of religion must needs know and confess that there is no exercise either more suitable to him that professeth it, or more needful for him, than to give himself to the exercise of prayer. But that which is confessed by all, and as to the outward performance gone about by many, I fear is yet a mystery sealed up from us, as the true and living nature of it. There is much of it expressed here in few words, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The divine constitution and qualifications of this divine work is here made up of a temper of fervency, reverence, and confidence. The first I spoke of before; but I fear our hearts were not well heated then, or may be cooled since. It is not the loud noise of words that is best heard in heaven, or that is constructed to be crying to God. No, this is transacted in the heart more silently to men, but it striketh up into the ears of God. His ear is sharp, and the voice of the soul's desires shrill, and though it were out of the depths, they will meet together. It is true the vehemency of affection will sometimes cause the extension of the voice; but yet it may cry as loud to heaven when it is kept within. I do not press such extraordinary degrees of fervour as may affect the body, but I would rather wish we accustomed ourselves to a solid calm seriousness and earnestness of spirit, which might be more constant than such raptures can be, that we might always gather our spirits to what we are about, and avocate them from impertinent wanderings, and fix them upon the present object of our worship. This is to worship him in spirit, who is a spirit.

The other thing that composes the sweet temper of prayer, is reverence: and what more suitable, whether you consider him or yourselves? "If I be your Father, where is my honour; and if I be your

Master, where is my fear?" Mal. 1:6. While we call him Father, or Lord, we proclaim this much, that we ought to know our distance from him, and his superiority to us. And if worship in prayer carry not this character, and express not this honourable and glorious lord, whom we serve, it wants that congruity and suitableness to him that is the beauty of it. Is there anything more uncomely than for children to behave themselves irreverently and irrespectfully towards their fathers, to whom they owe themselves? It is a monstrous thing even in nature, and to nature's light. O how much more abominable must it be, to draw near to "the Father of spirits, who made us, and not we ourselves, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways;"—in a word, to whom we owe not only this dust, but the living spirit that animates it, that was breathed from heaven, and finally, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," and well-being,—to worship such an one, and yet to behave ourselves so unseemly and irreverently in his apprehension of his glory, by lying flat and dead before him, having scarcely him in our thoughts whom we speak to. And finally, our deportments in his sight, are such as could not be admitted in the presence of any person a little above ourselves: to be about to speak to them, and yet to turn aside continually to every one that cometh by, and entertain communication with every base creature; this, I say, in the presence of a king, or nobleman, would be accounted as absurd an incivility as could be committed; and yet we behave ourselves just so with the Father of spirits.

O the wanderings of the hearts of men in divine worship, while we are in communication with our Father and Lord in prayer, whose heart is fixed to a constant attendance and presence, by the impression of his glorious holiness? whose Spirit doth not continually gad abroad, and take a word of every thing that occurs, and so mars that soul correspondence? O that this word, Psal. 89:7, were written with great letters on our hearts, "God is greatly to be

feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." That one word, God, speaketh all. Either we must convert him into an idol, which is nothing; or, if we apprehend him to be God, we must apprehend our infinite distance from him, and his unspeakable inaccessible glory above us. He is greatly feared and revered in the assemblies that are above, in the upper courts of angels, those glorious spirits who must cover their feet from us, because we cannot see their glory. They must cover their faces from him, because they cannot behold his glory, Isa. 6 What a glorious train hath he, and yet how reverent are they! They wait round about the throne, above and about it, as courtiers upon their king, for they are all ministering spirits, and they rest not day and night to adore and admire that holy One, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is full of his glory." Now, how much more then should he be greatly feared and had in reverence in the assembly of his saints, of poor mortal men, whose foundation is in the dust and in the clay; and, besides, drink in iniquity like water! There are two points of difference and distance from us. He is nearer angels, for angels are pure spirits; but we have flesh, which is furthest removed from his nature. And then angels are holy and clean; yet that is but spotted to his unspotted holiness. But we are defiled with sin, which putteth us farthest off from him, and which his holiness hath greatest antipathy at. Let us consider this, my beloved, that we may carry the impression of the glorious holiness and majesty of God on our hearts, whenever we appear before him, that so we may "serve and rejoice with trembling, and pray with reverence and godly fear." If we apprehend indeed our own quality and condition, how low, how base it is, how we cannot endure the very clear aspect of our own consciences, we cannot look on ourselves stedfastly without shame and confusion of face, at the deformed spectacle we behold; much less would we endure to have our souls opened and presented to the view of other men, even the basest of men,—we would be

overwhelmed with shame if they could see into our hearts! Now then, apprehend seriously what he is,—How glorious in holiness! How infinite in wisdom! How the secrets of your souls are plain and open in his sight! And I am persuaded, you will be composed to a reverent, humble, and trembling behaviour in his sight.

But withal, I must add this, that because he is your Father, you may intermingle confidence. Nay, you are commanded so to do, and this honours him as much as reverence; for confidence in God, as our Father, is the best acknowledgment of the greatness and goodness of God. It declareth how able he is to save us, and how willing, and so ratifieth all the promises of God made to us, and setteth a seal to his faithfulness. There is nothing he accounts himself more honoured by, than a soul's full resigning itself to him, and relying upon his power and good-will in all necessities, casting its care upon him, as a loving Father, who careth for us. And truly, there is much beauty and harmony in the juncture of these two, "rejoicing with trembling, confidence, with reverence, to ask, nothing doubting," and yet sensible of our infinite distance from him, and the disproportion of our requests to his highness. A child-like disposition is composed thus, as also the temper and carriage of a courtier hath these ingredients in it. The love of his Father, and the favour of his Prince, maketh him take liberty, and assume boldness; and withal he is not unmindful of his own distance from his Father, or master, "Let us draw near with full assurance of faith," Heb. 10:22. There is much in the Scripture, both exhorted, commanded, and commended, of that παρόρησια, that liberty and boldness of pouring out our requests to God, as one that certainly will hear us, and grant that which is good. Unbelief spoileth all. It is a wretched and base-spirited thing, that can conceive no honourable thoughts of God, but only like itself. But faith, which is the well-pleasing ingredient of prayer,—the lower thoughts a man have of himself, it maketh him conceive the higher

and more honourably of God—"My ways are not as your ways, nor my thoughts as your thoughts, but as far above as the heavens above the earth," Isa. 55:8. This is the rule of a believing soul's conceiving of God, and expecting from him: and when a soul is thus placed on God, by trusting and believing in him, it is fixed, "My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord," Psal. 112:7. O how wavering and inconstant is a soul, till it fix at this anchor, upon the ground of his immutable promises! It is tossed up and down with every wind, it is double-minded: now one way, then another: now in one mind, and shortly changed. And indeed the soul is like the sea, capable of the least or greatest commotion, James 1:6, 7, 8. I know not any thing that will either fix your hearts from wandering in prayer, or establish your hearts from trouble and disquiet after it, nothing that will so exoner and ease your spirits of care as this,—to lay hold on God as all-sufficient, and lay that constraint on your hearts, to wait on him and his pleasure, to cast your souls on his promises, that are so full and so free, and abide there, as at your anchor-hold, in all the vicissitudes and changes of outward or inward things. In spiritual things, that concern your salvation, that which is absolutely necessary, you may take the boldness to be absolute in it, and as Job, "though he should slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and as Jacob, "I will not let thee go till thou bless me." But either in outward things, that have some usefulness in them, but are not always fitted for our chiefest good; or in the degrees of spiritual gifts, and measures of graces, the Lord calls us without anxiety to pour out our hearts in them unto him. But withal we would do it with submission to his pleasure, because he knows best what is best for us. In these, we are not bound to be confident to receive the particular we ask, but rather our confidence should pitch upon his good-will and favour, that he will certainly deny nothing that himself knows is good for us. And so in these we should absolutely cast ourselves with carefulness upon his loving and fatherly providence, and resign ourselves to him, to be disposed of in

them as he sees convenient. There is sometimes too much limitation of God and peremptoriness used with him in such things, in which his wisdom craves a latitude both in public and private matters, even as men's affections and interests are engaged; but ordinarily it is attended and followed with shame and disappointment in the end. And there is, on the other hand, intolerable remissness and slackness in many, in pressing, even the weightiest petitions of salvation, mortification, &c., which certainly ariseth from the diffidence and unbelief of the heart, and the want of that rooted persuasion, both of the incomparable necessity and worth of the things themselves, and of his willingness and engagement to bestow them.

The word is doubled here, Abba, Father, the Syriac and Greek word signifying one thing, expressing the tender affection and love of God towards them that come to him: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him diligently;" so he that cometh to God must believe that he hath the bowels and compassion of a Father, and will be more easily inclined with our importunate cries, than the fathers of our flesh. He may suffer his children to cry long, but it is not because he will not hear, but because he would hear them longer, and delights to hear their cry oftener. If he delay, it is his wisdom to appreciate and endear his mercies to us, and to teach us to press our petitions, and sue for an answer.

Besides, this is much for our comfort, that from whomsoever, and whatsoever corner in the world prayers come up to him, they cannot want acceptance. All languages, all countries, all places are sanctified by Jesus Christ, that "whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord, from the ends of the earth, shall be saved." And truly it is a sweet meditation to think, that from the ends of the earth the cries of souls are heard: and that the end is as near heaven as the middle; and a

wilderness as near as a paradise; that though we understand not one another, yet we have one loving and living Father that understands all our meanings. And so the different languages and dialects of the members of this body make no confusion in heaven, but meet together in his heart and affection, and are one perfume, one incense, sent up from the whole catholic church, which here is scattered on the earth. O that the Lord would persuade us to cry this way to our Father, in all our necessities!

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