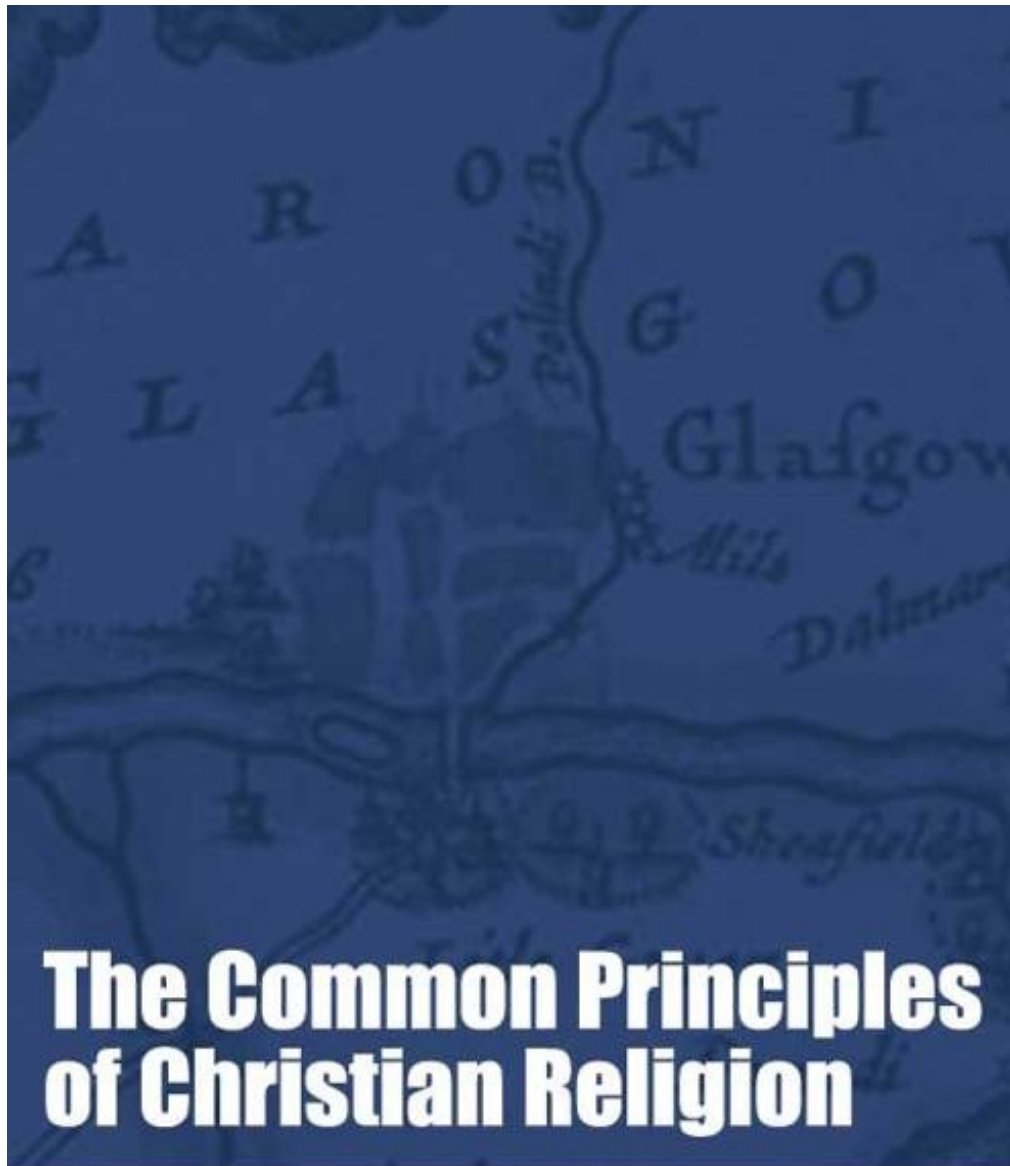


# The Common Principles of Christian Religion

Hugh Binning





Hugh Binning



Copyright ©Monergism Books

# **The Common Principles of the Christian Religion Clearly Proved and Singularly Improved**

**or a Practical Catechism**

**by Hugh Binning**

---

## **Table of Contents**

[ORIGINAL PREFACE.](#)

[LECTURE I. - GOD'S GLORY THE CHIEF END OF MAN'S BEING.](#)

[LECTURE II. - UNION AND COMMUNION WITH GOD THE END AND  
DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL.](#)

[LECTURE III. - THE AUTHORITY AND UTILITY OF THE  
SCRIPTURES.](#)

[LECTURE IV. - THE SCRIPTURES REVEAL ETERNAL LIFE  
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.](#)

[LECTURE V. - OF THE SCRIPTURES.](#)

[LECTURE VI. - WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH: THE  
RUIN AND RECOVERY OF MAN: FAITH AND LOVE TOWARDS  
CHRIST.](#)

[LECTURE VII. - OF THE NAME OF GOD.](#)

[LECTURE VIII. - THE ETERNITY AND UNCHANGEABLENESS OF  
GOD.](#)

LECTURE IX. - WHAT GOD IS TO US.

LECTURE X. - WHAT GOD IS.

LECTURE XI. - THE KNOWLEDGE THAT GOD IS, COMBINED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE IS TO BE WORSHIPPED.

LECTURE XII. - THE UNITY OF THE DIVINE ESSENCE, AND THE TRINITY OF PERSONS.

LECTURE XIII. - OF THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD AND THE TRINITY OF PERSONS.

LECTURE XIV. - OF THE DECREES OF GOD.

LECTURE XV. - OF PREDESTINATION.

LECTURE XVI. - OF PREDESTINATION.

LECTURE XVII. - OF CREATION.

LECTURE XVIII. - OF CREATION.

LECTURE XIX. - OF THE CREATION OF MAN.

LECTURE XX. - GOD'S WORKS OF PROVIDENCE.

LECTURE XXI. - OF THE FIRST COVENANT MADE WITH MAN.

LECTURE XXII. - OF THE FIRST COVENANT.

LECTURE XXIII. - OF THE STATE WHEREIN MAN WAS CREATED, AND HOW THE IMAGE OF GOD IS DEFACED.

LECTURE XXIV. - OF SIN BY IMPUTATION AND PROPAGATION.

LECTURE XXV. - OF THE WAY OF MAN'S DELIVERY.

Copyright

---

## ORIGINAL PREFACE.

### TO THE READER.

CHRISTIAN READER,—The holy and learned author of this little book, having outrun his years, hastened to a maturity before the ordinary season, insomuch that ripe summer-fruit was found with him by the first of the spring: for before he had lived twenty-five years complete, he had got to be *Philologus*, *Philosophus*, *Theologus eximius*; whereof he gave suitable proofs, by his labours, having first professed in philosophy three years, with high approbation, in the university of Glasgow, and thence was translated to the ministry of the gospel in a congregation adjacent, where he laboured in the work of the gospel near four years, leaving an epistle of commendation upon the hearts of his hearers. But as few burning and shining lights have been of long continuance here, so he ('after he had served his own generation by the will of God,' and many had rejoiced in his light for a season) was quickly transported to the land of promise, in the 26th year of his age. He lived deservedly esteemed and beloved, and died much lamented by all discerning Christians who knew him. And, indeed, the loss which the churches of Christ, in these parts, sustained in his death, was the greater upon a double account: first, that he was a person fitted with dexterity to vindicate school-divinity and practical theology from the superfluity of vain and fruitless perplexing questions wherewith latter times have corrupted both; and had it upon his spirit, in all his way, to reduce that native gospel simplicity, which, in most parts of the world where literature is in esteem, and where the gospel is preached, is almost exiled from the school and from the pulpit,—a specimen whereof the judicious reader may find in this little treatise. Besides, he was a person of eminent moderation and sobriety of spirit, (a rare grace in this generation,) whose heart was much drawn forth in the study of healing-ways and condescensions of love among brethren; one who longed for the recovering of the *humanity of Christianity*, which hath been well near lost in the bitter divisions of these times, and the animosities which have followed thereupon.

That which gave the rise to the publishing of this part of his manuscripts, was partly the longing of many who knew him after some fruit of his labours for the use of the church; and partly the exceeding great usefulness of the treatise, wherein, I am bold to say, that some fundamentals of the Christian religion, and great mysteries of faith, are handled with the greatest gospel-simplicity and most dexterous plainness; and are brought down to the meanest capacity and vulgar understanding, with abundant evidence of a great height and reach of useful knowledge in the author; who, had he lived to have perfected the explication of the grounds of religion in this manner—as he intended, in his opening the catechism unto his particular congregation—he had been, upon this single account, famous in the churches of Christ. But now, by this imperfect *opus posthumum*, thou art left to judge *ex ungue leonem*.

The author's method was his peculiar gift, who, being no stranger to the rules of art, knew well how to make his method subserve the matter which he handled; for, though he tell not always that his discourse hath so many parts, thou mayest not think it wants method, it being *maximam artis celare artem*. That the same Spirit which enabled him to conceive, and communicate to others, these sweet mysteries of salvation, may help thee with profit to read and peruse them, is the desire of him who is,

Thine in the service of the Gospel,

PATRICK GILLESPIE.

---

## LECTURE I.

GOD'S GLORY THE CHIEF END OF MAN'S BEING.

ROM. 11.36. "*Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever.*"

1 COR. 10.31. "*Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*"

ALL that men have to know, may be comprised under these two heads,—What their end is; and What is the right, way to attain to that end. And all that we have to do, is by any means to seek to compass that end. These

are the two cardinal points of a man's knowledge and exercise: *Quo et qua eundum est*,—Whither to go, and what way to go. If there be a mistake in any of these fundamentals, all is wrong. All arts and sciences have their principles and grounds that must be presupposed to all solid knowledge and right practice; so hath the true religion some fundamental principles which must be laid to heart and imprinted into the soul, or there can be no superstructure of true and saving knowledge, and no practice in Christianity that can lead to a blessed end. But as the principles are not many, but, a few common and easy grounds, from which all the conclusions of art are reduced, so the principles of true religion are few and plain; they need neither burden your memory, nor confound your understanding. That which may save you 'is nigh thee,' says the apostle, (Rom. 10.8.) 'even in thy mouth.' It is neither too far above us, nor too far below us. But, alas! your not considering of those common and few and easy grounds, makes them both burdensome to the memory, and dark to the understanding. As there is nothing so easy but it becomes difficult if you do it against your will,—*Nihil est tam facile, quin difficile fiat, si invitatus feceris*,—so there is nothing so plain, so common, but it becomes dark and hard if you do not indeed consider it and lay it to heart.

That which is, in the first place, to be considered is, our end. As in all other arts, and every petty business, it hath the first place of consideration, so especially in the Christian religion. It is the first cause of all human actions, and the first principle of all deliberate motions. Except you would walk at random, not knowing whither you go, or what you do, you must once establish this and fix it in your intention—What is the great end and purpose wherefore I am created, and sent into the world? If this be not either questioned, or not rightly constituted, you cannot but spend your time, *Vel nihil agendo, vel aliud agendo, vel male agendo*; you must either do nothing, or nothing to purpose, or, that which is worse, that which will undo you. It is certainly the wrong establishing of this one thing that makes the most part of our motions either altogether irregular, or unprofitable, or destructive and hurtful. Therefore, as this point hath the first place in your catechism, so it ought to be first of all laid to heart, and pondered as the one necessary thing. 'One thing is needful,' says Christ, Luke 10.42; and if any thing be in a superlative

degree needful, this is it. O that you would choose to consider it, as the necessity and weight of it require!

We have read two scriptures, which speak to the ultimate and chief end of man, which is the glorifying of God by all our actions and words and thoughts. In which we have these things of importance: 1. That God's glory is the end of our being. 2. That God's glory should be the end of our doing. And, 3. The ground of both these; because both being and doing are from him, therefore they ought to be both for him. He is the first cause of both, and therefore he ought to be the last end of both. 'Of him, and through him, are all things;' and therefore all things are also for him, and therefore all things should be done to him.

God is independent altogether, and self-sufficient. This is his royal prerogative, wherein he infinitely transcends all created perfection. He is of himself, and for himself; from no other, and for no other, 'but of him, and for him, are all things.' He is the fountain-head; you ought to follow the streams up to it, and then to rest, for you can go no farther. But the creature, even the most perfect work, besides God, it hath these two ingredients of limitation and imperfection in its bosom: it is from another, and for another. It hath its rise out of the fountain of God's immense power and goodness, and it must run towards that again, till it empty all its faculties and excellencies into that same sea of goodness. Dependence is the proper notion of a created being,—dependence upon that infinite independent Being, as the first immediate cause, and the last immediate end. You see then that this principle is engraven in the very nature of man. It is as certain and evident that man is made for God's glory, and for no other end, as that he is from God's power, and from no other cause. Except men do violate their own conscience, and put out their own eyes—as the Gentiles did, Rom. 1.19,&c.—'that which may be known' of man's chief end, 'is manifest in them,' so that all men are 'without excuse.' As God's being is independent, so that he cannot be expressed by any name more suitable than such as he takes to himself, 'I am that I am,'—importing a boundless, ineffable, absolute, and transcendent being, beside which, no creature deserves so much as to have the name of being, or to be made mention of in one day with his name, because his glorious light makes the poor derived shadow of light

in other creatures to disappear, and to evanish out of the world of beings, —so it is the glorious perfection of his nature, that he doth 'all things for himself,' Prov. 16.4, for his own name; and his glory is as dear to him as himself.' I am the Lord, that is my name, and [therefore] my glory will I not give to another,' Isa. 42.8; and 48.11. This is no ambition. Indeed, for a man to seek his own glory, or search into it, 'is not glory,' (Prov. 25.27,) but rather a man's shame. Self-seeking in creatures is a monstrous and incongruous thing; it is as absurd, and unbeseeming a creature, to seek its own glory, as to attribute to itself its own being. Shall the thing formed say to the potter, Thou hast not made me? That were ridiculous. And shall the thing formed say, 'Tis made for itself? That were as ridiculous. Self-denial is the ornament and beauty of a creature, and therefore humility is an ornament and clothing, 1 Pet. 5.5; and honour upholds the humble spirit, Prov. 29.23. But God's self-seeking, and seeking of his own glory, is his eminent excellency. It is indeed his glory, because he is, and there is none else; there is nothing, besides him, but that which hath issued forth from his incomprehensible fullness. And therefore it is all the reason of the world, that as he is the beginning, so he should be the end of all things, Rev. 1.8. And there is the more reason of it, that his majesty's seeking of his own glory is not prejudicial to the creature's good, but the very communication of his fullness goes along with it: so that in glorifying himself, he is most beneficial to his own creatures. Poor creatures, indigent at home, are yet proud of nothing, and endeavour, in seeking of themselves, to engross all perfections into their own bosoms! Ambition and vainglory robs and spoils others' excellencies to clothe itself withal; and then boasts itself in these borrowed feathers! But our blessed Lord is then doing most for our advantage when he does all for his own glory. He needs not go abroad to seek perfection, but to manifest what he is in himself; he communicates of himself to us. O blessed self-seeking that gave us a being and well-being; that makes no advantage by it, but gives advantage! He hath the honour of all, but we have the profit of all.

'All things are of him, and for him;' but man in a peculiar and proper way. As God, in making of man, was pleased of his goodness to stamp him with a character of his own image—and in this he puts a difference between man and other creatures, that he should have more plain and distinct engravings of divine majesty upon him, which might show the glory of the

workman—so it appears that he is in a singular way made for God, as his last end. As he is set nearer God, as the beginning and cause, than other creatures; so he is placed nearer God as the end. All creatures are made *ultimò*, lastly, for God, yet they are all made *proximè*, nextly, for man. Therefore David falls out a wondering, 'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him,' 'and hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, and put all things under his feet!' Psal. 8.4,6. The creature comes out in a direct line from God, as the beams from the body of the sun; and it is directed towards the use and service of mankind, from whom all the excellency and perfection that is in it should reflect towards God again. Man is both *proximè et ultimò* for God. We are to return immediately to the fountain of our being; and thus our happiness and well-being is perpetuated. There is nothing intervening between God and us that our use and service and honour should be directed towards: but all the songs and perfections of the creature, that are among the rest of the creatures, meet all in man as their centre, for this purpose that he may return with them all to the glorious fountain from whence they issued. Thus we stand next God, and in the middle between God and other creatures. This, I say, was the condition of our creation. We had our being immediately from God, as the beginning of all; and we were to have our happiness and well-being by returning immediately to God as the end of all. But sin coming in between God and us, hath displaced us, so that we cannot now stand next to God, without the intervention of a Mediator; and we cannot stand between God and creatures, to offer up their praises to him; but 'there is one Mediator between God and man,' that offers up both man's praises and the creature's songs which meet in man.

Now, seeing God hath made all things for himself, and especially man for his own glory, that he may show forth in him the glory and excellence of his power, goodness, holiness, justice, and mercy; it is not only most reasonable that man should do all things that he doth to the glory of God, but it is even the beauty and perfection of a man,—the greatest accession that can be to his being,—to glorify God by that being. We are not our own, therefore we ought not to live to ourselves, but to God whose we are.

But you may ask, What is it to glorify God? Doth our goodness extend to him? Or is it an advantage to the Almighty that we are righteous? No

indeed! And herein is the vast difference between God's glorifying of us and sanctifying of us, and our glorifying and sanctifying of him. God 'calls things that are not,' and makes them to be: but we can do no more but call things that are, and that far below what they are. God's glorifying is creative,—ours only declarative. He makes us such,—we do no more but declare him to be such. This then is the proper work that man is created for, to be a witness of God's glory, and to give testimony to the appearances and out-breakings of it in the ways of power and justice and mercy and truth. Other creatures are called to glorify God, but it is rather a proclamation to dull and senseless men, and a provocation of them to their duty. As Christ said to the Pharisees, 'If these children hold their peace, the stones would cry out,' so may the Lord turn himself from stupid and senseless man, to the stones and woods and seas and sun and moon, and exhort them to man's duty, the more to provoke and stir up our dulness, and to make us consider that it is a greater wonder that man, whom God hath made so glorious, can so little express God's glory, than if stupid and senseless creatures should break out in singing and praising of his majesty. The creatures are the books wherein the lines of the song of God's praises are written; and man is made a creature capable to read them, and to tune that song. They are appointed to bring in brick to our hand; and God has fashioned us for this employment, to make such a building of it. We are the mouth of the creation; but ere God want praises when our mouth is dumb, and our ears deaf, God will open the mouths of asses, 'of babes and sucklings,' and in them perfect praises, Psalm 8.1,2. Epictetus said well, *Si Luscinia essem, canerem ut Luscinia: cum autem homo sim, quid agam? Laudabo Deum, nec unquam cessabo*—If I were a lark, I would sing as a lark; but seeing I am a man, what should I do, but praise God without ceasing? It is as proper to us to praise God, as for a bird to chaunt. All beasts have their own sounds and voices peculiar to their own nature; this is the natural sound of a man. Now as you would think it monstrous to hear a melodious bird croaking as a raven; so it is no less monstrous and degenerate to hear the most part of the discourses of men savouring nothing of God. If we had known that innocent estate of man, O how would we think he had fallen from heaven! We would imagine that we were thrust down from heaven, where we heard the melodious songs of angels, into hell, to hear the howlings of damned spirits. This then is that we are bound unto, by the bond of our creation;

this is our proper office and station God once set us into, when he assigned every creature its own use and exercise. This was our portion, (and O the noblest of all, because nearest the King's own person!) to acknowledge in our hearts inwardly, and to express in our words and actions outwardly, what a One he is, according as he hath revealed himself in his word and works. It is great honour to a creature to have the meanest employment in the court of this great King; but, O, what is it to be set over all the King's house, and over all his kingdom! But, then, what is that, in respect of this,—to be next to the King,—to wait on his own person, so to speak? Therefore the godly man is described as a waiting-maid, or servant, Psal. 123.2.

Well then, without more discourse upon it, without multiplying of it into particular branches, to glorify God is in our souls to conceive of him, and meditate on his name, till they receive the impression and stamp of all the letters of his glorious name; and then to express this in our words and actions, in commending of him, and obeying of him. Our souls should be as wax to express the seal of his glorious attributes of justice, power, goodness, holiness, and mercy: and as the water that receives the beams of the sun reflects them back again, so should our spirits receive the sweet warming beams of his love and glorious excellency, and then reflect them towards his Majesty, with the desires and affections of our souls. All our thoughts of him, all our affections towards him, should have the stamp of singularity, such as may declare there is none like him, none besides him; our love, our meditation, our acknowledgment should have this character on their front,—'There is none besides thee: thou art, and none else.' And then a soul should, by the cords of affection to him and admiration of him, be bound to serve him. Creation puts on the obligation to glorify him in our body and spirits which are his; but affection only puts that to exercise. All other bonds leave our natures at liberty, but this constrains, 2 Cor. 5.14; it binds on all bonds, it ties on us all divine obligations. Then a soul will glorify God, when love so unites it to God, and makes it one spirit with him, that his glory becomes its honour, and becomes the principle of all our inward affections and outward actions. It is not always possible to have and express particular thoughts of God and his glory, in every action and meditation; but, for the most part it ought to be so: And if souls were accustomed to meditation on God, it would become their

very nature,—*altera natura*,—pleasant and delightsome. However, if there be not always an express intention of God's glory, yet there ought to be kept always such a disposition and temper of spirit as it may be construed to proceed from the intention of God's glory; and then it remains in the seed and fruit, if not in itself.

Now when we are speaking of the great end and purpose of our creation, we call to mind our lamentable and tragical fall from that blessed station we were constitute into. 'All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' Rom. 3.23. His being in the world was for that glory, and he is come short of that glory. O strange shortcoming! Short of all that he was ordained for! What is he now meet for? For what purpose is that chief of the works of God now! The salt, if it lose its saltiness, is meet for nothing, for wherewithal shall it be seasoned? Mark 9.50. Even so, when man is rendered unfit for his proper end, he is meet for nothing, but to be cast out and trode upon; he is like a withered branch that must be cast into the fire, John 15.6. Some things, if they fail in one use, they are good for another; but the best things are not so,—*Corruptio optimi, pessima*. As the Lord speaks to the house of Israel, 'Shall wood be taken of the vine tree to do any work?' Even so the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Ezek. 15.2-6. If it yield not wine, it is good for nothing. So, if man do not glorify God,—if he fall from that,—he is meet for nothing, but to be cast into the fire of hell, and burnt for ever; he is for no use in the creation, but to be fuel to the fire of the Lord's indignation.

But behold! the goodness of the Lord and his kindness and love hath 'appeared toward man. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,' 'through Jesus Christ,' Tit. 3.4-6. Our Lord Jesus, by whom all things were created, and for whom, would not let this excellent workmanship perish so, therefore he goes about the work of redemption,—a second creation more laborious and also more glorious than the first, that so he might glorify his Father and our Father. Thus the breach is made up; thus the unsavoury salt is seasoned; thus the withered branch is quickened again for that same fruit of praises and glorifying of God. This is the end of his second creation, as it was of the first: 'We are his workmanship created to good works in Christ Jesus,' Eph. 2.10. 'This is the work of God, to believe on him whom

he hath sent;' 'to set to our seal,' and to give our testimony to all his attributes, John 6.29, and 3.33. We are 'bought with a price,' and therefore we ought to glorify him with our souls and bodies. He made us with a word, and that bound us; but now he has made us again, and paid a price for us, and so we are twice bound not to be our own but his, 'and so to glorify him in our bodies and spirits,' 1 Cor. 6.20. I beseech you, gather your spirits, call them home about the business. We once came short of our end,—God's glory and our happiness; but know, that it is attainable again. We lost both; but both are found in Christ. Awake then and stir up your spirits, else it shall be double condemnation—when we have the offer of being restored to our former blessed condition—to love our present misery better. Once establish this point within your souls, and therefore ask, Why came I hither? To what purpose am I come into the world? If you do not ask it, what will you answer, when he asks you at your appearance before his tribunal? I beseech you, what will many of you say in that day when the Master returns and takes an account of your dispensation? You are sent into the world only for this business,—to serve the Lord. Now what will many of you answer? If you speak the truth (as then you must do it,—you cannot lie then!) you must say, "Lord, I spent my time in serving my own lusts; I was taken up with other businesses, and had no leisure; I was occupied in my calling," &c. Even as if an ambassador of a king should return him this account of his negotiation: "I was busy at cards and dice; I spent my money, and did wear my clothes." Though you think your plowing and borrowing and trafficking and reaping very necessary, yet certainly these are but as trifles and toys to the main business. O what a dreadful account will souls make! They come here for no purpose but to serve their bodies and senses, to be slaves to all the creatures which were once put under man's feet: Now man is under the feet of all, and he has put himself so. If you were of these creatures, then you might be for them. You seek them as if you were created for them, and not they for you; and you seek yourselves, as if you were of yourselves, and had not your descent of God. Know, my beloved, that you were not made for that purpose, nor yet redeemed either to serve yourselves, or other creatures, but that other creatures might serve you, and ye serve God, Luke 1.74,75. And this is really the best way to serve ourselves, and to save ourselves,—to serve God. Self-seeking is self-destroying; self-denying is self-saving, soul-saving. 'He that seeketh to

save his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it, and he that denies himself and follows me, is my disciple.' Will ye once sit down in good earnest about this business? 'Tis lamentable to be yet to begin to learn to live, when ye must die! Ye will be out of the world almost, ere ye bethink yourself, Why came I into the world? *Quidam tunc vivere incipiunt, cum desinendum est; imo quidam ante vivere desierunt quam inciperent*; this is of all most lamentable,—many souls end their life, before they begin to live. For what is our life, but a living death, while we do not live to God, and while we live not in relation to the great end of our life and being,—the glory of God? It were better, says Christ, that such 'had never been born.' You who are created again in Jesus Christ, it most of all concerns you to ask, Why am I made? And why am I redeemed? And to what purpose? It is certainly that ye may glorify your heavenly Father, Mat. 5.16; Psalm. 56.13. And you shall glorify him if you bring forth much fruit, and continue in his love, John 15.8,9. And this you are chosen and ordained unto, ver. 16; and therefore abide in him, that ye may bring forth fruit, ver. 4. And if you abide in him by believing, you do indeed honour him; and he that honoureth the Son honoureth the Father, John 5.23. Here is a compendious way to glorify God. Receive salvation of him free]y, righteousness and eternal life; this sets to a seal to God's truth and grace and mercy: and whoso counts the Son worthy to be a Saviour to them, and sets to their seal of approbation to him whom God the Father hath sent and sealed, he also honours the Father; and then he that honoureth the Father, hath it not for nothing, 'for them that honour me I will honour,' 1 Sam. 2.30, says the Lord; and 'he that serves me, him will my Father honour,' John 12.26. As the believing soul cares for no other, and respects no other but God, so he respects no other but such a soul. 'I will dwell in the humble, and look unto the contrite;' there are mutual respects and honours. God is the delight of such a soul, and such a soul is God's delight. That soul sets God in a high place, in a throne in its heart; and God sets that soul in a heavenly place with Christ, Eph. 2.6; yea he comes down to sit with us, and dwells in us, off his throne of majesty, Isa. 66.1,2; and 57.15.

---

## LECTURE II.

UNION AND COMMUNION WITH GOD THE END AND DESIGN OF

## THE GOSPEL.

PSALM 73.24-28. *"Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, &c. Whom have I in heaven but thee? &c. It is good for me to draw near to God."*

1 JOHN 1.3. *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."*

JOHN 17.21-23. *"That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," &c.*

IT is a matter of great consolation that God's glory and our happiness are linked together; so that whoever set his glory before them singly to aim at, they take the most compendious and certain way to true blessedness. His glory is the ultimate end of man, and should be our great and last scope. But our happiness—which consists in the enjoyment of God—is subordinate to this, yet inseparable from it. The end of our creation is communion and fellowship with God, therefore man was made with an immortal soul capable of it; and this is the greatest dignity and eminency of man above the creatures. He hath not only impressed from God's finger, in his first moulding, some characters resembling God, in righteousness and holiness; but is created with a capacity of receiving more of God by communion with him. Other creatures have already all they will have,—all they can have,—of conformity to him; but man is made liker than all, and is fitted and fashioned to aspire to more likeness and conformity, so that his soul may shine more and more to the perfect day.

There was an union made already in his first moulding; and communion was to grow as a fragrant and sweet fruit out of this blessed root. Union and similitude are the ground of fellowship and communion. That union was gracious,—that communion would have been glorious; for grace is the seed of glory. There was a twofold union between Adam and God,—an union of state, and an union of nature; he was like God, and he was God's friend. All the creatures had some likeness to God, some engravings of his power and goodness and wisdom: but man is said to be made according to God's image, 'Let us make man like unto us.' Other creatures had

*similitudinem vestigii*, but man had *similitudinem faciei*. Holiness and righteousness are God's face,—the very excellency and glory of all his attributes; and the Lord stamps the image of these upon man. Other attributes are but like his back parts; and he leaves the resemblance of his footsteps upon other creatures. What can be so beautiful as the image of God upon the soul? Creatures, the nearer they are to God, the more pure and excellent. We see in the fabric of the world, bodies the higher they are, the more pure and cleanly, the more beautiful. Now then, what was man that was 'made a little lower than the angels?'—in the Hebrew, 'a little lower than God,' *tantum non deus*. Seeing man is set next to God, his glory and beauty certainly surpasses the glory of the sun and of the heavens. Things contiguous and next other are like other. The water is liker air than the earth, therefore it is next the air. The air is liker heaven than water, therefore is it next to it. *Omne contiguum spirituali, est spirituale*. Angels and men next to God, are spirits, as he is a spirit. Now similitude is the ground of friendship. *Pares paribus congregantur; similitudo necessitudinis vinculum*. It is that which conciliates affections among men: So it is here by proportion. God sees all is very good, and that man is the best of his works; and he loves him, and makes him his friend, for his own image which he beholds in him.

At length from these two roots this pleasant and fragrant fruit of communion with and enjoyment of God grows up. This is the entertainment of friends, to delight in one another, and to enjoy one another. *Amicorum omnia communia*. Love makes all common. It opens the treasure of God's fullness, and makes a vent of divine bounty towards man; and it opens the heart of man, and makes it large as the sand of the sea to receive of God. Our receiving of his fullness is all the entertainment we can give him. O what blessedness is this, for a soul to live in him! And it lives in him when it loves him. *Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat*. And to taste of his sweetness and be satisfied with him, this makes perfect oneness: and perfect oneness with God, who is 'the fountain of life, and in whose favour is life,' is perfect blessedness.

But we must stand a little here and consider our misery, that have fallen from such an excellency. How are we come down from heaven wonderfully? Sin has interposed between God and man; and this

dissolves the union, and hinders the communion. An enemy has come between two friends, and puts them at odds; and oh! an eternal odds. Sin hath sown this discord, and alienated our hearts from God. Man's glory consisted in the irradiation of the soul from God's shining countenance; this made him light, God's face shined on him. But sin interposing has eclipsed that light and brought on an eternal night of darkness over the soul. And thus we are spoiled of the image of God, as when the earth comes between the sun and the moon. Now then, there can no beams of divine favour and love break through directly towards us, because of the cloud of our sins, that separates between God and us, and because of 'the partition-wall,' and 'the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us,'—God's holy law, and severe justice, Eph. 2.14; Col. 2.14.

Then, what shall we do? How shall we see his face in joy? Certainly it had been altogether impossible, if our Lord Jesus Christ had not come, who is 'the light and life of men.' The Father shines on him, and the beams of his love reflect upon us, from the Son. The love of God, and his favourable countenance, that cannot meet with us in a direct and immediate beam, they fall on us in this blessed compass, by the intervention of a mediator. We are rebels standing at a distance from God; Christ comes between, a mediator and a peace-maker, to reconcile us to God. 'God is in Christ reconciling the world. God first makes an union of natures with Christ; and so he comes near to us, down to us, who could not come up to him; and then he sends out the word of reconciliation,—the gospel, the tenor whereof is this, 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son,' 1 John 1.3. It is a voice of peace and invitation to the fellowship of God. Behold, then, the happiness of man is the very end and purpose of the gospel. Christ is the repairer of the breaches; the second Adam aspired to quicken what Adam killed. He hath 'slain the enmity,' and cancelled the hand-writing that was against us, and so made peace by the blood of his cross; and then, having removed all that out of the way, he comes and calls us unto the fellowship which we were ordained unto from our creation. We who are rebels, are called to be friends; 'I call you not servants, but friends.' It is a wonder that the creature should be called a friend of God; but, O great wonder, that the rebel should be called a friend! And yet that is not all. We are called to a

nearer union,—to be the sons of God; this is our privilege, John 1.12. This is a great part of our fellowship with the Father and his Son; we are the Father's children, and the Son's brethren; 'and if children, then heirs, heirs of God;' and if brethren, then co-heirs with Christ, Rom. 8.17.

Thus the union is begun again in Christ; but as long as sin dwells in our mortal bodies, it is not perfect, there is always some separation and some enmity in our hearts; and so there is neither full seeing of God, for 'we know but in part,' and we see 'darkly,' nor full enjoying of God, for we are 'saved by hope,' and we 'live by faith, and not by sight.' But this is begun which is the seed of eternal communion; we are here partakers of the divine nature. Now then it must aspire unto a more perfect union with God whose image it is. And therefore the soul of a believer is here still in motion towards God as his element. There is here an union in affection, but not completed in *fruition*,—*affectu non effectu*. The soul pants after God,—'Whom have I in heaven or earth but thee? My flesh and my heart faileth,' &c. A believing soul looks upon God as its only portion,—accounts nothing misery but to be separated from him, and nothing blessedness but to be one with him. This is the loadstone of their affections and desires; the centre which they move towards, and in which they will rest. It is true, indeed, that oftentimes our heart and our flesh faileth us, and we become ignorant and brutish. Our affections cleave to the earth, and temptations with their violence turn our souls towards another end than God. As there is nothing more easily moved and turned wrong than the needle that is touched with the adamant, yet it settles not in such a posture, it recovers itself and rests never till it look towards the north, and then it is fixed,—even so, temptations and the corruptions and infirmities of our hearts disturb our spirits easily, and wind them about from the Lord, towards any other thing; but yet we are continuing with him, and he keeps us with his right hand; and therefore though we may be moved, yet we shall not be greatly commoved; we may fall, but we shall rise again. He is 'the strength of our heart,' and therefore he will turn our heart about again, and fix it upon its own portion. Our union here consists more in his holding of us by his power, than our taking hold of him by faith. Power and good-will encamp about both faith and the soul: 'We are kept by his power through faith,' 1 Pet. 1.5. And thus he will guide the soul, and still be drawing it nearer to him, from itself, and from

sin, and from the world, till he 'receive us into glory,' and until we be one as with the Father and the Son,—'He in us and we in him, that we may be made perfect in one,' as it is in the words read.

This is strange. A greater unity and fuller enjoyment, a more perfect fellowship, than ever Adam in his innocency would have been capable of! What soul can conceive it? what tongue express it? None can: for it is that which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into man's heart to conceive.' We must suspend the knowledge of it till we have experience of it. Let us now believe it, and then we shall find it. There is a mutual inhabitation which is wonderful. Persons that dwell one *with* another have much society and fellowship; but to dwell one *in* another is a strange thing,—'I in them, and they in me;' and therefore God is often said to dwell in us, and we to dwell in him. But that which makes it of all most wonderful and incomprehensible is that glorious unity and communion between the Father and the Son, which it is made an emblem of: 'As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.' Can you conceive that unity of the Trinity? Can you imagine that reciprocal inhabitation,—that mutual communion between the Father and the Son? No: it hath not entered into the heart to conceive it! Only thus much we know, that it is most perfect, it is most glorious; and so much we may apprehend of this unity of the saints with God. O! love is an uniting and transforming thing. 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' He dwelleth in us by love; this makes him work in us, and shine upon us. Love hath drawn him down from his seat of majesty, to visit poor cottages of sinners, Isa. 66.1,2; and 46.3,4. And it is that love of God reflecting upon our souls that carries the soul upward to him, to live in him, and walk with him. O how doth it constrain a soul to 'live to him,' and draw it from itself! 2 Cor. 5.15. Then the more unity with God, the more separation from ourselves and the world; the nearer God the farther from ourselves; and the farther from ourselves the more happy; and the more unity with God, the more unity among ourselves, among the brethren of our family. Because here we are not fully one with our Father, therefore there are many differences between us and our brethren; because we are not one perfectly in him, therefore we are not one, as he and the Father are one. But when he shall be in us, and we in him, as the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, then

shall we be one among ourselves, then shall we meet in the unity of the faith, into a perfect man, 'into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,' Eph. 4.13. Christ is the uniting principle: While the saints are not wholly one, *uni tertio*, they cannot be perfectly one *inter se*, among themselves. Consider this, I beseech you. Christ's union with the Father is the foundation of our union to God, and our union among ourselves. This is comfortable; the ground of it is laid already. Now it is not simply the unity of the Father and the Son in essence that is here meant; for what shadow and resemblance can be in the world of such an incomprehensible mystery? But it is certainly the union and communion of God with Christ Jesus as mediator, as the head of 'the church which is his body.' Therefore seeing the Father is so wonderfully well-pleased and one with Christ, his well-beloved Son and messenger of the covenant, and chief party contracting in our name, he is, by virtue of this, one with us, who are his seed and members. And therefore, the members should grow up in 'the head Christ, from whom the whole body maketh increase,' 'according to the effectual working [of the Spirit] in it,' Eph. 5.15,16. Now, if the union between the Father and Christ our head cannot be dissolved, and cannot be barren and unfruitful, then certainly the Spirit of the Father, which is given to Christ beyond measure, must effectually work in every member, till it bring them to 'the unity of the faith,' and, 'to the measure of the perfect man, which is the fullness of Christ.' So then every believing soul is one with the Father as Christ is one, because he is the head and they the members; and the day is coming that all the members shall be perfectly united to the head Christ, and grow up to the perfect man, which is 'the stature of Christ's fullness.' 'And then shall we all be made perfect in one:' we shall be one as he is one; because he and we are one perfect man, head and members.

Now, to what purpose is all this spoken? I fear, it doth not stir up in our souls a desire after such a blessed life. Whose heart would not be moved at the sound of such words? 'Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son.' 'We are made perfect, he in us, and we in him.' Certainly, that soul is void of the life of God that doth not find some sparkle of holy ambition kindled within, after such a glorious and blessed condition! But these things savour not, and taste not to the most part; 'the natural man knoweth them not, for they are spiritually discerned.' How lamentable is

it, that Christ is come to restore us to our lost blessedness, and yet no man almost considers it or lays it to heart! O how miserable,—twice miserable—is that soul that doth not draw near to God in Christ, when God hath come so near to us in Christ; that goes a-whoring after the lust of the eyes and flesh, and after the imaginations of their own heart, and will not be guided by Christ, the way and life, to glory! 'Thou shalt destroy them, O Lord,' Psalm 73.27. All men are afar off from God, from the womb: behold, we may have access to God in Christ. Wo to them that are yet afar off, and will not draw near: 'they shall all perish!' I exhort you to consider what you are doing; the most part of you are going away from God; you were born far off, and you will yet go farther; know what you will meet with in that way,—destruction!

You have never yet asked in earnest, For what purpose you came into the world? What wonder ye wander and walk at random, seeing ye have not proposed to yourselves any certain scope and aim! It is great folly; you would not be so foolish in any petty business; but O how foolish men are in the main business! 'The light of the body is the eye;' if that be not light, 'the whole body is full of darkness.' If your intention be once right established, all your course will be orderly; but if you be dark and blind in this point, and have not considered it, you cannot walk in the light, your whole way is darkness. The right consideration of the great end would shine unto you, and direct your way. But while you have not proposed this end unto yourselves—the enjoyment of God—you must spend your time, either in doing nothing to that purpose, or doing contrary to it. All your other lawful business, your callings and occupations, are but in the by; they are not the end, nor the way, but you make them your only business; they are altogether impertinent to this end. And the rest of your walking, in lusts and ignorance, is not only impertinent, but inconsistent with it and contrary to it. If you think that you have this before your eyes, to enjoy God,—I pray you look upon the way you choose. Is your drunkenness, your swearing, your uncleanness, your contentions and railings, and such works of the flesh,—are these the way to enjoy God? Shall not these separate between God and you? Is your eating and drinking, sleeping as beasts, and labouring in your callings,—are these all the means you use to enjoy God? Be not deceived; you who draw not near God by prayer often in secret, and by faith in his Son Christ, as lost

miserable sinners, to be saved and reconciled by him, you have no fellowship with him, and you shall not enjoy him afterward! You whose hearts are given to your covetousness, who have many lovers and idols besides him, you cannot say, Whom have I besides Thee in earth? No; you have many other things besides God. You can have nothing of God, except, ye make him all to you,—unless you have him alone. 'My undefiled is One,' Cant. 6.9. He must be alone, for 'his glory he will not give to another.' If you divide your affections, and pretend to give him part, and your lusts another part, you may be doing so, but he will not divide his glory so, he will give no part of it to any other thing. But as for those souls that come to him and see their misery without him, O know how good it is! It is not only good, but best, yea only good; it is *bonum*, and it is *optimum*; yea, it is *unicum*. 'There is none good, save one, even God;' and there is nothing good for us but this one, to be near God, and so near, that we may be one,—one spirit with the Lord,—'for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' 1 Cor. 6.17. Rejoice in your portion, and long for the possession of it. Let all your meditations and affections and conversation proclaim this, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in the earth whom I desire besides thee.' And certainly he shall guide you to the end, and receive you into glory. Then you shall rest from your labours, because you shall dwell in him, and enjoy that which you longed and laboured for. Let the consideration of that end unite the hearts of Christians here. O what an absurd thing is it, that those who shall lodge together at night, and be made 'perfect in one,' should not only go contrary ways, but have contrary minds and affections!

---

### LECTURE III.

#### THE AUTHORITY AND UTILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 TIM. 3.16. "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*"

WE told you that there was nothing more necessary to know than what our end is, and what the way is that leads to that end. We see the most part of men walking at random,—running an uncertain race,—because they do not propose unto themselves a certain scope to aim at, and

whither to direct their whole course. According to men's particular inclinations and humours so do the purposes and designs of men vary; and often do the purposes of one man change, according to the circumstances of time and his condition in the world. We see all men almost running cross one to another. One drives at the satisfaction of his lust by pleasure; another fancies a great felicity in honour; a third in getting riches; and thus men divide themselves; whereas, if it were true happiness that all were seeking, they would all go one way towards one end. If men be not in the right way, the faster they seem to move toward the mark, the farther they go from it. Wandering from the right way, (suppose men intend well) will put them farther from that which they intend. *Si via in contrarium ducat, ipsa velocitas majoris intervalli causa est.* Therefore it concerns us all most deeply to be acquainted with the true path of blessedness; for if we once mistake, the more we do, the swifter we move, the more distant we are from it indeed. And there is the more need, because there are so many by-paths that lead to destruction. What say I? By-paths! No; highways, beaten paths, that the multitude of men walk in, and never challenge, nor will endure to be challenged as if they were in an error! In other journeys, men keep the plain highway, and are afraid of any secret by-way, lest it lead them wrong: *At hic, via quæque tritissima maxime decipit.* Here the high-pathed way leads wrong, and O, far wrong!—to hell. This is the meaning of Christ's sermon, "Enter in at the strait gate, but walk not in the broad way where many walk, for it leads to destruction." Therefore I would have this persuasion once begotten in your souls, that the course of this world,—the way of the most part of men,—is dangerous, is damnable. O consider whither the way will lead you, before you go farther! Do not think it a folly to stand still now, and examine it, when you have gone on so long in their company. Stand, I say, and consider! Be not ignorant as beasts, that know no other things than to follow the drove; *quæ pergunt, non quo eundum est, sed quo itur*; they follow not whither they ought to go, but whither most go. You are men, and have reasonable souls within you; therefore I beseech you, be not composed and fashioned according to custom and example, that is, brutish, but according to some inward knowledge and reason. Retire once from the multitude, and ask in earnest at God, What is the way? Him that fears him he will teach the way that he should choose. The way to his blessed end is very strait, very difficult; you must

have a guide in it,—you must have a lamp and a light in it,—else you cannot but go wrong.

The principles of reason within us are too dark and dim; they will never lead us through the pits and snares in the way. These indeed shined so brightly in Adam that he needed no light without him, no voice about him; but sin hath extinguished it much; and there remains nothing but some little spunk or sparkle, under the ashes of much corruption, that is but insufficient in itself, and is often more blinded and darkened by lusts. So that if it were never so much refined—as it was in many heathens—yet it is but the blind leading the blind, and both must fall into the ditch. Our end is high and divine,—to glorify God and to enjoy him; therefore our reason *caligat ad suprema*; it can no more steadfastly behold that glorious end, and move towards it, than our weak eyes can behold the sun. Our eyes can look downward upon the earth, but not upward to the heavens: so we have some remnant of reason in us, that hath some petty and poor ability for matters of little moment, as the things of this life; but if we once look upward to the glory of God, or eternal happiness, our eyes are dazzled, our reason confounded, we cannot steadfastly behold it, Eph. 4.18; 2 Cor. 3.13,14.

Therefore the Lord hath been pleased to give us the scriptures, which may be 'a lamp unto our feet,' and a guide unto our way; whereunto we shall do well 'to take heed, as unto [a candle or] a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn,' 2 Peter 1.19. These are 'able to make us wise unto salvation.' Let us hear what Paul speaks to Timothy, 2 Tim. 3.16, 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God,' &c.: where you have two points of high concernment,—the authority of the scriptures, and their utility. Their authority, for they are given by divine inspiration; their utility, for they are 'profitable for doctrine,' &c., and can make us perfect, and well 'furnished to every good work.'

The authority of it is in a peculiar way divine. 'Of him and through him are all things.' All writings of men, according to the truth of the scriptures, have some divinity in them, inasmuch as they have of truth, which is a divine thing. Yet the holy scriptures are by way of excellency attributed to God, for they are immediately inspired of God. Therefore Peter saith that 'the scriptures came not in old time by the will of man,

but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Peter 1.21. God by his Spirit, as it were, acted the part of the soul in the prophets and apostles; and they did no more but utter what the Spirit conceived. The Holy Ghost inspired the matter and the words, and they were but tongues and pens to speak and write it unto the people; there needed no debate, no search in their own minds for the truth, no inquisition for light; but light shined upon their souls so brightly, so convincingly, that it put it beyond all question that it was the mind and voice of God. You need not ask How they did know that their dreams or visions were indeed from the Lord; and that they did not frame any imagination in their own hearts, and taught it for his word, as many did? I say, you need no more ask that, than ask, How shall a man see light, or know the sunshine? Light makes itself manifest, and all other things. It is seen by its own brightness. Even so the holy men of God needed not any mark or sign to know the Spirit's voice; his revelation needed not the light of any other thing, it was light itself; it would certainly overpower the soul and mind, and leave no place of doubting. God, who cannot be deceived, and can deceive no man, hath delivered us this doctrine. O! with what reverence shall we receive it, as if we heard the Lord from heaven speak! If you ask, How you shall be persuaded that the scriptures are the word of God,—his very mind opened to men and made legible. Truly there are some things cannot be well proved, not because they are doubtful, but because they are clear of themselves, and beyond all doubt and exception. Principles of arts must not be proved, but supposed, till you find by trial and experience afterward that they were indeed really true. There are, no question, such characters of divinity and majesty imprinted in the very scriptures themselves, that whosoever hath the eyes of his understanding opened, though he run he may read them, and find God in them. What majesty is in the very simplicity and plainness of the scriptures! They do not labour to please men's ears, and adorn the matter with the curious garments of words and phrases; but represent the very matter itself to the soul, as that which in itself is worthy of all acceptance, and needs no human eloquence to commend it. Painting doth spoil native beauty. External ornaments would disfigure some things that are of themselves proportioned and lovely; therefore the Lord chooses a plain and simple style which is 'foolishness' to the world; but in these swaddling-clothes of the scriptures, and this poor cottage, the child Jesus, the Lord of heaven

and earth, is contained. There is a jewel of the mysterious wisdom of God, and man's eternal blessedness, in this mineral. What glorious and astonishing humility is here! What humble and homely glory and majesty also! He is most high, and yet none so lowly. What excellent consent and harmony of many writers in such distant times! Wonder at it. All speak one thing to one purpose,—to bring men to God, to abase all glory, and exalt him alone. Must it not be one spirit that hath quickened all these, and breathes in them all this one heavenly song, of 'glory to God on high, and good-will towards men?' Other writers will reason these things with you to convince you and persuade you; and many think them more profound and deep for that reason, and do despise the baseness of the scriptures; but to them whose eyes are opened, the majesty and authority of God commanding and asserting and testifying to them, is more convincing, from its own bare assertion, than all human reason.

Although there be much light in the scriptures to guide men's way to God's glory and their own happiness, yet it will all be to small purpose if 'the eyes of our understanding' be darkened and blinded. If you shall surround a man with day-light, except he open his eyes, he cannot see. The scriptures are a clear sun of life and righteousness; but the blind soul encompassed with that light is nothing the wiser, but thinks the lamp of the word shines not, because it sees not; it hath its own dungeon within it. Therefore the Spirit of God must open the eyes of the blind, and enlighten the eyes of the understanding, that the soul may see wonderful things in God's law, Psalm 119.5,18. The light may shine in the darkness, but 'the darkness comprehendeth it not,' John 1.5. I wonder not that the most part of men can see no beauty, no majesty, no excellency in the holy scriptures to allure them, because they are natural, and have not the Spirit of God, and so cannot know these things 'for they are spiritually discerned,' 1 Cor. 2.14: Therefore as the inspiration of God did conceive this writing at first, and preached this doctrine unto the world, so there can no soul understand it, or profit by it, but by the inspiration of the Almighty. 'Verily there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding,' saith Job. When the Spirit comes into the soul to engrave the characters of that law and truth into the heart which were once engraven on tables of stone, and not written with pen and ink; then the Spirit of Christ Jesus writes over and transcribes the

doctrine of the gospel on 'the fleshly tables of the heart,'—draws the lineaments of that faith and love preached in the word upon the soul; then the soul is 'the epistle of Christ,' 'written not with [pen and] ink, but with the Spirit of the living God,' 2 Cor. 3.3. And then the soul is manifestly declared to be such, when that which is impressed on the heart is expressed in the outward man in walking, that it may be 'read of all men.' Now, the soul having thus received the image of the scriptures on it, understands the Spirit's voice in them, and sees the truth and divinity of them. The eye must receive some species and likeness of the object before it see it; it must be made like to the object ere it can behold it, —*Intelligens in actu fit ipsum intelligibile*: so the soul must have some inspiration of the Holy Ghost, before it can believe with the heart the inspired scriptures.

Now, for the utility and profit of the scriptures, who can speak of it according to its worth? Some things may be over-commended,—nay, all things but this one,—God speaking in his word to mankind. Many titles are given to human writings; some are called accurate, some subtile, some ingenious, and some profound and deep, some plain, some learned; but call them what they please, the scripture may vindicate to itself these two titles as its own prerogative,—holy and profitable. The best speaker in the world in many words cannot want sin; the best writer hath some dross and refuse; but here, all is holy, all is profitable. Many books are to no purpose but to feed and inflame men's lusts; many serve for nothing but to spend and drive over the time, without thought; most part are good for nothing but to burden and over-weary the world, to put them in a fancy of knowledge which they have not; many serve for this only, to nourish men's curiosity and vain imaginations, and contentions about words and notions; but here is a book profitable,—all profitable. If you do not yet profit by it, you can have no pleasure in it; it is only ordained for soul's profiting, not for pleasing your fancy, not for matter of curious speculation, not for contention and strife about the interpretation of it. Many books have nothing in them, but specious titles to commend them; they do nothing less than what they promise; they have a large and fair entry, which leads only into a poor cottage; but the scriptures have no hyperbolic and superlative styles to allure men; they hold out a plain and common gate and entry which will undoubtedly lead to a pleasant palace;

others *et prodesse volunt et delectare*, but these certainly *et prodesse volunt et possunt*,—they both can profit you and will profit you. I wish that souls would read the scriptures as profitable scriptures, with the intention to profit. If you do not read with such a purpose, you read not the scriptures of God, they become as another book unto you. But what are they profitable for? For doctrine, and a divine doctrine; a doctrine of life and happiness. It is the great promise of the new covenant, 'You shall be all taught of God.' The scriptures can make a man learned and wise, learned to salvation; it is foolishness to the world, 'but the world through wisdom know not God.' Alas! what then do they know? Is there any besides God? And is there any knowledge besides the knowledge of God? You have a poor petty wisdom among you to gather riches and manage your business. Others have a poor imaginary wisdom that they call learning; and generally people think, to pray to God is but a paper-skill, a little book-craft; they think the knowledge of God is nothing else but to learn to read the Bible. Alas! mistake not; it is another thing to know God. The doctrine of Jesus Christ written on the heart is a deep profound learning; and the poor, simple, rudest people, may by the Spirit's teaching become wiser than their ancients, than their ministers. O, it is an excellent point of learning, to know how to be saved! What is it, I pray you, to know the course of the heavens,—to number the orbs, and the stars in them,—to measure their circumference,—to reckon their motions,—and yet not to know him that sits on the circle of them, and not know how to inhabit and dwell there? If you would seek unto God, and seek eyes opened to behold the mystery of the word, you would become wiser than your pastors; you would learn from the Spirit to pray better; you would find the way to heaven better than they can teach you, or walk in it.

Then, it is 'profitable for reproof and correction.' It contains no doctrine very pleasant to men's natural humours; but it is indeed most pleasant to a right and ordered taste. You know, the distemper of the eye, or the perverting of the taste, will misrepresent pleasant things, and sweet things to the senses, and make them appear ill-savoured and bitter. But, I say, to a discerning spirit there is nothing so sweet, so comely. 'I have seen an end of all perfection,' but none of thy law. 'Thy word is sweeter to me than the honey, or the honey-comb.' If a soul be prepossessed with the love of the world, and the lusts of the world, it cannot savour and

taste of them [the scriptures]; that vicious quality in the mind will make the pleasant gospel, unpleasant. 'I piped unto you, and ye have not danced.' But however, the scriptures are then most profitable when they are least pleasant to our corruptions; and, therefore, it is an absolute and entire piece. *Et prodesse volunt et delectare. Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci.* There are sharp reproofs, and sad corrections of his holy law, which must make way for the pleasant and sweet gospel. There is a reproof of life,—a wounding before healing,—that whoso refuse them, despise their own soul, but 'the ear that heareth them abideth among the wise,' Prov. 15.31,32. Woe unto that soul that correction or reproof or threatening is grievous unto; 'he shall die,' Prov. 15.10; 'he is brutish,' Prov. 12.1. There is a generation of men that can endure to hear nothing but gospel-promises; that cry out against all reproving of sins, and preaching of God's wrath against unbelieving sinners, as legal, and meddling with other men's matters, especially if they reprove the sins of rulers, their public state enormities; as if the whole word of God were not profitable; as if reproofs were not as wholesome as consolations; as if threatenings did not contribute to make men flee from the wrath to come into a city of refuge. Let such persons read their own character out of wise Solomon, 'Correction is grievous to them that forsake the way.' 'Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee; give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser,' Prov. 9.8,9. If we were pleasers of men, then were we not the servants of Jesus Christ; let us strive to profit men, but not to please them. Peace, peace, which men's own hearts fancy, would please them; but it were better for them to be awakened out of that dream, by reproof, by correction; and he that will do so, shall 'find more favour of him afterwards, than he that flattereth with the tongue,' Prov. 28.23.

Well then, let this be established in your hearts as the foundation of all true religion, that the scriptures are the word of the eternal God, and that they contain a perfect and exact rule both of glorifying God and of the way to enjoy him. They can make you perfect to every good work. I shall say no more on this; but beseech you, as you love your own souls, be acquainting yourselves with them. You will hear, in these days, of men pretending to more divine and spiritual discoveries and revelations than the scriptures contain: but, my brethren, these can make you 'wise to salvation,' these can make you 'perfect to every good work.' Then, what

needs more? All that is besides salvation, and beyond perfection, count it superfluous and vain, if not worse, if not diabolical. Let others be wise to their own destruction,—let them establish their own imaginations for the word of God, and rule of their faith,—but hold you fast what you have received, and 'contend earnestly' for it. Add nothing, and diminish nothing; let this lamp shine 'till the day dawn,'—till the morning of the resurrection; and walk ye in the light of it, and do not kindle any other sparkles, else ye shall lie down in the grave in sorrow, and rise in sorrow. Take the word of God as the only rule, and the perfect rule,—a rule for all your actions, civil, natural, and religious; for all must be done to his glory, and his word teacheth how to attain to that end. Let not your imaginations, let not others' example, let not the preaching of men, let not the conclusions and acts of Assemblies be your rule, but in as far as you find them agreeing with the perfect rule of God's holy word. All other rules are *regulæ regulatæ*; they are but like publications and intimations of the rule itself. Ordinances of assemblies are but like the herald-promulgation of the king's statute and law; if it vary in any thing from his intention, it is not valid and binding. I beseech you, take the scriptures for the rule of your walking, or else you will wander; the scripture is *regula regulans*, a ruling rule. If you be not acquainted with it, you must follow the opinions or examples of other men; and what if they lead you unto destruction?

---

#### LECTURE IV.

THE SCRIPTURES REVEAL ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

JOHN 5.39. "*Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.*"

EPH. 2.20. "*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.*"

AS in darkness there is need of a lantern without and the light of the eyes within,—for neither can we see in darkness without some lamp, though we have never so good eyes, nor yet see without eyes, though in never so clear a sunshine,—so there is absolute need for the guiding of our feet in

the dangerous and dark paths to eternal life (that are full of pits and snares,) of the lamp, or word written or preached, without us, and the illumination of the Holy Ghost within us. These are conjoined, Isa. 59.21, 'This is my covenant:' 'The Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, will not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed,' &c. There are words without, and there must needs be a spirit within, which makes us to behold the truth and grace contained in these words. There is a law written without, with pen and ink, and there is a law written within, upon the heart, with the Spirit of the living God. The law without is the pattern and exact copy; the law within, is the transcript or the image of God upon the heart, framed and fashioned according to the similitude of it, 2 Cor. 3.3; Heb. 8.10. So then, there needs be no more question about the divine authority of the scriptures, among those who have their senses exercised to discern between good and ill, than among men who see and taste, concerning light and darkness, sweet and bitter. The persuasion of a Christian is fetched deeper than the reasons of men. Their faith is 'the evidence of things not seen.' It is an eye, a supernatural eye, whereby a soul beholds that majesty and excellency of God shining in the word, which, though it shine about the rest of the world, yet 'tis not seen, because they cannot know it nor discern it. Wonder not that the multitude of men cannot believe the report that is made; that there are few who find any such excellency and sweetness in the gospel as is reported, because saith Isaiah; 53.1, 'the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them.' The hand of God must first write on their heart, ere they understand the writings of the scriptures; his arm must create an eye in their souls, an internal light, before it can behold that glorious brightness of God shining in the word. The word is God's testimony of himself, of his grace and mercy, and good-will to mankind. Now no man can receive this testimony, unless it be sealed and confirmed by the Holy Ghost into the heart: saith Peter, 'We are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him,' Acts 5.32. The word witnesses to the ear, and the Spirit testifieth to our spirits, the truth and worth of that; and therefore the Spirit is a seal and a witness. The word is the Lord's voice to his own children; bastards cannot know it, 'but my sheep know my voice,' John 10.4,16. You know no difference between the bleating of one sheep from another, but the poor lambs know their mother's voice; there is a secret

instinct of nature that is more powerful than many marks and signs: even so those who are begotten of God know his voice,—they discern that in it which all the world that hear it cannot discern,—there is a sympathy between their souls and that living word. That word is the immortal seed they are begotten of; and there is a natural instinct to love that, and to meditate in it; such an inclination to it, as in new-born babes to the breasts; so the children of God 'do desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby,' as they were born of it, 1 Pet. 2.2. In those scriptures which we read in your audience, you have something of their excellency, and our duty. There is a rich jewel in them, a precious pearl in that field, even Jesus Christ, and in him eternal life; and therefore we ought to search the scriptures for this jewel, to dig in the field for this pearl, the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, as a sure foundation whereupon souls may build their eternal felicity, and the hope of it. Jesus Christ is the very chief stone in that foundation, whereupon the weight of all the saints and all their hope hangs. And therefore we ought to lean the weight of our souls only to this truth of God, and build our faith only upon it, and square our practice only by it.

We shall speak something of the first, that it may be a spur to the second. The Jews had some respective opinion of the word of God; they knew that in them was eternal life; they thought it a doctrine of life and happiness, and so cried up Moses' writings, but they would not believe Christ's words. They erred, not understanding the scriptures, and so set the writings of Moses' law at variance with the preaching of Christ's gospel. What a pitiful mistake was this! They thought they had eternal life in the scriptures, and yet they did not receive nor acknowledge him whom to know was eternal life. Therefore our Lord Jesus sends them back again to the scriptures:—"Go and search them; you think, and you think well, that in them ye may find the way to eternal life; but while you seek it in them you mistake it: these scriptures testify of me, the end of the law, but you cannot behold the end of that ministry, because of the blindness of your hearts, (Rom. 10.3; 2 Cor. 3.13,14.) Therefore search again, unfold the ceremonies; I am wrapt in them, and life eternal with me. Dig up the law till you find the bottom of God's purpose in it,—till you find the end of the ministration,—and you shall find me, 'the way, the truth, and life;' and so you shall have that eternal life which now you do but think you have, and

are beguiled. While you seek it out of me, in vain you think you have it, for it is not in the scriptures, but because they testify of me, the life and the light of men." May not this now commend the word to us? eternal life is in it. Other writings and discourses may tickle the ears with some pleasing eloquence, but that is vanishing; it is but like a musician's voice. Some may represent some petty and momentary advantage, but how soon shall an end be put to all that? So that within a little time the advantage of all the books of the world shall be gone. The statutes and laws of kings and parliaments can reach no further than some temporal reward or punishment; their highest pain is the killing of this body; their highest reward is some evanishing and fading honour, or perishing riches: but 'he sheweth his word and judgments unto us, and hath not dealt so with any nation,' Psalm 147.19,20. And no nation under the whole heaven hath such laws and ordinances; eternal life and eternal death is wrapt up in them. These are rewards and punishments suitable to the majesty and magnificence of the eternal Lawgiver. Consider, I beseech you, what is folded up here,—the scriptures show the path of life; life is of all things the most excellent, and comes nearest the blessed being of God. When we say *life*, we understand a blessed life, that only deserves the name. Now this we have lost in Adam. Death is passed upon all men, but that death is not the worst: 'tis but a consequence of a soul-death. The immortal soul—whose life consisteth in communion with God, and peace with him—is separated from him by sin, and so killed, when it is cut off from the fountain of life; what a life can it have more, than a beam that is cut off by the intervention of a dark body from the sun. Now then, what a blessed doctrine must it be that brings to light, life and immortality? especially when we have so miserably lost it, and involved our souls into an eternal death. Life is precious in itself, but much more precious to one condemned to die,—to be caught out of the paws of the lion,—to be brought back from the gibbet. O how will that commend the favour of a little more time in the world! But then if we knew what an eternal misery we are involved into, and stand under a sentence binding us over to such an inconceivable and insupportable punishment as is the curse and wrath of God; O how precious an esteem would souls have of the scriptures, how would they be sweet unto their soul, because they show unto us a way of escaping that pit of misery, and a way of attaining eternal blessedness as satisfying and glorious as the misery would have

been vexing and tormenting! O that ye would once lay these in the balance together,—this present life and life eternal! Know ye not that your souls are created for eternity; that they will eternally survive all these present things? Now how do ye imagine they shall live after this life? Your thoughts and projects and designs are confined within the poor narrow bounds of your time. When you die, in that day your thoughts shall perish. All your imaginations and purposes and providences shall have an end then; they reach no farther than that time. And if you should wholly perish too, it were not so much matter. But for all your purposes and projects to come to an end, when you are but beginning to live, and enter eternity, that is lamentable indeed! Therefore I say, consider what ye are doing, weigh these in a balance,—eternal life and the present life; if there were no more difference but the continuance of the one, and the shortness of the other,—that the world's standing is but as one day, one moment to eternity,—that ought to preponderate in your souls. Do we not here flee away as a shadow upon the mountains? Are we not as a vapour that ascends, and for a little time appears a solid body, and then presently vanisheth? Do we not come all into the stage of the world, as for an hour, to act our part and be gone; now then, what is this to endless eternity? When you have continued as long as since the world began, you are no nearer the end of it. Ought not that estate then to be most in your eyes, how to lay up a foundation for the time to come? But then, compare the misery and the vexation of this life with the glory and felicity of this eternal life. What are our days? But few and full of trouble. Or, if you will, take the most blessed estate you have seen and heard of in this world, of kings and rich men, and help all the defects of it by your imaginations; suppose unto yourselves the height and pitch of glory and abundance and power that is attainable on earth; and when your fancy hath busked up such a felicity, compare it with an eternal life: O how will that vanish out of your imaginations! If so be you know any thing of the life to come, you will even think that an odious comparison,—you will think all that earthly felicity but light as vanity, 'every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.' Eternal life will weigh down eternally, 2 Cor. 4.17,18. O but it hath an exceeding weight in itself,—one moment of it, one hour's possession and taste of it! but then what shall the endless endurance of it add to its weight? Now there are many that presume they have a right to eternal life, as the Jews did. You think, saith he, that you have it; you think well,

that you think 'tis only to be found in the scriptures; but you vainly think that you have found it in them: and there is this reason for it, because 'you will not come to me that you might have life,' John 5.40. If you did understand the true meaning of the scriptures, and did not rest on the outward letter and ordinances, you would receive the testimony that the scriptures give of me. But now you hear not me, the Father's substantial Word, therefore 'ye have not his word abiding in you,' ver. 38. There was nothing more general among that people, than a vain carnal confidence and presumption of being God's people, and having interest in the promise of life eternal, as it is this day in the visible church. There is a multitude that are Christians only in the letter, and not in the spirit, that would never admit any question concerning this great matter of having eternal life; and so by not questioning it, they come to think they have it, and by degrees their conjectures and thoughts about this ariseth to the stability of some feigned and strong persuasion of it. In the Old Testament the Lord strikes at the root of their persuasions, by discovering unto them how vain a thing it was, and how abominable it was before him, to have an external profession of being his people, and to glory in external ordinances and privileges, and yet to neglect altogether the purging of their hearts and consciences from lust and idol-sins, and to make no conscience of walking righteously towards men. Their profession was contradicted by their practice, 'Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and yet come and stand in my house?' Jer. 7.9,10. Doth not that say as much as if I had given you liberty to do all these abominations? Even so it is this day; the most part have no more of Christianity but a name. They have some outward privileges of baptism and hearing the word; and, it may be, have a form of knowledge, and a form of worship; but in the meantime they are not baptized in heart,—they are in all their conversation even conformed to the heathen world,—they hate personal reformation, and think it too precise and needless. Now, I say, such are many of you, and yet you would not take well to have it questioned whether ye shall be partakers of eternal life. You think you are wronged when that is called in question. Oh that it were beyond all question indeed! But know assuredly that you are but Christians in the letter,—in the flesh and not in the spirit. Many of you have not so much as 'a form of knowledge'—have not so much as the letter of religion. You have heard some names in the preaching often repeated,—as Christ, and God, and

faith, and heaven, and hell,—and you know no more of these but the name. You consider not and meditate not on them; and though you know the truth of the word, yet the word abideth not nor dwelleth in you. You have it in your mouth, you have it in your mind or understanding, but it is not received in love, it doth not dwell in the heart. 'Let, the word of Christ dwell in you richly,' Col. 3.16. You have it imprisoned in your minds, and shut up in a corner where it is useless, and can do no more but witness against you, and scarce that. As the Gentiles incarcerated and detained the truth of God, written by nature within them, in unrighteousness, (Rom. 1.18,) so do many of you detain the knowledge of his word in unrighteousness. It hath no place in the heart, gets no liberty and freedom to walk through the affections, and so to order the conversation of men; and therefore the most part of men do but fancy to themselves an interest and right to eternal life. You think it, and do but think it; it is but a strong imagination, that hath no strength from the grounds of it, no stability from any evidence or promise, but merely from itself; or it is but a light and vain conjecture that hath no strength in it because there is no question or doubts admitted which may try the strength of it. But then I suppose that a man could attain some answerable walking, that he had not only a form of knowledge, but some reality of practice, some inward heat of affection and zeal for God and godliness, yet there is one thing that he wants, and if it be wanting will spoil all; and it is this, which Christ reproves in the Jews, 'you will not come to me to have life;' the scriptures testify of me, but you receive not their testimony. Suppose a man had as much equity and justice towards men, piety towards God, and sobriety towards himself, as can be found amongst the best of men; let him be a diligent reader of the scriptures, let him love them, and meditate on them day and night; yet if he do not come out of himself, and leave all his own righteousness as dung behind him, that he may be found in Jesus Christ, he hath no life, he cannot have any right to life eternal. You may think this is a strange assertion, that if a man had the righteousness and holiness of an angel, yet he could not be saved without denying all that, and fleeing to Christ as an ungodly man; and you may think it as strange a supposal, that any person that reads the scriptures, and walks righteously, and hath a zeal towards God, yet are such as will not come to Christ and will not hear him whom the Lord hath sent.

But the first is the very substance of the gospel. 'There is none other name whereby men may be saved, but by Jesus Christ,' Acts 4.12. Life eternal is all within him. All the treasures of grace and wisdom and knowledge are seated in him, Col. 1.19; 2.3. All the light of life and salvation is embodied in this sun of righteousness, since the eclipse of man's felicity in the garden. Adam was a living soul, but he lost his own life, and killed his posterity. Christ Jesus, the second common man in the world, is a quickening spirit. He hath not only life in himself, but he gives it more abundantly; and therefore you have it so often repeated in John, who was the disciple most acquainted with Christ, 'in him was life; and the life was the light of men,' John 1.4. And he is 'the bread of life,' that gives life to the world, John 6.33,35. He is 'the resurrection and the life,' 11.25; and 'the way, the truth, and the life,' 14.6. The scriptures do not contain eternal life, but in as far as they lead to him who is life, and whom to know and embrace is eternal life: and therefore, saith he, 'these are they which testify of me.' Man lived immediately in God when he was in innocency; he had life in himself from God; but then he began to live in himself without dependence on God the fountain of life, and this himself being interposed between God and life, it vanished even as a beam by the intervening of any gross body between it and the sun. Now man's light and life being thus eclipsed and cut off, the Lord is pleased to let all fullness dwell in his Son Jesus Christ, and the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily, Col. 2.9; that since there was no access immediately to God for life (a flaming fire, and sword of divine justice compassing and guarding the tree of life, lest man should touch it) there might be access to God in a mediator like unto us, that we might come to him, and might have life from God by the intervention of Jesus Christ.

Look then what is in the Holy Scriptures, and you shall find it but a letter of death and ministration of condemnation while it is separated from him. Christ is the very life and spirit of the scriptures, by whose virtue they quicken our souls. If you consider the perfect rule of righteousness in the law, you cannot find life there, because you cannot be conformed unto it; the holiest man offends in every thing, and that holy law being violated in any thing will send thee to hell with a curse. 'Cursed is he that abideth not in all things.' If you look upon the promise of life, 'do this and live;' what comfort can you find in it, except you could find doing in

yourselves? And can any man living find such exact obedience as the law requires? There is a mistake among many. They conceive that the Lord cannot but be well-pleased with them if they do what they can. But be not deceived,—the law of God requires perfect doing; it will not compound with thee, and come down in its terms; not one jot of the rigour of it will be remitted. If you cannot do all that is commanded, all you do will not satisfy that promise; therefore thou must be turned over from the promise of life to the curse, and there thou shalt find thy name written. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that Jesus Christ be made under the law, and give obedience in all things, even to the death of the cross, and so be made a curse for us, and sin for us, even he 'who knew no sin.' And thus in him you find the law fulfilled, justice satisfied, and God pleased. In him you find the promise of life indeed established in a better and surer way than was first propounded. You find life by his death, you find life in his doing for you. And again, consider the ceremonial law,—what were all those sacrifices and ceremonies? Did God delight in them? Could he savour their incense and sweet smells, and eat the fat of lambs and be pacified? No, he detests and abhors such abominations! Because that people did stay in the letter, and went no further than the ceremony, he declares that it was as great abomination to him as the offering up of a dog. While they were separated from Jesus Christ, in whom his soul rested and was pacified, they were not expiations, but provocations; they were not propitiations for sin, but abominations in themselves. But take these as the shadow of such a living substance; take them as remembrances of him who was to come, and behold Jesus Christ lying in these swaddling clothes of ceremonies, until the fullness of time should come, that he might be manifested in the flesh, and so you shall find eternal life in those dead beasts, in those dumb ceremonies. If you consider this Lamb of God slain in all these sacrifices, from the beginning of the world, then you present a sweet-smelling savour to God,—then you offer the true propitiation for the sins of the world,—then he will delight more in that sacrifice than all other personal obedience.

But what if I should say, that the gospel itself is a killing letter, and ministration of death, being severed from Christ? I should say nothing amiss, but what Paul speaketh, that his gospel was 'a savour of death' to many. Take the most powerful preaching, the most sweet discourse, the

most plain writings of the free grace and salvation in the gospel,—take all the preaching of Jesus Christ himself and his apostles,—and you shall not find life in them, unless ye be led by that Spirit of Christ unto himself, who is 'the resurrection and the life.' It will no more save you than the covenant of works, unless that word abide and dwell in your hearts, to make you believe in him, and embrace him with your souls, whom God hath sent. Suppose you heard all, and heard it gladly, and learned it, and could discourse well upon it, and teach others, yet if you be not driven out of yourselves, out of your own righteousness, as well as sins, and pursued to this city of refuge, Jesus Christ, you have not eternal life. Your knowledge of the truth of the gospel, and your obedience to God's law, will certainly kill you, and as certainly as your ignorance and disobedience, unless you have embraced in your soul that good thing Jesus Christ, contained in these truths, who is the diamond of that golden ring of the scriptures; and unless your soul embrace these promises as soul-saving, as containing the chief good, and 'worthy of all acceptation,' as well as your mind receive these as true and faithful sayings, 1 Tim. 1.15.

Thus ye see Jesus Christ is either the subject of all in the scriptures, or the end of it all. He is the very proper subject of the gospel. Paul knew nothing but Christ crucified in his preaching; and he is the very end and scope 'of the law for righteousness,' Rom. 10.3. All the preaching of a covenant of works, all the curses and threatenings of the Bible, all the rigid exactions of obedience, all come to this one great design; not that we set about such a walking to please God, or do something to pacify him, but that we being concluded under sin and wrath on the one hand, and an impossibility to save ourselves on the other hand, Gal. 3.22, Rom. 5.20, 21, may be pursued unto Jesus Christ for righteousness and life, who is both able to save us, and ready to welcome us. Therefore the Gospel opens the door of salvation in Christ, the law is behind us with fire and sword, and destruction pursuing us; and all for this end, that sinners may come to him and have life. Thus the law is made the pedagogue of the soul to lead to Christ; Christ is behind us, cursing, condemning, threatening us, and he is before with stretched-out arms ready to receive us, bless us, and save us, inviting, promising, exhorting to have life. Christ is on Mount Sinai, delivering the law with thunders, Acts 7.38; and he is on the Mount Zion, in the calm voice; he is both upon the mountain

of cursings and blessings, and on both doing the part of a mediator, Gal. 3.19,20. It is love that is in his heart which made him first cover his countenance with frowns and threats; and it is love that again displays itself in his smiling countenance. Thus souls are enclosed with love pursuing and love receiving; and thus the law, which seems most contrary to the Gospel, testifies of Christ. It gives him this testimony, that except salvation be in him, it is nowhere else. The law says, "It is not in me, seek it not in obedience; I can do nothing but destroy you, if you abide under my jurisdiction." The ceremonies and sacrifices say, "If you can behold the end of this ministry,—if a veil be not upon your hearts, as it was upon Moses' face, (2 Cor. 3. 13.) you may see where it is; it is not in your obedience, but in the death and suffering of the Son of God whom we represent." Then the Gospel takes all these coverings and veils away and gives a plain and open testimony of him: "There is no name under heaven to be saved by, but Christ's." The Old Testament spake by figures and signs, as dumb men do, but the New speaks in plain words, and with open face. Now I say, for all this that there is no salvation but in him, yet many souls,—not only those who live in their gross sins and have no form of godliness, but even the better sort of people that have some 'knowledge' and civility and a kind of 'zeal for God,'—yet they do not 'come to him that they may have life,' they do not 'submit to the righteousness of God,' Rom. 10.2,3. Here is the march that divides the ways of heaven and hell,—coming to Jesus Christ, and forsaking ourselves. The confidence of these souls is chiefly or only in that little knowledge, or zeal, or profession they have; they do not as really abhor themselves for their own righteousness as for their unrighteousness. They make that the covering of their nakedness and filthiness which is in itself as menstruous and unclean as any thing. It is now the very propension and natural inclination of our hearts, to stand upright in ourselves. Faith bows a soul's back to take on Christ's righteousness; but presumption lifts up a soul upon its own bottom. 'How can ye believe that seek honour one of another?' The engagements of the soul to its own credit or estimation,—the engagements of self-love and self-honour,—do lift up a soul that it cannot submit to God's righteousness, to righteousness in another. And therefore many do dream and think that they have eternal life, who shall awake in the end, and find that it was but a dream, a night-fancy.

Now from all this I would enforce this duty upon your consciences, to 'search the Scriptures' if you think to have eternal life; search them if ye would 'know Christ, whom to know is life eternal;' then again search them, for 'these are they that testify of him.' Searching imports diligence,—much diligence,—it is a serious work; it is not a common seeking of an easy and common thing, but a search and scrutiny for some hidden thing, for some special thing. It is not bare reading of the Scriptures that will answer this duty, except it be diligent and daily reading; and it is not that alone, except the spirit within meditate on them, and by meditation accomplish a diligent search. There is some hidden secret that you must search for that is enclosed within the covering of words and sentences. There is a mystery of wisdom that you must apply your hearts to search out, Eccl. 7.25. Jesus Christ is the treasure that is hid in this field. O a precious treasure of eternal life! Now then, souls, search into the fields of the Scriptures for him 'as for hid treasure,' Prov. 2.4. It is not only truth you must seek and buy, and not sell it, but it is life you would search; here is an object that may not only take up your understandings, but satisfy your hearts. Think not you have found all when you have found truth there, and learned it; no, except you have found life there, you have found nothing, you have missed the treasure. If you would profit by the Scriptures, you must bring both your understanding and your affections to them, and depart not till they both return full. If you bring your understanding to seek the truth, you may find truth, but not truly; you may find it, but you are not found of it. You may lead truth captive, and enclose it in a prison of your mind, and encompass it about with a guard of corrupt affections, that it shall have no issue, no outgoing to the rest of your souls and ways, and no influence on them. You may 'know the truth,' but you are not 'known of it,' nor brought into captivity to the obedience of it. The treasure that is hid in the Scriptures is Jesus Christ, whose entire and perfect name is, 'Way, Truth, and Life.' He is a living truth and true life; therefore Christ is the adequate object of the soul, commensurable to all its faculties. He has truth in him to satisfy the mind; and has life and goodness in him to satiate the heart; therefore if thou wouldest find Jesus Christ, bring thy whole soul to seek him, as Paul expresseth it. He is true and faithful, and 'worthy of all acceptance,' then bring thy judgment to find the light of truth, and thy affections to embrace the life of goodness that is in him. Now, as much as ye find of

him, so much have ye profited in the Scriptures. If you find commands there which you cannot obey, search again, and you may find strength under that command. Dig a little deeper, and you shall find Jesus the end of an impossible command. And when you have found him, you have found life and strength to obey, and you have found a propitiation and sacrifice for transgressing and not obeying. If you find curses in it, search again, and you shall find Jesus Christ under that, 'made a curse for us;' you shall find him 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.' When you know all the letter of the Scripture, yet you must search into the spirit of it, that it may be imprinted into your spirits. All you know does you no good but as it is received in love; unless your souls become a 'living epistle,' and the word without be written on the heart, you have found nothing. As for you that cannot read the Scriptures, if it be possible, take that pains to learn to read them. O if you knew what they contain, and whom they bear witness of, you would have little quietness till you could read at least his love-epistles to sinners! And if you cannot learn, be not discouraged; but if your desires within be fervent, your endeavours to hear it read by others will be more earnest. But it is not so much the reading of much of it that profiteth, as the pondering of these things in your hearts, and digesting them by frequent meditation, till they become the food of the soul. This was David's way; and by this he grew to the stature of a tall and well-bodied Christian.

---

## LECTURE V. OF THE SCRIPTURES.

EPH. 2.20. *"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."*

BELIEVERS are 'the temple of the living God,' in which he dwells and walks, 2 Cor. 6:16. Every one of them is a little sanctuary and temple to his Majesty; 'sanctify the Lord of hosts in your hearts.' Though he be 'the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity,' yet he is pleased to come down to this poor cottage of a creature's heart, and dwell in it. Is not this as great a humbling and condescending for the Father to come down off his throne of glory, to the poor base footstool of the creature's soul, as for the Son to come down in the state of a servant, and become in the form of sinful flesh? But then he is a temple and sanctuary to them. 'And he shall be for a sanctuary,' (Isa. 8:14.) a place of refuge, a secret hiding-place. Now, as every one is a little separated retired temple, so they all conjoined make up one temple, one visible body, in which he dwells. Therefore Peter calls them 'living stones, built up a spiritual house' to God, 1 Pet. 2:5. All these little temples make up one house and temple fitly joined together, in which God shows manifest signs of his presence and working. Unto this the apostle in this place alludes. The communion and union of Christians with God is of such a nature, that all the relations and points of conjunction in the creatures are taken to resemble it, and hold it out to us. We are citizens, saith he, and domestics, house-hold-men, and so dwell in his house; and then we are 'his house' besides. Now ye know there are two principal things in a house,—the foundation and the corner-stone; the one supports the building, the other unites it and holds it together. These two parts of this spiritual building are here pointed at. The foundation of every particular stone, and of the whole building, is the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, as holding out Jesus Christ to souls, 'the rock' on which our house shall be builded: not the apostles, or prophets, far less pastors and teachers since,—for they are but at best, 'workers together with God,' and employed in the building of the house; nor yet their doctrine, but as it holds out that 'sure foundation' that God has laid in Zion, (Isa. 28:16.) which is Jesus Christ; for 'other foundation

can no man lay.' And then, 'the corner-stone' is that same Jesus Christ, who reaches from the bottom even to the top of the building, and immediately touches every stone, and both quickens it in itself, and unites them together.

Well then, here is a sure foundation to build our eternal happiness upon; the word of God, that endures for ever, holds it out to us. All men are building upon something. Every man is about some establishment of his hopes,—lays some foundation of his confidence which he may stand upon. They are one of the two that Christ speaks of, Luke 6:48, 49: one builds on the rock, another on the sand. Now as the foundation is, so is the house. A changeable foundation makes a falling house; a sure foundation makes an unchangeable house; a house without a foundation will prove quickly no house. Now whatsoever men build their hope and confidence upon,—besides the word of God, his sure promise and sure covenant, and Jesus Christ in them,—they build upon no foundation, or upon a sandy foundation. 'All flesh is grass, and the flower and perfection of it is as the flower of the field.' Here is the name and character of all created perfections,—of the most excellent endowments of mind,—of all the specious actions of man: it is all but vanishing and vanity! 'Every man at his best estate is such, yea, altogether such.' You who have no more to build upon but your prosperity and wealth, O that is but sand and dung! Would any man build a house upon a dunghill? You who have no other hope but in your own good prayers and meanings,—your own reformations and repentances,—your professions and practices,—know this, that your hope is like a spider's house, like the web that she has laboriously exercised herself about all the week over, and then when you lean upon that house it shall fall through, and not sustain your weight. Whatsoever it be, besides this 'living stone,' Jesus Christ, who is the very substance of the word and promises, it shall undoubtedly prove thy shame and confusion. But behold the opposition the prophet makes between the word and these other things: 'The word of our God shall stand for ever,' Isa. 40:6-8. And therefore Peter makes it an 'incorruptible seed' of which believers are begotten, 1 Peter 1:23. It is the unchangeable truth and immutable faithfulness of God that makes his word so sure; 'it is builded up to the heavens.' Therefore the Psalmist often commends the word of the Lord as 'a tried word,'—as 'purified seven times.' It hath

endured the trial and proof of all men,—of all temptations,—of all generations. It hath often been put in the furnace of questions and doubtings,—it hath often been tried in the fire of afflictions,—but it came forth like pure gold, without dross. This is faith's foundation, 'God hath spoken in his holiness;' and therefore, though 'all men be liars,' yet God will be found true; he deceives none, and is deceived of none. The Lord hath taken a latitude to himself in his working; he loves to show his sovereignty in much of that; and therefore he changes it in men and upon men as he pleaseth. Yet he hath condescended to limit and bound himself by his word, and in this to show his faithfulness. And therefore, though heaven and earth should pass away,—though he should annihilate this world, and create new ones,—yet 'not one jot of his word shall fail.' The earth is established sure, though it hath no foundation, for the word of his command supports it: and yet a believer's confidence is upon a surer ground. 'Though the earth should be removed, yet it cannot pass or fail,' saith our Lord. And therefore the Psalmist useth to boast in God, that though the earth were moved, and the floods lifted up their voice, yet he would not fear, because his foundation was unshaken for all that; the word is not moved, when the world is moved, and therefore he was not moved. The world's stability depends upon a word of command; but our salvation depends on a word of promise. Now ye know, promises put an obligation upon the person, which commands do not. A man may change his commands as he pleases to his children or servants, but he may not change his promises. Therefore the promises of God put an obligation upon him who is truth itself, not to fail in performance; or rather he is to himself, by his unchangeable will and good pleasure, by his faithfulness and truth, an obliging and binding law. When no creature could set bounds to him, he encloses himself within the bounds of promises to us, and gives all flesh liberty to challenge him if he be not faithful.

Now all 'the promises of God are yea and amen in Jesus Christ;' that is, established and confirmed in him. Christ is the surety of them; and so the certainty and stability of them depend upon him, at least to our sense; for God in all his dealing condescends to our weakness, that we may have strong consolation. A promise might suffice to ground our faith, but he addeth an oath to his promise, and he takes Christ surety for the performance; and therefore Christ may be called the truth indeed,—the

substantial word of God,—for he is the very substance of the written and preached word. And then he is the certainty and assurance of it; the Scriptures testify of him, and lead us to this 'rock higher than we,' to build upon; and against this 'the gates of hell cannot prevail.' If the word lead not a soul into Christ himself, that soul hath no foundation. Though thou hear the word,—though thou know the word,—yea, suppose thou couldst teach others, and instruct the ignorant,—yet all that will be no foundation, as good as none, except thou do it. And what is it to do the word, but believe in him whom the word testifies of? This is the work of God, to resign thy soul to his mercies and merits, and have no confidence in the flesh; to scrape out all the rubbish of works and performances and parts out of the foundation, and singly to roll thy soul's weight upon God's promises and Christ's purchase; to look with Paul, on all things besides, in thee, and about thee, as dung and dross that thou can lean no weight upon; and to remove that dunghill from the foundation of thy hope, that Jesus Christ may be the only foundation of thy soul, as God hath laid him in the church for 'a sure foundation that whoso believeth in him may not be ashamed.' Whatever besides a soul be established on, though it appear very solid, and the soul be settled and fixed upon it, yet a day will come that will unsettle that soul and raze that foundation. Either it shall be now done in thy conscience, or it must be done at length, when that great tempest of God's indignation shall blow from heaven 'against all unrighteousness of men,' in the day of accounts. Then shall thy house fall, and the fall of it shall be great! But a soul established upon the sure promises, and upon Christ, in whom they 'are yea and amen,' shall abide that storm, and in that day have confidence before God,—have wherewith to answer in Jesus Christ, all the challenges of divine justice, and the accusations of conscience. 'He that trusts in him shall be as mount Sion, which cannot be moved.' You see all things else change, and therefore men's hopes and joys perish. Even here the temptations and revolutions of the times undermine their confidence and joy; and the blasts of the northern wind of affliction blow away their hopes.

Now as Christ is 'the foundation,' so he is 'the corner-stone' of the building. It is Christ who hath removed that 'partition-wall' between Jews and Gentiles, even the ceremonies of the one, and the atheism of the other. 'He is our peace, who hath made both one.' The two sides of the

house of God are united by this corner-stone, Jesus Christ. Thus we, who were the temples of Satan, are made the temples of God. Thus poor stranger Gentiles, who had no interest in the covenant of promises, come to share with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to be founded upon the doctrine of the prophets who taught the Jewish church. Christ is the bond of Christians; this is 'the head' into which all the members should grow up into a body. Distance of place, difference of nations, distinction of languages, all these cannot separate the members of Jesus Christ; they are more one—though consisting of divers nations, tongues, and customs, and dispositions—than the people of one nation, or children of one family; for one Lord, one spirit, unites all. Alas, that all are not united in affection and judgment! Why do the sides of this house contend, and wrestle one against another, when there is such a corner-stone joining them together? Are there not many Christians who cannot endure to look upon one another, who are yet both placed in one building of the temple of God? Alas, this is sad and shameful! But that which I would especially have observed in this, is, that Jesus Christ is such a foundation that reacheth throughout the whole building, and immediately toucheth every stone of the building. It is such a foundation as riseth from the bottom to the top; and therefore Jesus Christ is both 'the author and finisher of our faith,' 'the beginning and the end.' The first stone and the last stone of our building must rise upon him, and by him; the least degree of grace and the greatest perfection of it, both are in him; and therefore Christians should be most dependent creatures,—dependent in their first being, and in after well-being,—in their being, and growing, wholly dependent upon Christ; that out 'of his fullness' they may receive grace, and then more 'grace for grace,' that all may appear to be grace indeed.

Now, I beseech you, my beloved in the Lord, to know whereupon ye are builded, or ought to be builded. There are two great errors in the time, take heed of them; one is the doctrine of some, and another is the practice of the most part. Some do prefer their own fancies and night-dreams, and the imaginations of their own heart, to the word of God; and upon pretence of revelation of new light, do cast a mist upon that word of God which is a light that hath shined from the beginning. 'Be not deceived:' but 'try the spirits whether they be of God,' or not. There are many pretend to much of the Spirit, and therefore cry out against the word, as

letter, as flesh. But, my brethren, believe not every doctrine that calls itself a spirit. That spirit is not of God that hears not God's voice: as Christ reasoneth against the Jews. Seek ye more of the Spirit of Christ which he promiseth, who is a Spirit that teacheth all things; and bringeth to remembrance these blessed sayings; and leads us in all truth. It shall be both safest and sweetest to you to meditate on that word of the prophets and apostles; and the entrance into it shall give you light,—an old light which was from the beginning, and therefore a true light—for all truth is eternal—and yet a new light to your sense and feeling. It is both an old command, and a new command; an old word, and a new word; if thou search it by the Spirit's inspiration, that old word shall be made new, that letter made spirit and life. Such are the words that Christ speaks. But yet there are many who do not reject the Scriptures in judgment, who, notwithstanding, do not build on them in practice. Alas, it may be said of the most part of professed Christians among us, that they are not built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, but upon the sayings of fallible and weak men! What ground have many of you for your faith; but because the minister saith so, you believe so? The most part live in an implicit faith, and practice that in themselves which they condemn in the papists. You do not labour to 'search the scriptures,' that upon that foundation you may build your faith in the questioned truths of this age; that so you may be able to answer those that ask a reason of the faith that is in you. Alas! simple souls, you believe every thing, and yet really believe nothing; because you believe not the word, as the word of the living God, but take it from men upon their authority! Therefore when a temptation cometh, from any gainsayings of the truth,—you cannot stand against it, because your faith hath no foundation but the sayings of men, or acts of assemblies. And therefore, as men whom you trust with holding out light unto you, hold out darkness instead of light, you embrace that darkness also. But, I beseech you, be builded upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; not upon *them*, but upon that whereon they were builded, the infallible truths of God. You have the Scriptures, search them; since you have reasonable souls, search them. Other men's faith will not save; you cannot see to walk to heaven by other men's light, more than you can see by their eyes. You have eyes of your own, souls of your own, subordinate to none but the God of spirits, and the Lord of consciences, Jesus Christ; and therefore examine all that is spoken to you from the

word, according to the word; and receive no more upon trust from men, but as you find it upon trial to be the truth of God.

---

## LECTURE VI.

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH: THE RUIN AND RECOVERY OF MAN: FAITH AND LOVE TOWARDS CHRIST.

2 TIM. 1.13. *"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."*

HERE is the sum of religion. Here you have a compend of the doctrine of the Scriptures. All divine truths may be reduced to these two heads,—faith and love; what we ought to believe, and what we ought to do. This is all the Scriptures teach, and this is all we have to learn. What have we to know, but what God hath revealed of himself to us? And what have we to do, but what he commands us? In a word, what have we to learn in this world, but to believe in Christ, and love him, and so live to him? This is the duty of man, and this is the dignity of man, and the way to eternal life. Therefore the Scriptures, that are given to be "a lamp to our feet, and a guide to our paths," contain a perfect and exact rule,—*credendorum et faciendorum*,—of faith and manners,—of doctrine and practice. We have in the scriptures many truths revealed to us of God, and of the works of his hands,—many precious truths; but that which most of all concerns us, is to know God and ourselves. This is the special excellency of the reasonable creature, that it is made capable to know its Creator, and to reflect upon its own being. Now, we have to know ourselves, what we are now, and what man once was; and accordingly to know of God, what he once revealed of himself, and what he doth now reveal. I say, the Scriptures hold out to our consideration a twofold estate of mankind, and according to these, a twofold revelation of the mystery of God. We look on man now, and we find him another thing than he was once; but we do not find God one thing at one time, and another thing at another time; for there is no 'shadow of change' in him; and "he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Therefore we ask not, what he was, and what he is now; but how he manifests himself differently, according to the different estates of man. As we find in the Scriptures, man once righteous and blessed, Eccles. 7:29; and God making him such according to his own

image, "in righteousness and true holiness," Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24; we find him in communion and friendship with God, set next to the divine majesty, and above the works of his hand, and all things "under his feet." How holy was he! and how happy! And happy he could not choose but be, since he was holy; being conformed and like unto God in his will and affection,—choosing that same delight, that same pleasure with God, in his understanding,—knowing God and his will, and likewise, his own happiness. In such a conformity he could not but have much communion with him, that had such conformity to him—union being the foundation of communion—and great peace and solid tranquillity in him.

Now, in this state of mankind God expresses his goodness and wisdom and power, his holiness and righteousness. These are the attributes that shine most brightly. In the very morning of the creation, God revealed himself to man as a holy and just God, whose eyes could behold no iniquity; and therefore he made him upright, and made a covenant of life and peace with him, to give him immortal and eternal life,—to continue him in his happy estate, if so be he continued in well-doing; Rom. 10:5, "do this and live." In which covenant, indeed, there were some outbreakings of the glorious grace and free condescendency of God; for it was no less free grace and undeserved favour to promise life to his obedience, than now to promise life to our faith. So that if the Lord had continued that covenant with us, we ought to have called it grace, and would have been saved by grace as well as now; though it be true, that there is some more occasion given to man's nature to boast and glory in that way, yet not at all "before God," Rom. 4:2.

But we have scarcely found man in such an estate, till we have found him sinful and miserable and fallen from his excellency. That sun shined in the dawning of the creation, but before ye can well know what it is, it is eclipsed and darkened with sin and misery: as if the Lord had only set up such a creature in the firmament of glory, to let him know how blessed he could make him, and wherein his blessedness consists, and then presently to throw him down from his excellency. When you find him mounting up to the heavens, and spreading himself thus in holiness and happiness, like a bay tree; behold again, and you find him not; though you seek him, you shall not find him, his place doth not know him. He is

like one that comes out with a great majesty upon a stage, and personates some monarch, or emperor, in the world; and then ere you can well gather your thoughts, to know what he is, he is turned off the stage, and appears in some base and despicable appearance. So quickly is man stript of all those glorious ornaments of holiness, and puts on the vile rags of sin and wretchedness, and is cast from the throne of eminency above the creatures, and from fellowship with God, to be a slave and servant to the dust of his feet, and to have communion with the devil and his angels. And now, ye have man holden out in Scripture as the only wretched piece of the creation, as the very plague of the world; the whole creation groaning under him, (Rom. 8:19-23) and in pain to be delivered of such a burden, of such an execration and curse and astonishment. You find the testimony of the word condemns him altogether, concludes him under sin, and then under a curse, and makes all flesh guilty in God's sight. The word speaks otherwise of us than we think of ourselves: "Their imagination is only evil continually," Gen. 6:5. O then, what must our affections be, that are certainly more corrupt! What then must our way be! All flesh hath corrupted their way, and done abominable works, and "none doeth good," Psalm 14:1-3. But many flee in unto their good hearts as their last refuge, when they are beaten from these outworks of their actions and ways. But the Scripture shall storm that also: "The heart is deceitful above all things: who can know it?" it is "desperately wicked," Jer. 17:9. In a word, man is become the most lamentable spectacle in the world; a compend of all wickedness and misery enclosed within the wails of inability and impossibility to help himself, shut up within a prison of despair, a stinking, loathsome, and irksome dungeon. It is like the miry pit that Jeremiah was cast into, that there was no out-coming, and no pleasant abode in it.

Now, man's state being thus,—nay, having made himself thus, and 'sought out" to himself such sad "inventions," Eccl. 7:29;—and having "destroyed" himself, Hos. 13:9; What think ye? Should any pity him? If he had fallen into such a pit of misery ignorantly and unwittingly, he had been an object of compassion; but having cast himself headlong into it, who should have pity on him? Or, who should "go aside to ask" how he did, or bemoan him? Jer. 15:5. But behold the Lord pities man as a father doth his children. Psalm 103. "His compassions fail not;" he comes by

such a loathsome and contemptible object, and casts his skirts over it, and saith "Live!" (Ezek. 16:6.) and maketh it a time of love. I say, no flesh could have expected any more of God than to make man happy and holy, and to promise him life in well-doing; but to repair that happiness after it was willfully lost, and to give life to evil-doers and sinners,—O how far was it from Adam's expectation when he fled from God! Here then is the wonder, that when men and angels were in expectation of the revelation of his wrath from heaven against their wickedness, and the execution of the curse man was concluded under, that even then God is pursuing man, and pursues him with love, and opens up to him his very heart and bowels of love in Jesus Christ! Behold then the second revelation and manifestation of God, in a way of grace, pure grace,—of mercy and pity towards lost sinners. "The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man [hath] appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his abundant mercy showed in Christ Jesus," Tit. 3:4-6. So then, we have this purpose of God's love unfolded to us in the Scriptures; and this is the substance of them—both Old and New Testament—or the end of them; "Christ is the end of the law" (Rom. 10:4.) to all sinners concluded under sin and a curse. By it, our Lord Jesus, the good Ebedmelech, comes and casts down a cord to us, and draws us up out of the pit of sin and misery. He comes to this prison, and opens the doors to let captives free. So then we have God holden out to us as a redeemer, as a repairer of our breaches,— "God in Christ reconciling the world,"—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help," Hos. 13:9. He finds to himself "a ransom" to satisfy his justice, Job 33:24. He finds a propitiation to take away sin,—a sacrifice to pacify and appease his wrath. He finds one of our brethren, but yet his own Son in whom he is well-pleased; and then holds out all this to sinners, that they may be satisfied in their own consciences, as he is in his own mind. God hath satisfied himself in Christ; you have not that to do. He is not now to be reconciled to us, for he was never really at odds; though he covered his countenance with frowns and threats, since the Fall, and hath appeared in fire and thunders and whirlwinds which are terrible, yet his heart had always love in it to such persons; and therefore he is come near in Christ, and about reconciling us to himself. Here is the business then, to have our souls reconciled to him, to take away the enmity within us; and as he is satisfied with his Son, so to satisfy ourselves with him, and be as well-

pleased in his redemption and purchase as the Father is, and then you believe indeed in him. Now if this were accomplished, what have we more to do but to love him and to live to him? When you have found in the Scripture, and believed with the heart, what man once was, and what he now is; what God once appeared, and what he now manifests himself in the gospel; ye have no more to do but to search in the same Scriptures what ye henceforth ought to be. Ye who find your estate recovered in Christ, ask, "What manner of persons ought we to be?" And the Scripture shall also give you that "form of sound words," which may not only teach you to believe in him, but to love him and obey his commands. The law that before condemned you is now by Christ put in your hands to guide you and conduct you in the way, and teacheth you how to live henceforth to his glory. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," Tit. 2:12. Here is the sum of the rule of your practice and conversation; piety towards God, equity towards men, and sobriety towards ourselves; self-denial, and world-denial, and lust-denial; to give up with the world and our own lusts,—henceforth to have no more to do with them,—to resign them, not for a time, not in part, but wholly and for ever in affection, and by parts in practice and endeavour; and then to resign and give up ourselves to him, to live to him, and to live in him.

Thus we have given you a sum of the doctrine of the Scriptures, of that which is to be believed, and that which is to be done as our duty. Now we shall speak a word of these two cardinal graces which are the compend of all graces,—as the objects of them are the abridgment of the Scriptures,—faith and love. These 'sound words' can profit us nothing, unless we hold them fast with faith and love.

Faith is like the fountain-gate. Streams come out of it that cleanse the conscience from the guilt of sin, and purify the heart from the filth of sin; because it is that which cometh to the "fountain opened up in the house of David," and draweth water out of these "wells of salvation." If you consider the fall and ruin of mankind, you will find infidelity and unbelief the fountain of it as well as the seal of it. Unbelief of the law of God,—of his promises and threatenings. This was first called in question; and

when once called in question, it is half-denied. Hath God said so, that you shall die?—It is not far off:—"Ye shall not surely die." Here then was the very beginning of man's ruin. He did not retain in his knowledge, and believe with his heart, the truth and faithfulness and holiness of God; which unbelief was conjoined and intermingled with much pride—"ye shall be as gods." He began to live out of God, in himself; not remembering that his life was a stream of that divine fountain, that being cut off from it, would dry up. Now therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ,—an expert Saviour, and very learned and complete for this work,—he brings man out of this pit of misery by that same way he fell into it. He fell down by unbelief, and he brings him up out of it by faith. This is the cord that is cast down to the poor soul in the dungeon; or rather his faith is the dead-grip of the cord of divine promises which is sent unto the captive-prisoner; and by virtue thereof he is drawn out into the light of salvation. Unbelief of the law of God did first destroy man; now the belief of the gospel saves him. The not believing of the Lord's threatenings was the beginning of his ruin; and believing of his precious promises is salvation. I say no more, as our destruction began at the unbelief of the law, so our salvation must begin at the belief of it. The law and divine justice went out of his sight, and so he sinned; now the law entering into the conscience, discovers a man's sins, and makes sin abound; and that is the beginning of our remedy, to know our disease. But as long as this is hid from a man's eyes, he is shut up in unbelief; he is sealed and confirmed in his miserable estate, and so kept from Jesus Christ the remedy. Thus unbelief first and last destroys. Faith might have preserved Adam, and faith again may restore thee who hast fallen in Adam.

There is a great mistake of faith among us: some taking it for a strong and blind confidence that admits of no questions or doubts in the soul, and so vainly persuading themselves that they have it; and some again conceiving it to be such an assurance of salvation as instantly comforts the soul and looseth all objections, and so foolishly vexing their own souls, and disquieting themselves in vain, for the want of that which, if they understood what it is, they would find they have. I say, many souls conceive that to be the best faith that never doubted, and hath always lodged in them and kept them in peace since they were born. But, seeing all men were once "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and

strangers to the covenant of promise, and without God in the world," and so without Christ also, it is certain that those souls who have always blessed themselves in their own hearts, and cried "Peace, peace," and were never afraid of the wrath to come, have embraced an imagination and dream of their own heart for true faith. It is not big and stout words that will prove it. Men may defy the devil and all his works, and speak very confidently, and yet, God knows, they are captives by him at his pleasure, and not far from that misery which they think they have escaped. Satan works in them with such a crafty conveyance that they cannot perceive it. And how should they perceive it? For we are "by nature dead in sins," and so cannot feel or know that we are such. It is a token of life to feel pain, a certain token, for dead things are senseless. You know how jugglers may deceive your very senses; and make them believe they see that which is not, and feel that which they feel not. Oh! how much more easy is it for Satan—such an ingenious and experimented spirit—assisted with the help of our deceitful hearts, to cast such a mist over the eyes of hearts, and make them believe any thing! How easily may he hide our misery from us, and make us believe it is well with us! And thus multitudes of souls perish in the very opinion of salvation. That very thing which they call faith,—that strong ungrounded persuasion,—is no other thing than the unbelief of the heart; unbelief, I mean, of the holy law, of divine justice, and the wrath to come; for if these once entered into the soul's consideration, they would certainly cast down that stronghold of vain confidence that Satan keeps all the house in peace by. Now this secure and presumptuous despising of all threatenings and all convictions, is varnished over to the poor soul with the colour and appearance of faith in the gospel. They think, to believe in Christ is nothing else but never to be afraid of hell; whereas it is nothing else but a soul fleeing into Christ for fear of hell, and fleeing from the wrath to come to the city of refuge.

Now again, there are some other souls quite contrary minded, that run upon another extremity. They once question whether they have faith; and always question it. You shall find them always out of one doubt into another, and still returning upon these debates, Whether am I in Christ, or not? And often peremptorily concluding that they are not in him, and that they believe not in him. I must confess, that a soul must once

question the matter, or they shall never be certain. Nay, a soul must once conclude that it is void of God, and without Christ; but having discovered that, I see no more use and fruit of your frequent debates and janglings about interest. I would say then unto such souls, that if you now question it, it is indeed the very time to put it out of question. And how? Not by framing or seeking answers to your objections;—not by searching into thyself to find some thing to prove it,—not by mere disputing about it, for when shall these have an end? But simply and plainly by setting about that which is questioned. Are you in doubt if you be believers? How shall it be resolved then but by believing indeed? It is now the very time that thou art called to make application of thy soul to Christ, if thou thinkest thou cannot make application of Christ to thy soul. If thou cannot know if he be thine, then how shalt thou know it but by choosing him for thine and embracing him in thy soul? Now I say, if that time which is spent about such unprofitable debates, were spent in solid and serious endeavours about the thing in debate, it would quickly be out of debate. If you were more in the obedience to those commands, than in the dispute whether you have obeyed or not, you would sooner come to satisfaction in it. This I say the rather, because the weightier and principal parts of the gospel are those direct acts of faith and love to Jesus Christ; both these are the outgoings of the soul to him. Now again, examination of our faith and assurance are but secondary and consequent reflections upon ourselves, and are the soul returning in again to itself, to find what is within. Therefore, I say, a Christian is principally called to the first, and always called. It is the chief duty of man, which, for no evidence, no doubting, no questioning, should be left undone. If ye be in any hesitation whether you are believers or not; I am sure the chiefest thing, and most concerning, is, rather to believe than to know it. It is a Christian's being to believe; it is indeed his comfort and well-being to know it; but if you do not know it, then by all means so much the more set about it presently. Let the soul consider Christ and the precious promises, and lay its weight upon him; this you ought to do, and not to leave the other undone.

Secondly, I say to such souls, that it is the mistake of the very nature of faith that leads them to such perplexities, and causeth such inevidence. It is not so much the inevidence of marks and fruits that makes them doubt, as the misapprehension of the thing itself; for as long as they mistake it in

its own nature, no sign, no mark, can satisfy in it. You take faith to be a persuasion of God's love that calms and quiets the mind. Now, such a persuasion needs no signs to know it by; it is manifest by its own presence, as light by its own brightness. It were a foolish question to ask any, how they knew that they were persuaded of another's affection? The very persuasion maketh itself more certain to the soul than any token. So then, while you question whether you have faith or not, and in the mean time take faith to be nothing else but such a persuasion, it is in vain to bring any marks or signs to convince you that you have faith; for if such a persuasion and assurance were in you, it would be more powerful to assure your hearts of itself than any thing else; and while you are doubting of it, it is more manifest that you have it not, than any signs or marks can be able to make it appear that you have it. If any would labour to convince a blind man that he saw the light, and gave him signs and tokens of the light's shining, the blind man could not believe him; for it is more certain to himself that he sees not, than any evidence can make the contrary probable. You are still wishing and seeking such a faith as puts all out of question. Now, when ministers bring any marks to prove you have true faith, it cannot satisfy or settle you, because your very questioning proves that ye have not that which ye question. If you had such a persuasion, you would not question it. So then, as long as you are in that mistake concerning the true nature of faith, all the signs of the word cannot settle you. But I say, if once you understood the true nature of faith, it would be more clear in itself unto you, than readily marks and signs could make it; especially in the time of temptation. If you would know, then, what it is indeed, consider what the word of God holds out concerning himself, or us; and the solid belief of that in the heart hath something of the nature of saving faith in it. The Lord gives a testimony concerning man, that he is "born in sin," that he is "dead in sin," and all his "imaginationes are only evil continually." Now, I say, to receive this truth into the soul, upon God's testimony, is a point of faith. The Lord in his word "concludes all under sin" and wrath; so, then, for a soul to conclude itself also under sin and wrath is a point of faith. Faith is the soul's testimony to God's truth; the word is God's testimony. Now then, if a soul receive this testimony within, whether it be law or gospel, it is an act of faith. If a soul condemn itself, and judge itself, that is a setting to our seal that God is true, who speaks in his law, and so it is a believing in

God. I say more: to believe with the heart that we cannot believe, is a great point of sound belief, because it is a sealing of that word of God,—"The heart is desperately wicked," and "of ourselves we can do nothing." Now, I am persuaded, if such souls knew this, they would put an end to their many contentions and wranglings about this point, and would rather bless God that hath opened their eyes to see themselves, than contend with him for that they have no faith. It is light only that discovers darkness, and faith only that discerns unbelief. It is life and health only that feel pain and sickness; for if all were alike, nothing could be found [That is, *felt*.—ED], as in dead bodies. Now, I say to such souls as believe in God the Lawgiver, believe also in Christ the Redeemer. And what is that? It is not to know that I have an interest in him. No, that must come after; it is the Spirit's sealing after believing which puts itself out of question when it comes. And so if you had it, you needed not many signs to know it by; at least you would not doubt of it, more than he that sees the light can question it. But, I say, to believe in Christ is simply this: I,—whatsoever I be,—ungodly, wretched, polluted, desperate, am willing to have Jesus Christ for my Saviour; I have no other help, or hope, if it be not in him. It is, I say, to lean the weight of thy soul on this foundation-stone laid in Zion; to embrace the promises of the gospel, albeit general, as "worthy of all acceptation," and wait upon the performance of them. It is no other thing but to make Christ welcome; to say, "'Even so, Lord Jesus;" I am content in my soul that thou be my Saviour, to be found in thee, "not having my own righteousness." I am well-pleased to cast away my own as dung, and find myself no other than an ungodly man." Now it is certain that many souls that are still questioning whether they have faith, yet do find this in their souls; but because they know not that it is faith which they find, they go about to seek that which is not faith, and where it is not to be found; and so disquiet themselves in vain, and hinder fruitfulness.

Now, the faith of a Christian is no fancy; it is not a light vain imagination of the brain, but it dwells in the heart,—"with the heart man believes," and it dwells with love. Faith and love, we need not be curious to distinguish them. It is certain that love is in it, and from it; it is in the very bosom of it, because faith is a soul-embracing of Christ; it is a choosing of him for its portion; and then upon the review of this goodly

portion, and from consideration of what he is, and hath done for us, the soul loves him still more, and is impatient of so much distance from him. We find them conjoined in Scripture, but they are one in the heart. O that we studied to have these jointly engraven on the heart! As they are joined in the word, so our heart should be a "living epistle." Faith and love are two words but one thing under different notions. They are the outgoings of the soul to Christ for life,—the breathings of the soul after him, for more of him, when it hath once tasted how good he is. Faith is not a speculation, or a wandering thought of truth; it is the truth, not captivated into the mind, but dwelling in the heart, and getting possession of the whole man. You know a man and his will are one; not so a man and his mind; for he may conceive the truth of many things he loves not, but whatever a man loves, that and he in a manner become one with another. Love is unitive; it is the most excellent union of distant things. The will commands the whole man, and hath the office of applying of all the faculties to their proper works. *Illa imperat, aliæ exsequuntur*. Therefore when once divine truth gets entry into the heart of a man, and becomes one with his will and affection, it will quickly command the whole man to practice and execute; and then he that received "the truth in love" is found a walker in the truth. Many persons captivate truth in their understandings, as the Gentiles did; they hold or detain it in unrighteousness; but because it hath no liberty to descend into the heart, and possess that garrison, it cannot command the man. But oh! it is better to be truth's captive than to captivate truth, saith the apostle, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine whereto ye were delivered," Rom. 6:17. O a blessed captivity! to be delivered over to truth,—that is indeed freedom, for truth makes free, John 8:32. And it makes free where it is in freedom. Give it freedom to command thee, and it shall indeed deliver thee from all strange lords; and thou shalt obey it from the heart when it is indeed in the heart. When the truths of God,—whether promises, or threatenings, or commands,—are impressed into the heart, you shall find the expressions of them in the conversation. Faith is not an empty assent to the truth, but a receiving of it "in love;" and when the truth is received in love, then it begins to work by love. "Faith worketh by love," saith Paul, Gal. 5:6. That now is the proper nature of its operation which expresses its own nature. Obedience proceeding from love to God flows from faith in God, and that shows the

true and living nature of that faith. If the soul within receive the seal and impression of the truth of God, it will render the image of that same truth in all its actions.

Love is put for all obedience. It is made the very sum and compend of the law, the fulfilling of it; for the truth is the most effectual and constraining principle of obedience, and withal the most sweet and pleasant. The love of Christ constrains us to live to him, and not henceforth to ourselves, 2 Cor. 5:14, 15. As I said, a man and his will is one; if you engage it, you bind all; if you gain it, it will bring all with it. As it is the most ready way to gain any party, to engage their head whom they follow and upon whom they depend, let a man's love be once gained to Christ, and the whole train of the soul's faculties, of the outward senses and operations, will follow upon it. It was an excellent and pertinent question that Christ asked Peter, when he was going away, (if Peter had considered Christ's purpose in it, he would not have been so hasty and displeased,) "Peter, "lovest thou me?" then "feed my sheep."" If a man love Christ, he will certainly study to please him, and though he should do never so much in obedience, it is no pleasure except it be done out of love. O this, and more of this in the heart, would make ministers feed well, and teach well, and would make people obey well! "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Love devotes and consecrates all that is in a man to the pleasure of him whom he loves; therefore it fashions and conforms one—even against nature—to another's humour and affection. It constrains not to live to ourselves, but to him,—its joy and delight is in him, and therefore all is given up and resigned to him. Now as it is certain, that if you love much you will do much, so it is certain that little is accepted for much that proceeds from love; and therefore, our poor maimed and halting obedience is called "the fulfilling of the law." He is well-pleased with it, because love is ill-pleased with it. Love thinks nothing too much,—all too little; and therefore his love thinks any thing from us much, since love would give more. He accepts that which is given; the lover's mite cast into the treasury, is more than ten times so much outward obedience from another man. He meets love with love. If the soul's desire be towards the love of his name; if love offer, though a farthing, his love receiving it counts it a crown. Love offering a present of duty, finds many imperfections in it, and covers any good that is in it, seems not to regard

it, and then beholds it as a recompense. His love, receiving the present from us, covers a multitude of infirmities that are in it. And thus, what in the desire and endeavour of love on our part, and what in the acceptation of what is done on his part, "love is the fulfilling of the law." It is an usual proverb, All things are as they are taken: "Love is the fulfilling of the law," because our loving Father takes it so; he takes as much delight in the poor children's willingness, as in the more aged's strength; the offer and endeavour of the one pleaseth him, as well as the performance of the other.

The love of God is the fulfilling of the law, for it is a living law; it is the law written on the heart; it is the law of a spirit of life within. *Quis legem det amantibus? Major lex amor sibi ipsi est.* You almost need not prescribe any rules, or set over the head of love the authority and pain of a command, for it is a greater law to itself. It hath within its own bosom as deep an engagement and obligation to any thing that may please God as you can put upon it; for it is in itself the very engagement and bond of the soul to him. This is it, indeed, which will do him service; and that is the service which he likes. It is that only serves him constantly and pleasantly; and constantly it cannot serve him which doth it not pleasantly, for it is delight only that makes it constant. Violent motions may be swift, but not durable; they last not long. Fear and terror is a kind of external impulse that may drive a soul swiftly to some duty; but because that is not one with a soul, it cannot endure long; it is not good company to the soul. But love, making a duty pleasant, becomes one with the soul; it incorporates with it, and becomes like its nature to it, that though it should not move so swiftly, yet it moves more constantly. And what is love but the very motion of the soul to God? And so till it have attained that, to be in him, it can find no place of rest. Now this is only the service that he is pleased with, which comes from love, because he sees his own image in it; for love in us is nothing else but the impression and stamp that God's love to us makes on the heart. It is the very reflection of that sweet warm beam. So then, when his love reflects back unto himself, carrying our heart and duty with it, he knoweth his own superscription, he loves his own image in such a duty: "if a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John 14:23. Here now is an

evidence that he likes it, for he must needs like that place he chooses to dwell in. He who hath such a glorious mansion and palace above must needs love that soul dearly, that he will prefer it to his high and holy place.

Now I know it will be the secret question and complaint of some souls, how shall I get love to God? I cannot love him, my heart is so desperately wicked; I cannot say as Peter "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." I shall not insist upon the discovery of your love unto him by marks and signs; only I say, if thou indeed from thy heart desirest to love him, and art grieved that there is not this love in thy soul to him which becomes so love-worthy a Saviour, then thou indeed lovest him, for he that loveth the love of God, loveth God himself. And wherefore art thou sad for the want of that love, but because thou lovest him in some measure, and withal findest him beyond all that thou canst think and love? But I say, that which most concerns thee is to love still more, and that thou wouldest be still more earnest to love him than to know that thou lovest him.

Now I know no more effectual way to increase love to Jesus Christ, than to believe his love. Christ Jesus is "the author and finisher" both of faith and love; and "we love him, because he first loved us." Therefore the right discovery of Jesus Christ, what he is, and what he hath done for sinners, is that which will of all things most prevail to engage the soul unto him. But as long as ye suspend your faith upon the being or increase of your love and obedience—as the manner of too many is—you take even such a course as he that will not plant the tree till he see the fruits of it; which is contrary to common sense and reason.

Since this, then, is the sum of true religion, to believe in Christ, and to love him, and so live to him,—we shall wind up all that is spoken into that exhortation of the apostle's, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard." You have this doctrine of faith and love delivered unto you which may be able to save your souls. Then, I beseech you, hold them fast, salvation is in them. They are 'sound words' and wholesome words; words of life, spirit and life, (as Christ speaks,) as well as words of truth. But how will you hold them fast that have them not at all,—that know them not though you hear them? You who are ignorant of the gospel, and hear nothing but a sound of words, instead of sound and wholesome

words, how can you hold them fast? Can a man hold the wind in the hollow of his hand, or keep a sound within it? You know no more but a sound and a wind that passeth by your ear, without observing either truth or life in it. But then again, you who understand these sound words, and have "a form of knowledge," and of the letter of the law, what will that avail you? You cannot hold it fast, except you have it within you; and it is within you indeed when it is in your heart,—when the form of it is engraven upon the very soul in love. Now, though you understand the sound of these words, and the sound of truth in them, yet you receive not the living image of them which is faith and love. Can you paint a sound? Can you form it, or engrave it on any thing? Nay, but these sound words are more substantial and solid. They must be engraven on the heart, else you will never hold them. They may be easily plucked out of the mouth and hand by temptation, unless they be enclosed and laid up in the secret of the heart, as Mary laid them. The truth must hold thee fast, or thou canst not hold it fast; it must captivate thee, and bind thee with the golden chains of affection, which only is true freedom, or certainly thou wilt let it go. Nay, you must not only have the truth received by love into your heart, but, as the apostle speaks, you must also "hold fast the form of sound words." Scripture words are sound words; the Scripture-method of teaching is sound and wholesome. There may be unsound words used in expressing true matter; and if a man shall give liberty to his own luxuriant imagination to expatiate in notions and expressions, either to catch the ear of the vulgar, or to appear some new discoverer of light and gospel-mysteries, he may as readily fall into error and darkness, as into truth and light. Some men do busk up old truths, Scripture truths, into some new dress of language and notions, and then give them out for new discoveries, new lights; but in so doing, they often hazard the losing of the truth itself. We should beware and take heed of strange words that have the least appearance of evil, such as *Christed* and *Godded*. Let us think it enough to be wise according to the Scriptures, and suspect all that as vain, empty, unsound, that tends not to the increase of faith in Christ and love and obedience unto him; as ordinarily the dialect of those called Antinomians is. Giving, and not granting, that they had no unsound mind, yet I am sure they use unsound words to express sound matter. The clothes should be shaped to the person. Truth is plain and simple; let words of truth also be full of simplicity. I say no more, but leave that upon

you, that you hold fast even the very words of the Scriptures, and be not bewitched by the vain pretensions of spirit,—all spirit,—pure and spiritual service,—and such like, to the casting off of the word of truth, as *letter*, as *flesh*. And such is the high attainment of some in these days; an high attainment indeed, and a mighty progress in the way to destruction,—the very last discovery of that Antichrist and man of sin. Oh, make much of the Scripture, for you shall neither read nor hear the like of it in the world! Other books may have sound matter, but there is still something, in manner or words, unsound. No man can speak to you truth in such plainness and simplicity, in such soundness also. But here is both sound matter, and sound words; the truth holden out truly; health and salvation holden out in as wholesome a matter as is possible. Matter and manner are both divine.

---

## LECTURE VII. OF THE NAME OF GOD.

EXOD. 3.13, 14. *"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."*

WE are now about this question, What God is. But who can answer it? Or, if answered, who can understand it? It should astonish us in the very entry to think that we are about to speak and to hear of his majesty, whom 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,' nor hath it entered into the heart of any creature to consider what he is. Think ye that blind men could have a pertinent discourse of light and colours? Would they form any suitable notion of that they had never seen, and which cannot be known but by seeing? What an ignorant speech would a deaf man make of sound which a man cannot so much as know what it is but by hearing of it? How then can we speak of God who dwells in such inaccessible light, that, though we had our eyes opened, yet they are far less proportioned to that resplendent brightness, than a blind eye is to the sun's light?

It uses to be a question, If there be a God? Or, how it may be known that there is a God? It were almost blasphemy to move such a question, if there were not so much Atheism in the hearts of men, which makes us either to doubt, or not firmly to believe and seriously to consider it. But what may convince souls of the Divine Majesty? Truly, I think, if it be not evident by its own brightness, all the reason that can be brought is but like a candle's-light to see the sun by! Yet, because of our weakness, the Lord shines upon us in the creatures, as in a glass; and this is become the best way to take up the glorious brightness of his majesty, by reflection in his word and works. God himself dwells in 'light inaccessible, that no man can approach unto;' if any look straight to that Sun of Righteousness, he shall be astonished and amazed, and see no more than in the very darkness. But the best way to behold the sun is to look at it in a pail of water; and the surest way to know God by, is to take him up in a state of humiliation and condescension, as the sun in the rainbow, in his word and works, which are mirrors of the divine power and goodness, and do reflect upon the hearts and eyes of all men the beams of that uncreated light. If this be not the 'speech,' that 'day uttereth unto day, and night unto night,' "One self-Being gave me a being;" and if thou hear not that language that is 'gone out into all the earth,' and be not, as it were, noised and possessed with all the sounds of every thing about thee, above thee, beneath thee, yea, and within thee, all singing a melodious song to that excellent name which is above all names, and conspiring to give testimony to the fountain of their being: if this, I say, be not so sensible unto thee as if a tongue and a voice were given to every creature to express it, then, indeed, we need not reason the business with thee who hast lost thy senses. Do but, I say, retire inwardly, and ask in sobriety and sadness, what thy conscience thinks of it; and undoubtedly it shall confess a divine majesty; or at least tremble at the apprehension of what it either will not confess or slenderly believes. The very evidence of truth shall extort an acknowledgment from it. If any man denied the divine majesty, I would seek no other argument to persuade him than what was used to convince an old philosopher who denied the fire: they put his hand in it till he felt it. So, I say, return within to thy own conscience, and thou shalt find the scorching heat of that Divine Majesty burning it up, whom thou wouldst not confess. There is an inward feeling and sense of

God that is imprinted in every soul by nature that leaves no man without such a testimony of God, that makes him 'without excuse;' there is no man so impious, so atheistical, but whether he will or not, he shall feel at some times that which he loves not to know or consider of; so that what rest secure consciences have from the fear and terror of God, it is like the sleep of a drunken man, who, even when he sleeps, does not rest quietly.

Now, although this inward stamp of a Deity be engraven on the minds of all, and every creature without have some marks of his glory stamped on them, so that all things a man can behold above him, or about him, or beneath him, the most mean and inconsiderable creatures, are pearls and transparent stones that cast abroad the rays of that glorious brightness which shines on them; as if a man were enclosed into a city built all of precious stones, that in the sunshine all and every parcel of it, the streets, the houses, the roofs, the windows, all of it, reflected into his eyes those sunbeams in such a manner as if all had been one mirror:—though, I say, this be so, yet such is the blockishness and stupidity of men that they do not, for all this, consider of the glorious Creator; so that all these lamps seem to be lighted in vain to show forth his glory; which, though they do every way display their beams upon us, that we can turn our eye nowhere but such a ray shall penetrate it, yet we either do not consider it, or the consideration of it takes not such deep root as to lead home to God. Therefore the Scripture calls all natural men atheists: They have 'said in their heart, there is no God,' Psalm 14.1. All men almost confess a God with their mouth, and think they believe in him; but alas! behold their actions and hearts, what testimony they give; for a man's walking and conversation is like an eye-witness, that one of them deserves more credit than ten ear-witnesses of professions,—*Plus valet oculatus testis unus, quam auriti decem*. Now, I may ask of you, what would ye do, how would ye walk, if ye believed there were no God? Would ye be more dissolute and profane, and more void of religion? Would not human laws bind you as much in that case as they now do? For that is almost all the restraint that is upon many,—the fear of temporal punishment, or shame among men. Set your walking beside a heathen's conversation, and save that you say, ye believe in the true God, and he denies him, there is no difference. Your transgressions speak louder than your professions, 'that there is no fear of God before your eyes,' Psalm 36.1. Your practice belies your

profession; you 'profess that you know God; but in works you deny him,' saith Paul, Tit. 1.16. *Ore quod dicitis, opere negatis.*

In the words read in your audience, you have a strange question, and a strange answer; a question of Moses, and an answer of God. The occasion of it was the Lord's giving to Moses a strange and uncouth message. He was giving him commission to go and speak to a king to dismiss and let go six hundred thousand of his subjects; and to speak to a numerous nation to depart from their own dwellings, and come out whither the Lord should lead them. Might not Moses then say within himself, "'Who am I,' to speak such a thing to a king? Who am I, to lead out such a mighty people? Who will believe that thou hast sent me? Will not all men call me a deceiver, an enthusiastical fellow, that take upon me such a thing?" Well then, saith Moses to the Lord,— "Lord, when I shall say, that the God of their fathers sent me unto them, they will not believe me; they have now forgotten thy majesty, and think that thou art but even like the vanities of the nations; they cannot know their own portion from other nations' vain idols; which they have given the same name unto, and call gods as well as thou art called. Now therefore," says he, "when they ask me what thy proper name is by which thou art distinguished from all idols, and all the works of thine own hands, and of men's hands, what shall I say unto them? Here is the question." But why askest thou my name? saith the Lord to Jacob, Gen. 32.29. Importing, that it is high presumption and bold curiosity to search such a wonder. Ask not my name, saith the angel to Manoah, for 'it is secret' or wonderful, Judges 13.18. It is a mystery, a hidden mystery, not for want of light, but for too much light. It is a secret; it is wonderful; out of the reach of all created capacity. Thou shalt call his name 'Wonderful,' Isa. 9.6. What name can express that incomprehensible Majesty? The mind is more comprehensive than words, but the mind and soul is too narrow to conceive him. O then! how short a garment must all words, the most significant and comprehensive and superlative words be? Solomon's soul and heart was enlarged as the sand of the sea, but O it is not large enough for the Creator of it! 'What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?' Prov. 30.4. The Lord himself expresses it to our capacity, because we are not capable of what he can express, much less of what he is. If he should speak to us of himself as he is, O, it should be 'dark

sayings,' hid from the understandings of all living! We could reach no more of it, but that it is a wonder, a secret. Here is the highest attainment of our knowledge, to know there is some mystery in it, but not what that mystery is. Christ hath a name above all names, how then can we know that name? It was well said by some of old, *Deus est poluwnnumoV* , and yet anwnnumoV , *multorum nominum, et tamen nullius nominis*; he hath all names, and yet, he hath no name; *quia est omnia, et tamen nihil omnium*, because he is all in all, and yet none of all; *Deus est quod vides, et quod non vides*. You may call him by all the works of his hands, for these are beams of his uncreated light, and streams of his inexhaustible sea of goodness, so that whatever perfection is in them, all that is eminently, yea, infinitely in him. Therefore saith Christ, 'There is one good, even God:' and he calls himself 'the light of life;' and therefore you have so many names of God in Scripture. There is no quality, no property, or virtue, that hath the least shadow of goodness, but he is that essentially, really, eternally, and principally; so that the creature deserves not such names but as they participate of his fullness. He is 'the true light,' the true life; the sun is not that true light, though it give light to the moon and to men, for it borrows its light and shining from him. All creatures are and shine but by reflection; therefore these names do agree to them but by a metaphor, so to speak; the propriety and truth of them is in him. As it is but a borrowed kind of speech to call a picture or image a man—only because of the representation and likeness to him it communicates in one name with him—even so in some manner, the creatures are but some shadows, pictures, or resemblances, and equivocal shapes of God; and whatever name they have, of good, wise, strong, beautiful, true, or such like, it is borrowed speech from God whose image they have. And yet poor vain man would be wise,—thought wise really, intrinsically in himself, and properly,—calls himself so; which is as great an abuse of language as if the picture should call itself a true and living man. But then, as you may call him all things, because he is eminently and gloriously all that is in all, the fountain and end of all; yet we must again deny that he is any of these things, *Unus omnia, et nihil omnium*. We can find no name to him; or what can you call him, when you have said, 'He is light?' You can form no other notion of him but from the resemblance of this created light. But alas! that he is not; he as infinitely transcends that, and is distant from it, as if he had never made it

according to his likeness. His name is above all these names; but what it is himself knows, and knows only.

If ye ask what he is, we may glance at some notions and expressions to hold him out. In relation to the creatures, we may call him Creator, Redeemer, Light, Life, Omnipotent, Good, Merciful, Just, and such like: but if you ask, what is his proper name in relation to himself, *ipse novit*, himself knows that, we must be silent, and silence in such a subject is the rarest eloquence. But let us hear what the Lord himself speaks, in answer to this question. If any can tell, sure he himself knows his own name best. "I am (saith he) what I am.' *Sum qui sum*. 'Go tell them that I AM hath sent thee.'" A strange answer, but an answer only pertinent for such a question. What should Moses make of this? What is he the wiser of his asking? Indeed he might be the wiser; it might teach him more by silence than all human eloquence could instruct him by speaking. His question was curious, and behold an answer short and dark, to confound vain and presumptuous mortality,—'I am what I am;' an answer that does not satisfy curiosity, for it leaves room for the first question, and What art thou? But abundant to silence faith and sobriety, that it shall ask no more, but sit down and wonder.

There are three things I conceive imported in this name: God's unsearchableness, God's unchangeableness, and God's absoluteness. His ineffability, his eternity, and his sovereignty and independent subsistence, upon whom all other things depend. I say,

1. His unsearchableness. You know it is our manner of speech when we would cover any thing from any, and not answer any thing distinctly to them, we say, "It is what it is; I have said what I have said; I will not make you wiser of it." Here then is the fittest notion you can take up God into, to find him unsearchable beyond all understanding, beyond all speaking. The more ye speak or think, to find him always beyond what ye speak or think; whatever you discover of him, to conceive that infiniteness is beyond that; *ad finem cujus pertransire non potest*; the end of which you cannot reach; that he is an unmeasurable depth, a boundless ocean of perfection; that you can neither sound the bottom of it, nor find the breadth of it! Can a child wade the sea, or take it up in the hollow of its hand? Whenever any thing of God is seen, he is seen a wonder;

'Wonderful' is the name he is known by. All our knowledge reacheth no farther than admiration. 'Who is like unto thee?' Exod. 15.11. Psalm 89.6,7; and admiration speaks ignorance. The greatest attainment of knowledge reacheth but to such a question as this, Who is like to thee? to know only that he is not like any other thing that we know, but not to know what he is. And the different degrees of knowledge are but in more admiration or less at his unconceivableness, and in more or less affection expressed in such pathetic interrogations, O who is like the Lord? How excellent is his name? Here is the greatest degree of saints' knowledge here-away, to ask with admiration and affection such a question that no answer can be given to, or none that we can conceive or understand so as to satisfy wondering, but such as still more increaseth it. There is no other subject but you may exceed it in apprehensions and in expressions. O how often are men's songs and thoughts and discourses above the matter! But here is a subject that there is no excess into; nay, there is no access unto it, let be excess in it. Imagination that can transcend the created heavens and earth, and fancy to itself millions of new worlds, every one exceeding another, and all of them exceeding this in perfection, yet it can do nothing here. That which at one instant can pass from the one end of heaven to the other, walk about the circumference of the heavens, and travel over the breadth of the sea, yet it can do nothing here. 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' Job 11.7. Imagination cannot travel in these bounds, for his centre is everywhere, and his circumference nowhere, as an old philosopher speaks of God: *Deus est, cujus centrum est ubique, circumferentia nusquam*. How shall it then find him out? There is nothing sure here, but to lose ourselves in a mystery, and to follow his majesty till we be swallowed up with an—*O altitudo!* O the depth and height and length and breadth of God! O the depth of his wisdom! O the height of his power! O the breadth of his love! And O the length of his eternity! It is not reason and disputation, saith Bernard, will comprehend these, but holiness; and that by stretching out the arms of fear and love, reverence and affection. What more dreadful than power that cannot be resisted, and wisdom that none can be hid from? and what more lovely than the love wherewith he hath so loved us, and his unchangeableness which admits of no suspicion? O fear him who hath a hand that doth all, and an eye that beholds all things; and love him who hath so loved us, and cannot change! God hath been the subject of

the discourses and debates of men in all ages; but oh! *Quam, longe est in rebus qui est tam communis in vocibus?* How little a portion have men understood of him? How hath he been hid from the eyes of all living? Every age must give this testimony of him,—we have heard of his fame, but he is hid from the eyes of all living. I think, that philosopher that took it to his advisement, said more in silence than all men have done in speaking. Simonides being asked by Hiero, a king, what God was, asked a day to deliberate in and think upon it. When the king sought an account of his meditation about it, he desired yet two days more; and so as oft as the king asked him, he still doubled the number of the days in which he might advise upon it. The king wondering at this, asked what he meant by those delays: saith he, *Quanto magis considero, tanto magis obscurior mihi videtur*,—"the more I think on him, he is the more dark and unknown to me." This was more real knowledge than the many subtile disputations of those men who, by their poor shell of finite capacity and reason, presume to empty the ocean of God's infiniteness, by finding out answers to all the objections of carnal reason against all those mysteries and riddles of the Deity. I profess, I know nothing can satisfy reason in this business, but to lead it captive to the obedience of faith, and to silence it with the faith of a mystery which we know not. Paul's answer is one for all, and better than all the syllogisms of such men, 'Who art thou, O man! who disputest?' Dispute thou: I will believe. *Ut intelligatur, tacendum est*. Silence only can get some account of God; quiet and humble ignorance in the admiration of such a majesty is the profoundest knowledge. *Non est mirum si ignoretur, majoris esset admirationis si sciatur*. It is no wonder that God is not known; all the wonder were to know and comprehend such a wonder, such a mystery. It is a wonder indeed, that he is not more known, but when I say so, I mean that he is not more wondered at because he is passing knowledge. If our eyes of flesh cannot see any thing almost when they look straight and steadfastly upon the sun, O what can the eye of the soul behold, when it is fixed upon the consideration of that shining and glorious majesty! Will not that very light be as darkness to it, that it shall be as it were darkness and dazzled with a thick mist of light in *superlucente caligine*,—confounded with that resplendent darkness? It is said that the Lord 'covers himself with light as with a garment,' Psalm 104.2; and yet 'clouds and darkness are round about him,' Psalm 97.2; and he makes darkness his [covering] secret

place, Psalm 18.11. His inaccessible light is this glorious darkness, that strikes the eyes of men blind; as in the darkness, the sun's light is the night-owl's night and darkness. When a soul can find no better way to know him by, than by these names and notions by which we deny our own knowledge, when it hath conceived all of him it can, then, as being overcome with that dazzling brightness of his glory, to think him inconceivable and to express him in such terms as withal expresses our ignorance. There is no name agrees more to God, than that which saith, we cannot name him, we cannot know him, such as invisible, incomprehensible, infinite, &c. This, Socrates, an heathen, professed to be all his knowledge, that he knew he did know nothing, and therefore he preached an unknown God to the Athenians, to whom, after, they erected an altar with that inscription, 'To the unknown God.' I confess, indeed, the most part of our discourses, of our performances, have such a writing on them, 'to the unknown God!' because we think we know him, and so we know nothing. But oh! that Christians had so much knowledge of God, so much true wisdom, as solidly, and willingly to confess in our souls our own ignorance of him, and then I would desire no other knowledge, and growing in the grace of God, but to grow more and more in the believing ignorance of such a mystery, in the knowledge of an unknown, unconceivable and unsearchable God; that in all the degrees of knowledge we might still conceive we had found less, and that there is more to be found than before we apprehended. This is the most perfect knowledge of God, that doth not drive away darkness, but increases it in the soul's apprehension. Any increase in it doth not declare what God is, or satisfy one's admiration in it, but rather shows him to be more invisible and unsearchable. So that the darkness of a soul's ignorance is more manifested by this light, and not more covered; and one's own knowledge is rather darkened, and disappears in the glorious appearance of this light. For in all new discoveries, there is no other thing appears but this, that that which the soul is seeking is supereminently unknown, and still further from knowledge than ever it conceived it to be. Therefore, whatever you conceive or see of God, if you think ye know what ye conceive and see, it is not God ye see, but something of God's less than God; for it is said, 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what he hath laid up for them that love him.' Now certainly, that is himself he hath laid up for them; therefore,

whatever thou conceivest of him, and thinkest now thou knowest of him, that is not he; for it hath not entered into man's heart to conceive him. Therefore, this must be thy soul's exercise and progress in it, to remove all things, all conceptions from him, as not beseeming his majesty, and to go still forward in such a dark negative discovery, till thou know not where to seek him, nor find him. *Si quis Deum videat et intelligat quod vidit, Deum non vidit*, if any see God, and understand what they see, God they do not see; for, 'God hath no man seen,' 1 John 4.12; 'and no man knows the Father but the Son, and none knows the Son but the Father.' It is his own property to know himself as it is to be himself. Silent and seeing ignorance is our safest and highest knowledge.

---

## LECTURE VIII.

### THE ETERNITY AND UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD.

EXOD. 3.14. "*I AM THAT I AM.*"—P SALM 90.2. "*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.*"—

JOB 11.7-9. "*Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*"

THIS is the chief point of saving knowledge, to know God; and this is the first point or degree of the true knowledge of God, to discern how ignorant we are of him, and to find him beyond all knowledge. The Lord gives a definition of himself, but such an one as is no more clear than himself to our capacities; a short one indeed, and you may think it says not much—'I am.' What is it that may not say so, 'I am that I am?' The least and most inconsiderable creature hath its own being. Man's wisdom would have learned him to call himself by some high styles, as the manner and custom of kings and princes is, and such as the flattery of men attributes unto them. You would think the superlatives of wise, good, strong, excellent, glorious, and such like, were more beseeming his majesty; and yet there is more majesty in this simple style than in all others; but a 'natural man' cannot behold it, for it is 'spiritually

discerned.' 'Let the potsherd,' saith he, 'strive with the potsherds of the earth,' [Isa. 45.9,] but let them not strive with their Maker. So I say, let creatures compare with creatures; let them take superlative styles, in regard of others. Let some of them be called good, and some better, in the comparison among themselves; but God must not enter in the comparison. Paul thinks it an odious comparison, to compare present crosses to eternal glory: 'I think them not worthy to be compared,' saith Paul, Rom. 8.18. But how much more odious is it, to compare God with creatures? Call him highest, call him most powerful, call him most excellent, almighty, most glorious in respect of creatures, you do but abase his majesty, to bring it down to any terms of comparison with them which is beyond all the bounds of understanding. All these do but express him to be in some degree eminently seated above the creatures, as some creatures are above all others! so you do no more but make him the head of all as some one creature is the head of one line or kind under it; but what is that to his majesty? He speaks otherwise of himself, Isa. 40.17. 'All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing.' Then, certainly, you have not taken up the true notion of God when you have conceived him the most eminent of all beings, as long as any being appears as a being in his sight before whom all beings conjoined are as nothing. While you conceive God to be the best, you still attribute something to the creature; for all comparatives include the positive in both extremes: so then, you take up only some different degrees between them who differ so infinitely, so incomprehensibly. The distance betwixt heaven and earth is but a poor similitude to express the distance between God and creatures. What is the distance betwixt a being and nothing? Can you measure it? Can you imagine it? Suppose you take the most high, and the most low, and measure the distance betwixt them, you do but consider the difference betwixt two beings, but you do not express how far nothing is distant from any of them. Now, if any thing could be imagined less than nothing, could you at all guess at the vast distance between it and a being? so it is here. Thus saith the Lord, 'all nations,' their glory, perfection, and number, all of them, and all their excellencies united,—do not amount to the value of an unit in regard of my Majesty; all of them like ciphers, join never so many of them together, they can never make up a number, they are nothing in this regard, and less than nothing. So then, we ought thus to conceive of God, and thus to

attribute a being and life to him, as in his sight and in the consideration of it all created beings might vanish out of our sight; even as the glorious light of the sun, though it do not annihilate the stars, and make them nothing, yet it annihilates their appearance to our senses, and makes them disappear as if they were not. Although there be a great difference and inequality of the stars in the night,—some lighter, some darker, some of the first magnitude, and some of the second and third, &c. some of greater glory, and some of less,—but in the day-time all are alike, all are darkened by the sun's glory, even so it is here,—though we may compare one creature with another, and find different degrees of perfection and excellency, while we are only comparing them among themselves; but let once the glorious brightness of God shine upon the soul, and in that light all these lights shall be obscured, all their differences unobserved. An angel and a man, a man and a worm, differ much in glory and perfection of being: but oh! in his presence there is no such reckoning. Upon this account all things are alike, God infinitely distant from all, and so not more or less. Infiniteness is not capable of such terms of comparison. This is the reason why Christ says, 'There is none good but one, even God.' Why, because in respect of his goodness, nothing deserves that name. Lesser light, in the view of the greater, is a darkness, as less good in comparison of a greater appears evil; how much more then shall created light and created goodness lose that name and notion, in the presence of that 'uncreated Light, and self-sufficient Goodness.' And therefore it is, that the Lord calls himself after this manner, 'I am,' as if nothing else were. "I will not say," saith he, "that I am the highest, the best and most glorious that is—that supposeth other things to have some being, and some glory that is worthy the accounting of—but I am, and there is none else; I am alone; I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear I live for ever." There is nothing else can say, I am, I live, and there is nothing else; for there is nothing hath it of itself. Can any boast of that which they have borrowed, and is not their own? As if the bird that had stolen from other birds its fair feathers should come forth and contend with them about beauty; would not they presently every one pluck out their own, and leave her naked, to be an object of mockery to all! Even so, since our breath and being is in our nostrils, and that depends upon his Majesty's breathing upon us, if he should but keep in his breath, as it were, we should vanish into nothing; he looketh upon man and he is not,

Job 7.8. That is a strange look, that looks man not only out of countenance, but out of life and being. He looks him into his first nothing; and then can he say, "I live, I am?" No, he must always say of himself in respect of God, as Paul of himself in respect of Christ., 'I live, yet not I, but Christ in me.' I am, yet not I, but God in me. I live, I am, yet not I, but in God, in whom I live and have my being. So that there is no other thing, besides God, can say, 'I am;' because all things are but borrowed drops of this self-sufficient fountain, and sparkles of this primitive light. Let any thing intervene between the stream and the fountain, and it is cut off and dried up; let any thing be interposed between the sun and the beam, and it evanishes. Therefore, this fountain-being, this original light, this self-being, auto on , as Plato called him, deserves only the name of being; other things that we call after that name are nearer nothing than God, and so, in regard of his majesty, may more fitly be called nothing than something. You see then how profound a mystery of God's absolute self-sufficient perfection, is infolded in these three letters, I AM, or in these four, J EHOVAH . If you ask what is God? There is nothing occurs better than this, 'I am,' or, he that is. If I should say he is the almighty, the only wise, the most perfect, the most glorious, it is all contained in that word, 'I am that I am,' *Nempe hoc est ei esse, hæc omnia esse*; for that is to be, indeed, to be all those perfections simply, absolutely, and, as it were, solely. If I say all that, and should reckon out all the scripture-epithets, I add nothing; if I say no more, I diminish nothing.

As this holds out God's absolute perfection, so we told you that it imports his eternity and unchangeableness. You know Pilate's speech, 'What I have written I have written;' wherein he meant that he would not change it; it should stand so. So this properly belongs to God's eternity, 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,' Psalm 90.2. Now this is properly to be; and this only deserves the name of being, which never was nothing, and never shall be nothing; which may always say, 'I am.' You know it is so with nothing else but God. The heavens and earth, with the things therein, could not say, six thousand years ago, 'I am,' Adam could once have said, 'I am,' but now he cannot say it; for that self-being and fountain-being hath said to him, return to

dust. And so it is with all the generations past; where are they now? They were, but they are not. And we then were not, and now are; for we are come in their place, but within a little time, Who of us can say, 'I am?,' No, 'we flee away; and are like a dream, as when one awaketh!' We 'are like a tale that is told,' that makes a present noise, and it is past. Within few years this generation will pass, and none will make mention of us; our place will not know us, no more than we do now remember those who have been before. Christ said of John, 'he was a burning and shining light;' 'he was,' saith he, but now he is not. But Christ may always say. 'I am the light and life of men.' Man is; but look a little backward, and he was not; you shall find his original. And step a little forward and he shall not be, you shall find his end. But God is 'Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.' But oh! who can retire so far backward as to apprehend a beginning; or go such a start forward as to conceive an end in such a being as is the beginning and end of all things, but without all beginning and end? Whose understanding would it not confound? There is no way here but to flee to Paul's sanctuary, 'O the height and breadth, and length and depth!' We cannot imagine a being, but we must first conceive it nothing, and in some instant receiving its being; and, therefore, 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' Therefore what his being is hath not entered into the heart of man to consider. If any man would live out the space but of two generations, he would be a world's wonder; but if any had their days prolonged as the patriarchs before the flood, they would be called ancient indeed, but then the heavens and earth are far more ancient. We may go backward the space of near six thousand years in our own minds, and yet be as far from his beginning as we were. When we are come to the beginning of all things, a man's imagination may yet extend itself further, and suppose to itself as many thousands of years before the beginning of time, as all the angels and men of all nations and generations from the beginning, if they had been employed in no other thing but this, could have summed up; and then suppose a product to be made of all the several sums of years, it would be vast and unspeakable; but yet your imagination could reach further, and multiply that great sum into itself as often as there are units in it. Now when you have done all this, you are never a whit nearer the days of 'the Ancient of days.' Suppose then this should be the only exercise of men and angels throughout all eternity; all this marvelous arithmetic would

not amount unto the least shadow of the continuance of him who is 'from everlasting.' All that huge product of all the multiplications of men and angels, hath no proportion unto that never-beginning and never-ending duration. The greatest sum that is imaginable hath a certain proportion to the least, number, that it containeth it so oft and no oftener; so that the least number being multiplied will amount unto the greatest that you can conceive. But O! where shall a soul find itself here? It is enclosed between infiniteness before and infiniteness behind,—between two everlastings; which way soever it turns, there is no outgoing; which way soever it looks, it must lose itself in an infiniteness round about it. It can find no beginning and no end, when it hath wearied itself in searching, which, if it find not, it knows not what it is, and cannot tell what it is. Now what are we then? O what are we, who so magnify ourselves! 'We are but of yesterday, and know nothing,' Job 8.9. Suppose that we had endured the space of a thousand years, yet saith Moses, Psalm. 90.4, 'A thousand years are but as yesterday in thy sight.' Time hath no succession to thee. Thou beholdest at once what is not at once, but in several times; all that may thus happen hath not the proportion of one day to thy days. We change in our days, and are not that to-day we were yesterday; but 'he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,' Heb. 13.8. Every day we are dying, some part of our life is taken away; we leave still one day more behind us, and what is behind us is gone and cannot be recovered. Though we vainly please ourselves in the number of our years, and the extent of our life, and the vicissitudes of time, yet the truth is, we are but still losing so much of our being and time as passeth. First, we lose our childhood, then we lose our manhood; and then we leave our old age behind us also, and there is no more before us. Even the very present day we divide it with death. But when he moves all things, he remains immovable. Though days and years be in a continual flux and motion about him, and they carry us down with their force, yet he abides the same for ever. Even the earth that is established so sure, and the heavens that are supposed to be incorruptible, yet they 'wax old as doth a garment;' but he is the same, and 'his years have no end,' Psalm 102.26,27. *Sine principio principium; absque fine finis; cui præteritum non abit, haud adit futurum; ante omnia post omnia totus unus ipse,—* He is the beginning without any beginning; the end without an end: there is nothing bypast to him, and nothing to come. *Sed uno mentis cernit in*

*ictu, quæ sunt, quæ erunt, quæ fuerantque*,—he is one that is all, before all, after all, and in all. He beholds out of the exalted and supereminent tower of eternity, all the successions and changes of the creatures; and there is no succession, no mutation in his knowledge, as in ours. 'Known to him are all His works from the beginning.' He can declare the end before the beginning; for he knows the end of all things, before he gives them beginning. Therefore he is never driven to any consultation upon any emergence, or incident, as the wisest of men are, who could not foresee all accidents and events; but 'he is in one mind,' saith Job; and that one mind and one purpose is one for all, one concerning all. He had it from everlasting, and who can turn him? For he will accomplish what his soul desires.

Now, 'canst thou by searching find out God?' Canst thou, a poor mortal creature, either ascend up unto the height of heaven, or descend down into the depths of hell? Canst thou travel abroad, and compass all the sea and dry land, by its longitude and latitude? Would any mortal creature undertake such a voyage, to compass the universe? Nay, not only so, but to search into every corner of it, above and below, on the right hand and on the left? No certainly, unless we suppose a man whose head reaches unto the height of heaven, and whose feet is down in the depths of hell, and whose arms, stretched out, can fathom the length of the earth, and breadth of the sea; unless, I say, we suppose such a creature, then it is in vain to imagine, that either the height of the one, or the depth of the other,—the length of the one, and the breadth of the other, can be found out and measured. Now, if mortal creatures cannot attain the measure of that which is finite, O then, what can a creature do! What can a creature know of him that is infinite, and the maker of all these things? You cannot compass the sea and land, how then can a soul comprehend him, 'who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?' Isa. 40.12. Thou canst not measure the circumference of the heaven, how then canst thou find out him, 'who metes out heaven with the span,' 'and stretcheth them out as a curtain?' Isa. 40.12,22. You cannot number the nations, or perceive the magnitude of the earth, and the huge extent of the heavens, what then canst thou know of him, 'who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the

inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers before him?' and he spreadeth out the heavens 'as a tent to dwell in!' Isa. 40.22. He made all the pins and stakes of this tabernacle, and he fastened them below but upon nothing, and stretches this curtain about them and above them; and it was not so much difficulty to him, as to you to draw the curtain about your bed; for 'he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast.' Canst thou by searching find him out? And yet thou must search him; not so much out of curiosity to know what he is, for he dwelleth in 'the light which no man can approach unto,' which no man hath seen, and no man can see, 1 Tim. 6.16; not so much to find him, as to be found of him, or to find what we cannot know when we have found. *Hic est qui nunquam quæri frustra potest, cum tamen inveniri non potest.* You may seek him, but though you never find him, yet ye shall not seek him in vain, for ye shall find blessedness in him. Though you find him, yet can you search him out unto perfection? Then what you have found were not God. How is it possible for such narrow hearts to frame an apprehension, or receive an impression of such an immense greatness, and eternal goodness? Will not a soul lose its power of thinking and speaking, because there is so much to be thought and spoken; and it so transcends all that it can think or speak? Silence then must be the best rhetoric; and the sweetest eloquence, when eloquence itself must become dumb and silent. It is the abundance and excess of that inaccessible light, that hath no proportion to our understandings, that strikes us as blind as, in the darkness, the want of light. All that we can say of God is, that whatsoever we can think or conceive, he is not that, because he hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, and that he is not like any of those things which we know, unto which if he be not like, we cannot frame any similitude or likeness of him in our knowledge. What then shall we do? Seek him and search him indeed: but, if we cannot know him, to reverence and fear and adore what we know. So much of him may be known as may teach us our duty and show unto us our blessedness. Let then all our inquiries of him have a special relation to this end, that we may out of love and fear of such a glorious and good God, worship and serve him, and compose ourselves according to his will and wholly to his pleasure. Whatever thou knowest of God, or searchest of him, it is but a vain speculation, and a work of curiosity, if it do not lead to this end,—to frame and fashion thy soul to an union and communion with him in love;

if it do not discover thyself unto thyself, that in that light of God's glorious majesty thou mayest distinctly behold thy own vileness and wretched misery, thy darkness and deadness and utter impotency. The angels that Isaiah saw attending God in the temple, had wings covering their faces, and wings covering their feet. Those excellent spirits who must cover their feet from us, because we cannot behold their glory, as Moses behoved to be veiled, yet they cannot behold his glory, but must cover their face from the radiant and shining brightness of his majesty. Yet they have other two wings to fly with. And being thus composed in reverence and fear to God, they are ready to execute his commands willingly and swiftly, Isa. 6.1-3, &c. But what is the use Isaiah makes of all this glorious sight? 'Woe is me! I am a man of unclean lips,' &c. Oh! all is unclean,—people, and pastor! He had known, doubtless, something of it before, but now he sees it of new, as if he had never seen it. The glory of God shining on him doth not puff him up in arrogance and conceit of the knowledge of such profound mysteries, but he is more abased in himself by it. It shines into his heart and whole man, and lets him see all unclean within and without. And so it was with Job, Job 43.5,6. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;' but as long as it was hearsay, I thought myself something,—I often reflected upon myself and actions, with a kind of self-complacency and delight; but now, saith he, since I have seen thee by the seeing of the eye, 'I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes;' I cannot look upon myself with patience,—without abhorrency and detestation. Self-love made me loathe other men's sins more than mine own, and self-love did cover mine own sins from me; it presented me to myself in a feigned likeness; but now I see myself in my true shape, and all coverings stripped off. Thy light hath pierced into my soul, and behold, I cannot endure to look upon myself. Here now is the true knowledge of God's majesty, which discovers within thee a mystery of iniquity: and here is the knowledge of God indeed, which abases all things besides God, not only in opinion but in affection, that attracts and unites thy soul to God, and draws it from thyself and all created things. This is a right discovery of divine purity and glory, that spots even the cleanness of angels, and stains the pride of all glory; much more will it represent filthiness, as filthiness without a covering. It is knowledge and science, 'falsely so called,' that puffeth up; for true knowledge emptieth a soul of itself, and humbleth a soul in itself, that it may be full of God. He that thinks he knows any

thing, knows nothing as he ought to know.

This then is the first property or mark of the saving knowledge of God. It removes all grounds of vain confidence that a soul cannot trust unto itself. And then the very proper intent of it is, that a soul may trust in God, and depend on him in all things. For this purpose the Lord hath called himself by so many names in scripture, answerable to our several necessities and difficulties, that he might make known to us how all-sufficient he is, that so we may turn our eyes and hearts towards him. This was the intent, of this name, I AM , that Moses might have a support of his faith; for if he had looked to outward appearance, was it not almost a ridiculous thing, and like a vain fancy, for a poor inconsiderable man to go to a king with such a message, that he would dismiss so many subjects? And was it not an attempt of some madman to go about to lead so many thousands from a wicked tyrannical king, into another nation? Well, saith the Lord, 'I am;' I, who give all things a being, will give a being to my promise. I will make Pharaoh hearken, and the people obey. Well then, what is it that this name of God will not answer? It is a creating name,—a name that can bring all things out of nothing by a word. If he be such as he is, then he can make of us what he pleases. If our souls had this name constantly engraven on our hearts, O what power would divine promises and threatenings have with us! 'I, even I, am he that comforteth thee,' saith he, Isaiah 41.12. If we believed that it were he indeed, the Lord Jehovah, how would we be comforted! How would we praise him by his name J AH ! How would we stoop unto him, and submit unto his blessed will! If we believed this, would we not be as dependent on him as if we had no being in ourselves? Would we not make him our habitation and dwelling-place; and conclude our own stability, and the stability of his church from his unvariable eternity? as the Psalmist, Psalm 99.1. Psalm 102. How can we think of such a Fountain-Being, but we must withal acknowledge ourselves to be shadows of his goodness, and that we owe to him what we are, and so consecrate and dedicate ourselves to his glory! How can we consider such a Self-Being, Independent, and Creating Goodness, but we must have some desire to cleave to him, and some confidence to trust in him! Now, this is to know him. When, we think on his unchangeableness, let us consider our own vanity, whose glory and perfection is like a summer flower, or like a vapour ascending for a little

time, whose 'best estate is altogether vanity.' Our purposes are soon broken off, and made of none effect; our resolutions change. This is a character of mortality, we are not always alike. *Non sibi constare, nec ubique et semper sibi parem eundemque esse.* To be now one thing, and then another thing, is a property of sinful and wretched man. Therefore let us 'cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils,' and 'trust not in princes' who shall die, far less in ourselves who are less than the least of men: but let us put our trust in God, 'who changeth not,' and we shall not be consumed,—our waters shall not fail,—we shall never be ashamed of any hope we have in him. There is nothing else you trust in, but undoubtedly it shall prove your shame and confusion. Whatever you hear or know of God, know that it is vain and empty, unless it descend down into the heart to fashion it to his fear and love, and extend unto the outward man to conform it to obedience; you are but 'vain in your imaginations, and your foolish hearts are darkened,' while 'when you know God, you glorify him not as God.' If that be not the fruit and end of knowledge, that knowledge shall be worse to thee than ignorance, for it both brings on judicial hardening here, and will be thy solemn accuser and witness against thee hereafter, Rom. 1.21-24. The knowledge of Jesus Christ, truly so called, is neither barren nor unfruitful, for out of its root and sap spring humility, self-abasing confidence in God, patience in tribulations, meekness in provocations, temperance and sobriety in lawful things, &c. 2 Pet. 1.5-8.

---

## **LECTURE IX.**

### **WHAT GOD IS TO US.**

EXOD . 34.6,7. "*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands.*"

THERE is nothing can separate between God and a people but iniquity; and yet he is very loath to separate even for that. He makes many shows of departing, that so we may hold him fast; and indeed he is not difficult to be holden. He threatens often to remove his presence from a person or nation; and he threatens, that he may not indeed remove, but that they may entreat him to stay; and he is not hard to be entreated. Who is a God

like unto him, slow to anger, and of great mercy? He is long of being provoked, and not long provoked; for it is like the anger of a parent's love. Love takes on anger as the last remedy; and if it prevail, it is as glad to put it off as it was unwilling to take it on. You may see a lively picture of this in God's dealing with Moses and this people in the preceding chapter. He had long endured this rebellious and obstinate people,—had often threatened to cut them off,—and yet, as it were, loath to do it, and repenting of it, he suffers himself to be entreated for them; but all in vain to them,—they corrupted their way still more: and in the 32d chapter fall into gross idolatry, the great trespass that he had given them so solemn warning of often, whereupon great wrath is conceived. And the Lord (chap. 33.2.) threatens to depart from them,—Go your way, saith he, to Canaan, but I will not go with you; take your venture of any judgments, and the people of the land's cruelty. Here is a sad farewell to Israel; and who would think he could be detained after all that? Who would think that he could be entreated? And yet he is not entreated, he is not requested, before he gives some ground of it, and before he first condescends; go, saith he, and put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. Will he then accept a repenting people, and is there yet hope of mercy? Should he that is going away show us the way to keep him still? And he that flees from us, will he strengthen us to pursue and follow after him? This is not after the manner of men, it is true, whose compassions fail when their passion ariseth, but this is the manner and method of grace, or of him who waits to be gracious. He flees so as he would have a follower. Yea, while he seems to go away, he draws the soul that he might run after him. Hence is that word, Psalm 63.8. 'My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me.' Well, the people mourn, and put off their ornaments in sign of humiliation and abasement, but all this doth not pacify and quench the flame that was kindled. Moses takes the tabernacle out of the camp, the place of judgment where God spake with the people; and the cloud, the sign of God's presence, removes. In a word, the sign of God's loving and kind presence departs from them, to signify that they were divorced from God, and, in a manner, the Lord by Moses excommunicates all the people and rulers both, and draws away these holy things from the contagion of a profane people. But yet all is not gone. He goes far off, but not out of sight, that you may always follow him; and if you follow, he will stand

still. He is never without the reach of crying, though we do not perceive him. Now, in this sad case you may have a trial who is godly. Every one that seeks the Lord will separate from the unholy congregation, and follow the tabernacle; and this affects the whole people much, that they all worship in the tent doors.

Now, in the meantime, God admits Moses to speak with him. Though he will not speak to the people, yet he will speak with their mediator, a typical mediator, to show us that God is well-pleased in Christ; and so all Christ's intercessions and requests for us will get a-hearing. When they are come once in talking, the business is taken up, for He is not soon angry, and never implacably angry,—'slow to anger,' and keeps it not long. Moses falling familiar with God, not only obtains his request for the people, but becomes more bold in a request for his own satisfaction and confirmation. He could not endure to lead that people unless God went with him; and having the promise of his going with them, he cannot endure distance with him, but aspires to the nearest communion that may be. Oh! that it were so with us. His great request is, that the Lord will show him his glory. Had he not seen much of this already; and more than any man ever saw, when he spoke in the mount with God, &c.? Nay, but he would see more; for there is always more to be seen, and there is in a godly soul always more desire to see it. The more is seen, the more is loved and desired. Tasting of it only begets a kindly appetite after it; and the more tasted, still the fresher and more recent: but yet it is above both desire and fruition,—'Thou canst not see my face,' &c. All our knowledge of God,—all our attainments of experience of him,—do but reach to some dark and confused apprehension of what he is. The clearest and nearest sight of God in this world, is, as if a man were not known but by his back, which is a great point of estrangement. It is said, in heaven we shall see him 'face to face,' and fully as he is, because then the soul is made capable of it.

Two things in us here put us in an incapacity of nearness with God,—infirmity and iniquity. Infirmity in us cannot behold his glory. It is of so weak eyes, that the brightness of the sun would strike it blind. And iniquity in us, he cannot behold it, because he is of pure eyes, that can look on no unclean thing. It is the only thing in the creation that God's

holiness hath an antipathy at; and therefore he is still about the destroying of the body of sin in us, about the purging from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; and till the soul be thus purged of all sin, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, it cannot be a temple for an immediate vision of him, and an immediate exhibition of God to us. Sin is the wall of partition, and the thick cloud that eclipses his glory from us. It is the opposite hemisphere of darkness, contrary to light; according to the access or recess of God's presence, it is more or less dark. The more sin reigns in thee, the less of God is in thee; and the more sin be subdued, the readier and nearer is God's presence. But let us comfort ourselves that one day we shall put off both infirmity and iniquity; mortality shall put on immortality, and corruption be clothed with incorruption. We shall leave the rags of mortal weakness in the grave, and our menstruous clothes of sin behind us; and then shall the weak eyes of flesh be made like eagles' eyes, to behold the sun; and then shall the soul be clothed with holiness, as with a garment, which God shall delight to look upon, because he sees his own image in that glass.

We come to the Lord's satisfying of Moses' desire, and proclaiming his name before him. It is himself only can tell you what he is. It is not ministers' preaching, or other discourse, can proclaim that name to you. We may indeed speak over those words unto you, but it is the Lord that must write that name upon your heart. He only can discover his glory to your spirit. There is a spirit of life which cannot be enclosed in letters and syllables, or transmitted through your ears into your hearts, but he himself must create it inwardly, and stir up the inward sense and feeling of that name, of those attributes. Faith, indeed, 'cometh by hearing,' and our knowledge in this life is 'through a glass darkly,' through ordinances and senses; but there must be an inward teaching and speaking to your souls to make that effectual: 'the anointing teacheth you of all things,' 1 John 2.27. Alas! it is the separation of that from the word that makes it so unprofitable. If the Spirit of God were inwardly writing what the word is teaching, then should your souls be 'living epistles,' that ye might read God's name on them. O! be much in imploring of and depending on him that teacheth to profit, who only can declare unto your souls what he is!

These names express his essence or being, and his properties; what he is

in himself, and what he is to us. In himself he is Jehovah, or a Self-Being, aut on , as we heard in the 3d chapter, 'I am that I am,' and EL, a strong God, or Almighty God; which two hold out unto us the absolute incomprehensible perfection of God, eminently and infinitely enclosing within himself all the perfections of the creature; the unchangeable and immutable being of God, who was, and is, and is to come, without succession, without variation, or shadow of turning; and then the almighty power of God, by which without difficulty, by the inclination and beck of his will and pleasure, he can make, or unmake all,—create or annihilate,—to whom nothing is impossible. Which three, if they were pondered by us till our souls received the stamp of them, they would certainly be powerful to abstract and draw our hearts from the vain, changeable, and empty shadow of the creature, and gather our scattered affections that are parted among them, because of their insufficiency, that all might unite in one, and join with this self-sufficient and eternal God. I say, if a soul did indeed believe and consider how all-sufficient he is, how insufficient all things else are, would it not cleave to him, and draw near to him? Psalm 73, ult. It is the very torment and vexation of the soul to be thus racked, distracted, and divided about many things; and therefore many, because there is none of them can supply all our wants. Our wants are infinite, our desires insatiable, and the good that is in any thing is limited and bounded; it can serve, one but for one use, and another for another use; and when all are together, they can but supply some wants, but they leave much of the soul empty. But often these outward things cross one another, and cannot consist together; and hence ariseth much strife and debate in a soul. His need requireth both, and both will not agree. But O that you could see this one universal good, one for all, and above all, your souls would choose him certainly—your souls would trust in him! Ye would say, 'Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride on horses.' Creatures shall not satisfy us, we will seek our happiness in thee and nowhere else; since we have tasted this new wine, away with the old, the new is better. I beseech yon, make God your friend, for he is a great one; whether he be a friend or an enemy, he hath two properties that make him either most comfortable, or most terrible, according as he is at peace or war with souls,—eternity, and omnipotency. You were all once enemies to him. O consider what a party you have, an almighty party, and an unchangeable party! and if you will make peace with him, and that in

Christ, then know he is the best friend in the world, because he is unchangeable and almighty. If he be thy friend, he will do all for thee he can do and thou hast need of. Many friends willing to do, have not ability, but he hath power to do what he wills and pleases. Many friends are changeable,—their affections dry up and of themselves die; and therefore even princes' friendship is but a vain confidence, for they shall die, and then their thoughts of favour perish with them; but he abides the same for all generations. There is no end of his duration, and no end of his affection; he can still say, 'I am that I am.' What I was, I am; and I will be what I am. Men cannot say so, they are like the brooks that the companies of Teman looked after, and thought to have found them in summer as they left them in winter; but behold they were dried up, and the companies ashamed. God cannot make thee ashamed of thy hope, because he is faithful and able. Ability and fidelity is a sure anchor to hold by in all storms and tempests.

Such is God in himself. Now, there are two manner of ways he vents himself towards the creatures,—in a comfortable way, or in a terrible way. This glorious perfection and almighty power hath an issue upon sinners, and it runs in a twofold channel, of mercy or justice; of mercy towards miserable sinners that find themselves lost, and flee unto him and take hold of his strength; and justice towards all those that flatter themselves in their own eyes, and continue in their sins, and put the evil day far off. There is no mercy for such as fear not justice, and there is no justice for such as flee from it unto mercy. The Lord exhibits himself in a twofold appearance, according to the condition of sinners. He sits on a throne and tribunal of grace and mercy, to make access to the vilest sinner who is afraid of his wrath and would fain be at peace with him; and he sits on a throne of justice and wrath, to seclude and debar presumptuous sinners from holiness. There were two mountains under the law,—one of cursings, and another of blessings. These are the mountains God sets his throne upon, and from these he speaks and sentences mankind. From the mountain of cursings, he hath pronounced a curse and condemnatory sentence upon all flesh, 'for all have sinned.' Therefore, he concludes all under sin, that all flesh might stop their mouth, and the whole world become guilty before God. Now, the Lord having thus condemned all mankind because of disobedience, he sits again upon the mountain of

blessings, and pronounces a sentence of absolution, of as many as have taken with the sentence of condemnation, and appealed to his grace and mercy; and those which do not so, the sentence of condemnation stands above their heads unrepealed. He erects his tribunal of justice in the world for this end, that all flesh might once be convicted before him; and therefore he cites, as it were, and summons all men to sist themselves and compear before his tribunal, to be judged. He lays out an accusation in the word against them. He takes their consciences witness of the truth of all that is charged on them, and then pronounces that sentence in their conscience, 'Cursed is he that abideth not in all things,' which the conscience subsumes, and concludes itself accursed, and subscribes to the equity of the sentence. And thus man is guilty before God, and his mouth stopped. He hath no excuses, no pretences, he can see no way to escape from justice, and God is justified, by this means, in his speaking and judging, Psalm 51.4. The soul ratifies and confirms the truth and justice of all his threatenings and judgments, Rom. 3.4. Now, for such souls as join with God in judging and condemning themselves, the Lord hath erected a throne of grace and tribunal of mercy in the word, whereupon he hath set his Son Jesus Christ, Psalm 2.6; 89.14; 45.6; Heb. 1.8. And O! this throne is a comfortable throne. Mercy and truth go before the face of the king to welcome and entertain miserable sinners, and to make access to them. And from this throne Jesus Christ holds out the sceptre of the gospel, to invite sinners, self-condemned sinners, to come to him alone, who hath gotten all final judgment committed to him, that he may give eternal life 'to whom he will,' John 5.21,22. O! that is a sweet and ample commission given to our friend and brother, Jesus Christ,—power to repeal sentences passed against us,—power and authority to absolve them whom justice hath condemned, and to bless whom the law hath cursed, and to open their mouth to praise whose mouth sin and guiltiness hath stopped,—power to give the answer of a good conscience to thy evil self-tormenting conscience! In a word, he hath power to give life, to make alive and heal those who are killed or wounded by the commandment. Now, I say, seeing God hath of purpose established this throne of mercy in the word, thou mayest well, after receiving and acknowledging of the justice of the curse of the law, appeal to divine mercy and grace sitting on another throne of the gospel. Thou mayest—if thy conscience urge thee to despair, and to conclude there is

no hope—thou mayest, I say, appeal from thy conscience, from Satan, from justice, unto Jesus Christ, who is holding out the sceptre to thee. The minister calls thee, rise and come; stand no longer before that bar, for it is a subordinate judicatory; there is a way to redress thee by a higher court of grace. Thou mayest say to justice, to Satan, to thy own conscience,—"It is true, I confess, that I deserve that sentence; I am guilty, and can say nothing against it, while I stand alone. But though I cannot satisfy, and have not; yet there is one, Jesus Christ, who gave his life a ransom for many, and whom God hath given as a propitiation for sins. He hath satisfied and paid the debt in my name; go and apprehend the cautioner, since he hath undertaken it, nay, he hath done it, and is absolved. Thou hadst him in thy hands, O Justice! Thou hadst him prisoner under the power of death. Since thou hast let him go, then he is acquitted from all the charge of my sins; and therefore, since I know that he is now a king, and hath a throne to judge the world and plead the cause of the poor sheep, I will appeal to him, refer the cause to his decision, I will make my supplication to him, and certainly he will hear, and interpose himself between wrath and me. He will rescind this sentence of condemnation, since he himself was condemned for us and is justified,—'It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again,' who shall condemn me? He is near that justifies me, Rom. 8.33,34. Now if thou do indeed flee unto him for refuge, that city is open for thee, and nothing to prejudice thy entry. But no curse, no condemnation can enter in it, Rom. 8.1. He will justify and absolve thee from all things whereof the law could not justify thee, but condemn thee. There is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared. David may teach thee this manner of application, (Psalm 130. and 142.2,) of appealing from the deserved curse, to free undeserved blessing and mercy in Christ.

Let us consider this name of the Lord, and it shall answer all our suspicions of him,—all our objections against coming to him and believing in him. It is certain, ignorance is the mother of unbelief, together with the natural perverseness of our hearts. If we knew his name, we would trust in him; if his names were pondered and considered, we would believe in him. Satan knows this, and therefore his great sleight and cunning is to hold our minds fixed on the consideration of our misery and desperate estate. He keeps the awakened conscience

still upon that comfortless sight, and he labours to represent God by halves, and that it is a false representation of God. He represents him as clothed with justice and vengeance,—as a consuming fire, in which light a soul can see nothing but desperation written; and he labours to hold out the thoughts of his mercy and grace, or diverts a soul from the consideration of his promises; whence it comes, that they are not established, that though salvation be near, yet it is far from them in their sense and apprehension. Therefore I say, you should labour to get an entire sight of God, and you shall see him best in his word. There he reveals himself, and there you find, if you consider, that which may make you fear him indeed, but never flee from him,—that which may abase you, but withal embolden you to come to him though trembling. Whatever thought possess thee of thine own misery, of thy own guiltiness, labour to counterpoise that with the thought of his mercy and free promises. Whatever be suggested of his holiness and justice, hear himself speak out his own name, and thou shall hear as much of mercy and grace as may make these not terrible unto thee, though high and honourable. The Lord hath so framed the expression and proclamation of his name in this place, that first a word of majesty and power is premised,—'the Lord, the Lord God,'—that it may compose our hearts in fear and reverence of such a glorious one, and make a preparatory impression of the majesty of our God, which indeed is the foundation of all true faith. It begins to adore and admire a deity, a majesty hid from the world. The thoughts of his power and glory possess the soul first, and make it begin to tremble to think that it hath such a high and holy one to deal with.

But, in the next place, you have the most sweet, alluring, comforting styles that can be imagined, to meet with the trembling and languishing condition of a soul that would be ready to faint before such a majesty. Here Mercy takes it by the hand, and gives a cordial of grace, pardon, forgiveness, &c. to it, which revives the soul of the humble, and intermingles some rejoicing with former trembling. Majesty and greatness go before to abase and humble the soul in its own eyes; and mercy and goodness second them, to lift up those who are low and exalt the humble. And in the description of this, the Lord spends more words, according to the necessity of a soul, to signify to us how great and strong consolation may be grounded on his name,—how accessible he is, though

he dwell in inaccessible light, how lovely he is, though he be the high and the lofty one,—how good he is, though he be great,—how merciful he is, though he be majestic. In a word, that those that flee to him may have all invitation, all encouragement to come, and nothing to discourage, to prejudge their welcome; that whoever will, may come, and nothing may hinder on his part. And then, after all this, he subjoins a word of his justice, in avenging sin, to show us that he leaves that as the last; that he essays all gaining ways of mercy with us; and that he is not very much delighted with the death of sinners, that so whosoever perishes may blame themselves for hating their own salvation and forsaking their own mercy.

Now whoever thou art that apprehendest a dreadful and terrible God, and thyself a miserable and wretched sinner, thou canst find no comfort in God's highness and power, but it looks terrible upon thee, because thou doubtest of his good-will to save and pardon thee. Thou sayest with the blind man, If thou wilt, thou canst do it; thou art a strong God, but what comfort can I have in thy strength, since I know not thy good-will? I say, the Lord answers thee in this name, I am 'merciful,' saith the Lord. If thou be miserable, I am merciful as well as strong; if thou have sin and misery, I have compassion and pity. My mercy may be a copy and pattern to all men to learn it of me, even towards their own brethren, Luke 6.36. Therefore he is called 'the father of mercies,' 2 Cor. 1.3. *Misericors est cui alterius miseria cordi est*. Mercy hath its very name from misery, for it is no other thing than to lay another's misery to heart; not to despise it, not to add to it, but to help it. It is a strong inclination to succour the misery of sinners, therefore thou needest no other thing to commend thee to him. Art thou miserable, and knowest it indeed? Then he is merciful; and know that also, these two suit well.

Nay, but saith the convinced soul, I know not if he will be merciful to me, for what am I? There is nothing in me to be regarded. I have nothing to conciliate favour, and all that may procure hatred. But, saith the Lord, I am 'gracious,' and dispense mercy freely, without respect to condition or qualification. Say not, if I had such a measure of humiliation as such a one,—if I loved him so much,—if I had so much godly sorrow and repentance,—then, I think he would be merciful to me. Say not so, for

behold he is gracious. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and there is no other cause, no motive to procure it; it comes from within his own breast. It is not thy repentance will make him love thee, nor thy hardness of heart will make him hate thee or obstruct the vent of his grace towards thee. No! if it be grace, it is no more of works,—not works in that way that thou imaginest. It is not of repentance, not of faith in that sense thou conceivest; but it is freely, without the hire, without the price of repentance or faith, because all those are but the free gifts of grace. Thou wouldst have these graces to procure his favour, and to make them the ground of thy believing in his promises but grace is without money. It immediately contracts with discovered misery, so that if thou do discover in thyself misery and sin, though thou find nothing else, yet do not cast away confidence, but so much the more address thyself to mercy and grace, which do not seek repentance in thee, but bring repentance and faith with them unto thee. Yet there is something in the awakened conscience. I have gone on long in sin; I have been a presumptuous sinner; can he endure me longer? Well, hear what the Lord saith, I am 'long-suffering' and patient. And if he had not been so, we had been damned ere now. Patience hath a long term, and we cannot outrun it, outweary it. Why do we not wonder that he presently and instantly executed his wrath on angels, and gave them not one hour's space for repentance, but cast them down headlong into destruction, as in a moment; and yet his majesty hath so long delayed the execution of our sentence, and calls us unto repentance and forgiveness, that we may escape the condemnation of angels? His patience is not slackness and negligence, as men count it, 2 Pet. 3.9. He sits not in heaven as an idol, and idle spectator of what men are doing; but he observes all wrongs, and is sensible of them also. And if we were mindful and sensible of them also, he would forget them. He is long-suffering. This is extended and stretched-out patience beyond all expectation, beyond all deserving, yea contrary to it. Therefore, as long as he forbears, if thou apprehend thy misery and sin, and continuance in it; do not conclude that it is desperate. 'Why should a living man complain?' As long as patience lengthens thy life, if thou desire to come to him, believe he will accept thee.

But, saith the doubting soul, I am exceeding perverse and wicked; there is

nothing in me but wickedness. It so abounds in me that there is none like me. But, saith the Lord, I am 'abundant in goodness.' Thy wickedness, though it be great, it is but a created wickedness; but my goodness is the goodness of God. I am as abundant in grace and goodness as thou art in sin,—nay, infinitely more. Thy sin is but the transgression of a finite creature; but my mercy is the compassion of an infinite God,—it can swallow it up. Suppose thy sin cry up to heaven, yet mercy reaches above heaven, and is built up for ever. Here is an invitation to all sinners to come and taste,—O come and taste, and see how good the Lord is! Goodness is communicative; it diffuses itself, like the sun's light. There is 'riches of his goodness,' Rom. 2.4. Poor soul, thou canst not spend it though thou have many wants!

But I am full of doubtings, fears, and jealousies; I cannot believe in his promises; I often question them. How, then, will he perform them? I say, saith the Lord, I am abundant in truth. He will certainly perform. Shall our unbelief, or doubting, 'make the faith of God without effect?' &c. Rom. 3.3. God forbid! His faithfulness reaches unto the clouds; he will keep covenant with thee, whose soul hath chosen him, though thou often question and doubt of him. Indeed, thou shouldst not give indulgence to thy doubtings and jealousies, but look on them as high provocations. For what can be more grievous to fervent love than to meet with jealousy? Jealousy would quench any creature's love; but though it grieve and provoke him, yet he will not change, he will not diminish his. Only do not think your disputings and quarrelling innocent and harmless things. No certainly, they grieve the Spirit,—stir up the beloved to go away, as it were, before he please,—and make thee walk without comfort, and without fruit. Yet he will bear with, and not quench 'the smoking flax' of a believer's desires, though they do not arise to the flame of assurance.

But the wounded spirit hath one or two burdens more. I have abused much mercy, how can mercy pity me? I have turned grace into wantonness, so that when I look to mercy and grace to comfort me, they do rather challenge me. The sins of none are like mine,—none of such a heinous and presumptuous nature. But let us hear what God the Lord speaks: I keep 'mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.' Thou hast wasted much mercy, but more is

behind; all the treasure is not spent. Though there were many thousand worlds besides, I could pardon them all, if they would flee unto my mercy. Thou shalt not be straitened in me. Mercy will pardon thy abuse of mercy; it will forgive all faults thou dost against itself. Thou that sinnest against the Son of man, the Redeemer of the world, and remedy of sin,—yet there is pardon for thee, whatever the quality, condition, or circumstance of thy sin be. Whoever, convinced of it, and loadened with it, desirest rest to thy soul, thou mayest find it in Christ, whose former kindness thou hast answered with contempt. Many sins, many great sins, and these presumptuous sins, cannot exclude, nay, no sin can exclude a willing soul. Unbelief keeps thee unwilling, and so excludes thee.

Now, as the spider sucks poison out of the sweetest flower, so the most part of souls suck nothing but delusion and presumption and hardening out of the gospel. Many souls reason for more liberty to sin, from mercy. But behold, how the Lord backs it with a dreadful word, 'who will by no means clear the guilty.' As many as do not condemn themselves before the tribunal of justice, there is no rescinding of the condemnatory sentence, but it stands above their heads, 'he that believeth not is condemned already.' Justice hath condemned all by a sentence. He that doth not, in the sense of this, flee unto Jesus Christ from sin and wrath, is already condemned. His sentence is standing. There needs no new one. Since he flees not to mercy for absolution, the sentence of condemnation stands unrepealed. You guilty souls who clear yourselves, God will not clear you. And, alas! how many of you do clear yourselves! Do you not extenuate and mince your sins? How hard is it to extort any confession of guilt out of you, but in the general! If we condescend to particulars, many of you will plead innocency almost in every thing, though you have, like children, learned to speak these words that ye are sinners. I beseech you consider it; it is no light matter, for 'God will by no means clear the guilty;' by no means, by no entreaties, no flatteries. What! will he not pardon sin? Yes indeed: his name tells you he will pardon all kind of sins, and absolve all manner of guilty persons: but yet such as do condemn themselves, such as are guilty in their own conscience, and their mouths stopped before God,—you who do not enter into the serious examination of your ways, and do not arraign yourselves before God's tribunal daily, till you find yourselves loathsome and desperate, and no refuge for you,—

you who do flatter yourselves always in the hope of heaven, and put the fear of hell always from you,—I say, God will by no means, no prayers, no entreaties, clear or pardon you, because you come not to Jesus Christ, in whom is preached forgiveness and remission of sins. You who take liberty to sin, because God is gracious, and delay repentance till the end, because God is long-suffering,—know God will not clear you; he is holy and just, as he is merciful. If his mercy make thee not fear and tremble before him, and do not separate thee from thy sins,—if remission of sins be not the strongest persuasion to thy soul of the removing of sin,—certainly thou dost in vain presume upon his mercy.

---

## LECTURE X. WHAT GOD IS.

JOHN 4.24. "*God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*"

WE have here something of the nature of God pointed out to us, and something of our duty towards him. 'God is a Spirit,' that is his nature; and 'man must worship him,' that is his duty; and that 'in spirit and in truth,' that is the right manner of the duty. If these three were well pondered till they did sink into the bottom of our spirits, they would make us indeed Christians, not in the letter, but in the spirit. That is presupposed to all Christian worship and walking, to know what God is; it is indeed the *primo cognitum* of Christianity, the first principle of true religion, the very root out of which springs and grows up walking suitably with, and worshipping answerably of, a known God. I fear much of our religion is like the Athenians'; they built an altar to the unknown God, and like the Samaritans', who worshipped they knew not what. Such a worship, I know not what it is, when the God worshipped is not known. The two parents of true religion are the knowledge of God and of ourselves. This, indeed, is the beginning of the fear of God, which the wise preacher calls 'the beginning of' true 'wisdom.' And these two, as they beget true religion, so they cannot truly be one without the other. It is not many notions and speculations about the divine nature,—it is not

high and strained conceptions of God,—that comprise the true knowledge of him. Many think they know something when they can speak of those mysteries in some singular way, and in some terms removed from common understandings, while neither themselves nor others know what they mean. And thus they are presumptuous, self-conceited, knowing nothing as they ought to know. There is a knowledge that puffs up, and there is a knowledge that casts down; a knowledge in many that doth but swell them, not grow them; it is but a rumour full of wind, a vain and empty, frothy knowledge, that is neither good for edifying others, nor saving a man's self; a knowledge that a man knows and reflects upon, so as to ascend upon the height of it, and measure himself by the degrees of it. This is not the true knowledge of God, which knows not itself, looks not back upon itself, but straight towards God, his holiness and glory, and our baseness and misery; and therefore it constrains the soul to be ashamed of itself in such a glorious presence, and to make haste to worship, as Moses, Job, and Isaiah did.

This definition of God,—if we did truly understand it, we could not but worship him in another manner. 'God is a Spirit.' Many ignorant people form in their own mind some likeness and image of God, who is invisible. Ye know how ye fancy to yourselves some bodily shape. When you conceive of him, you think he is some reverend and majestic person sitting on a throne in heaven. But, I beseech you, correct your mistakes of him. There is outward idolatry and there is inward; there is idolatry in action, when men paint or engrave some similitude of God; and there is idolatry in imagination, when the fancy and apprehension run upon some image or likeness of God. The first is among Papists, but I fear the latter is too common among us; and it is indeed all one, to form such a similitude in our mind, and to engrave or paint it without. So that the God whom many of us worship, is not the living and true God, but a painted or graven idol. When God appeared most visible to the world, as at the giving out of the law, yet no man did see any likeness at all. He did not come under the perception of the most subtle sense; he could not be perceived but by the retired understanding, going aside from all things visible. And therefore you do but fancy an idol to yourselves, instead of God, when you apprehend him under the likeness of any visible or sensible thing; and so whatever love, or fear, or reverence you have, it is

all but misspent superstition, the love and fear of an idol.

I. Know then, 'that God is a Spirit;' and therefore he is like none of all those things you see, or hear, or smell, or taste, or touch. The heavens are glorious indeed, the light is full of glory; but he is not like that. If all your senses should make an inquiry, and search for him throughout the world, you should not find him. Though he be near hand every one of us, yet our eyes and ears, and all our senses, might travel the length of the earth and breadth of the sea, and should not find him, even as you might search all the corners of heaven, ere you could hear or see an angel. If you would saw a man asunder and resolve him into atoms of dust, yet you could not perceive a soul within him. Why? Because these are spirits, and so without the reach of your senses.

II. If God be a Spirit, then he is invisible, and dwells in light inaccessible, 'which no man hath seen or can see.' Then our poor narrow minds, that are drowned, as it were, and immersed in bodies of clay, and in this state of mortality, receive all knowledge by the senses, cannot frame any notion of his spiritual and abstracted nature. We cannot conceive what our own soul is, but by some sensible operation flowing from it; and the height that our knowledge of that noble part of ourselves amounts to, is but this dark and confused conception, that the soul is some inward principle of life and sense and reason. How then is it possible for us to conceive aright of the divine nature, as it is in itself, but only in a dark and general way? We guess at his majesty, by the glorious emanations of his power, and wisdom, and the rays thereof, which he displays abroad in all the work of his hands; and from all these concurring testimonies, and evidences of his majesty, we gather this confused notion of him, that he is the fountain-self-independent Being, the original of these things, and more absolute in the world than the soul is in the body; the true *Anima mundi*; the very life and the light of men, and the soul that quickens, moves, and forms all this visible world; that makes all things visible, and himself is invisible. Therefore it is that the Lord speaks to us in Scripture of himself, according to our capacities,—of his face, his right hand, and arm, his throne, his sceptre, his back parts, his anger, his fury, his repentance, his grief, and sorrow,—none of which are properly in his spiritual, immortal, and unchangeable nature. But because our dullness and slowness is such

in apprehending things spiritual, it being almost without the sphere and comprehension of the soul while in the body, which is almost addicted unto the senses in the body; therefore the Lord accommodates himself unto our terms and notions; *balbutit nobiscum*,—he, like a kind father, stammers with his stammering children, speaks to them in their own dialect; but withal, would have us conceive he is not really such an one, but infinitely removed in his own being from all these imperfections. So when you hear of these terms in scripture, O beware of conceiving God to be such a one as yourselves! But, in these expressions not beseeing his Majesty, because below him, learn your own ignorance of his glorious Majesty, your dullness and incapacity to be such as the holy One must come down as it were in some bodily appearance, ere you can understand any thing of him.

III. If God be a Spirit, then he is most perfect and most powerful. All imperfection, all infirmity, and weakness in the creature, is founded in the gross and material part of it. You see the more matter and bodily substance is in any thing, it is the more lumpish, heavy, and void of all action. It is the more spiritual, pure, and refined part of the creation that hath most activity in it, and is the principle of all motions and actions. You see a little fly hath more action in it than a great mountain, because there are spirits in it which move it. The bottom of the world contains the dregs of the creation, as it were,—a mass and lump of heavy earth; but the higher and more distant bodies be from that, the more pure and subtile they are; and the more pure and subtile they be, the more action, virtue, and efficacy they have. The earth stands like a dead lump, but the sea moves; and the air being thinner and purer than both, moves more easily and swiftly. But go up higher, and still the motion is swifter, and the virtue and influence is the more powerful. What is a dead body when the soul and spirit is out of it? It hath no more virtue and efficacy than so much clay, although by the presence of the spirit of it, it was active, agile, swift, strong and nimble. So much then as any thing hath of spirit in it, so much the more perfect and powerful it is. Then I beseech you consider what a One the God of the spirits of all flesh must be,—the very Fountain-spirit,—the Self-being spirit,— *auto pneuma* . When the soul of a man, or the spirit of a horse, hath so much virtue, to stir up a lump of earth, and to quicken it to so many diverse operations, even though that soul and

spirit did not, nay, could not make that piece of earth they dwell in, then, what must his power and virtue be that made all those things? Who gave power and virtue even to the spirits of all flesh? 'Their horses,' saith God, are 'flesh and not spirit,' (Isa. 31.3;) because, in comparison of his majesty, the very spirits in them are but like a dead lump of flesh. If he should draw in his breath, as it were, they would have no more virtue to save the Israelites, than so many lumps of flesh or clay. For he is the Spirit of all spirits, that quickens, actuates, and moves them to their several operations and influences. *Anima mundi, et Anima animarum mundi*. An angel hath more power than all men united in one body. Satan is called the prince of the air, and the god of this world, for he hath more efficacy and virtue to commove the air, and raise tempests, than all the swarms of multiplied mankind, though gathered into one army. If the Lord did not restrain and limit his power, he were able to destroy whole nations at once. An angel killed many thousands of Sennacherib's army in one night; what would many angels do then, if the Lord pleased to apply them to that work? O what is man that he should magnify himself, or glory in strength, or skill? Beasts are stronger than men, but man's weaker strength being strengthened with more skill, proves stronger than they. But in respect of angels he hath neither strength nor wisdom.

IV. If God be a Spirit, then he is not circumscribed by any place; and if an infinite Spirit, then he is everywhere, no place can include him, and no body can exclude him. He is within all things, yet not included nor bounded within them; and he is without all things, yet not excluded from them. *Intra omnia, non tamen inclusus in illis; extra omnia, nec tamen exclusus ab illis*. You know every body hath its own bounds and limits circumscribed to it, and shoots out all other bodily things out of the same space, so that before the least body want some space, it will put all the universe in motion, and make every thing about it to change its place, and possess another. But a spirit can pass through all of them, and never disturb them; a legion may be in one man, and have room enough. If there were a wall of brass, or tower, having no opening, neither above nor beneath, no body could enter, but by breaking through, and making a breach into it; but an angel or spirit could storm it without a breach, and pierce through it without any division of it. How much more doth the Maker of all spirits fill all in all! The thickness of the earth doth not keep

him out, nor the largeness of the heavens contain him. How then do we circumscribe and limit him within the bounds of a public house, or the heavens? O! how narrow thoughts have we of his immense greatness, who, without division or multiplication of himself, fills all the corners of the world,—whose indivisible unity is equivalent to an infinite extension and divisibility! How often, I pray you, do you reflect upon this? God is near to every one of us. Who of us thinks of a divine Majesty nearer us than our very souls and consciences, 'in whom we live, and move, and have our being?' How is it we move, and think not with wonder of that first Mover in whom we move? How is it we live and persevere in being, and do not always consider this fountain-Being in whom we live and have our being? O, the atheism of many souls professing God! We do speak, walk, eat, and drink, and go about all our businesses, as if we were self-being, and independent of any; never thinking of that all-present quickening Spirit, that acts us, moves us, speaks in us, makes us to walk and eat and drink; as the barbarous people, who see, hear, speak and reason, and never once reflect upon the principle of all these, to discern a soul within. This is brutish, and in this, man who was made of a straight countenance to look upward to God, and to know himself and his Maker, till he might be differenced from all creatures below, is degenerated, and become like the beasts that perish. Who of us believes this all-present God? We imagine that he is shut up in heaven, and takes no such notice of affairs below; but certainly, he is not so far from us; though he show more of his glory above, yet he is as present and observant below.

V. If he be a Spirit, then as he is incomprehensible and immense in being, so also there is no comprehension of his knowledge. The nearer any creature comes to the nature of a spirit, the more knowing and understanding it is. Life, is the most excellent being, and understanding is the most excellent life. *Materia est iners et mortua*. The nearer any thing is to the earthly matter, as it hath less action, so less life and feeling. Man is nearer an angel than beasts, and therefore he hath a knowing understanding spirit in him. There is a spirit in man, and the more or less this spirit of man is abstracted from sensual and material things, it lives the more excellent and pure life, and is, as it were, more or less delivered from the chains of the body. These souls that have never risen above, and retired from sensible things, O, how narrow are they,—how captivated

within the prison of the flesh! But when the Lord Jesus comes to set free, he delivers a soul from this bondage, he makes these chains fall off, and leads the soul apart to converse with God himself, and to meditate on things not seen,—sin, wrath, hell, and heaven. And the farther it goes from itself, and the more abstracted it is from the consideration of present things, the more it lives a life like angels. And therefore, when the soul is separated from the body, it is then perfectly free, and hath the largest extent of knowledge. A man's soul must be almost like Paul's 'whether out of the body, or in the body, I know not,'—if he would understand aright spiritual things. Now then, this infinite Spirit is an all-knowing Spirit, all-seeing Spirit, as well as all-present; 'there is no searching of his understanding,' Isa. 40.28. Psalm 147.5. 'Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?' Isa. 40.13. Rom. 11.34. He calls the generations from the beginning, and known to him are all his works from the beginning. O that you would always set this God before you, or rather set yourselves always in his presence, in whose sight you are always! How would it compose our hearts to reverence and fear in all our actions, if we did indeed believe that the Judge of all the world is an eye-witness to our most retired and secret thoughts and doings! If any man were as privy to thy thoughts, as thy own spirit and conscience, thou wouldst blush and be ashamed before him. If every one of us could open a window into one another's spirits, I think this assembly should dismiss as quickly as that of Christ's, when he bade them that were without sin cast a stone at the woman. We could not look one upon another. O then, why are we so little apprehensive of the all-searching eye of God, who can even declare to us our thought before it be? How much atheism is rooted in the heart of the most holy! We do not always meditate, with David, Psalm 139, on that all-searching and all-knowing Spirit, who knows our down-sitting and uprising, and understands our thoughts afar off, and who is acquainted with all our ways. O how would we ponder our path, and examine our words, and consider our thoughts before-hand, if we set ourselves in the view of such a Spirit, that is within us and without us, before us and behind us! He may spare sinners as long as he pleases, for there is no escaping from him. You cannot go out of his dominions; nay, you cannot run out of his presence, Psalm 139.7-10. He can reach you when he pleases, therefore he may delay as long as he pleases.

---

## LECTURE XI.

THE KNOWLEDGE THAT GOD IS, COMBINED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE IS TO BE WORSHIPPED.

JOHN 4.24. *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*

THERE are two common notions engraven on the hearts of all men by nature,—that God is, and that he must be worshipped; and these two live and die together; they are clear, or blotted together. According as the apprehension of God is clear, and distinct, and more deeply engraven on the soul, so is this notion of man's duty of worshipping God clear and imprinted on the soul; and whenever the actions of men do prove that the conception of the worship of God is obliterate or worn out,—whenever their transgressions do witness that a man hath not a lively notion of this duty of God's worship,—that doth also prove that the very notion of a godhead is worn out, and cancelled in the soul. For how could souls conceive of God as he is indeed, but they must needs, with Moses, (Exod. 24.8.) make haste to pray and worship? It is the principle of the very law of nature which shall make the whole world inexcusable, 'because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.' A father must have honour, and a master must have fear; and God, who is the common parent and absolute master of all, must have worship, in which reverence and fear, mixed with rejoicing and affection, predominate. It is supposed, and put beyond all question that he must be: 'he that worships him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.' It is not simply said, God is a Spirit and must be worshipped; no, for none can doubt of it. If God be, then certainly worship is due to him, for who is so worshipful? And because it is so beyond all question, therefore woe to the irreligious world that never puts it in practice! O, what excuse can you have, who have not so much as a form of godliness! Do you not know, that it is beyond all controversy that God must be worshipped? Why then do you deny that in your practice, which all men must confess in their conscience? Is not he God, the Lord, a living and self-being Spirit? Then must he not have worshippers? Beasts are not created for it; it is you, O sons of men! whom he made for his own praise; and it is not more suitable to your nature

than it is honourable and glorious. This is the great dignity and excellency you are privileged with, beyond the brute beasts,—to have spirits within you capable of knowing and acknowledging the God of your spirits. Why then do you both rob and spoil God of his glory, and cast away your own excellency? Why do you love to trample on your ornaments and wallow in the puddle; like beasts void of religion, but so much worse than beasts, that you ought to be better, and were created for a more noble design? O base-spirited wretches, who hang down your souls to this earth, and follow the dictates of your own sense and lust, and have not so much as an external form of worshipping God! How far are you comshort of the noble design of your creation, and the high end of your immortal souls! If you will not worship God, know, he will have worshippers. Certainly he will not want it; because he hath designed so many souls to stand before him, and worship him, and that number will not fail. He might indeed have wanted worshippers: for what advantage is it to him? But in this he declares his love and respect to man, that he will not want honour and service from him. It is rather to put honour upon him, and to make him blessed and happy, than for any gain that can amount to himself by it. For this is indeed the true honour and happiness of man, not to be worshipped and served of other fellow-creatures, but to worship and serve the Creator. This is the highest advancement of a soul, to lie low before him, and to obey him, and have our service accepted of his Majesty. I beseech you, strive about this noble service! Since he must have worshippers, O say within your souls, "I must be one! If he had but one, I could not be content if I were not that one." Since the Father is seeking worshippers, (ver. 23,) O let him find thee! Offer thyself to him, saying, Lord, here am I. Should he seek you, who can have no advantage from you? Should he go about so earnest a search for true worshippers, who can have no profit by them? And why do ye not seek him, since to you all the gain and profit redounds? Shall he seek you to make you happy? And why do ye not seek him and happiness in him? It is your own service, I may truly say, and not his so much; for in serving him thou dost rather serve thyself; for all the benefit redounds to thyself, though thou must not intend such an end, to serve him for thyself, but for his name's sake; else thou shalt neither honour him, nor advantage thyself. I pray you let him not seek in vain, for in these afflictions he is seeking worshippers; and if he find you, you are found and saved indeed. Do not

then forsake your own mercy, to run from him who follows you with salvation.

As none can be ignorant that God is, and must be worshipped, so it is unknown to the world in what manner he must be worshipped. The most part of men have some form in worshipping God, and please themselves in it so well that they think God is well pleased with it; but few there are who know indeed what it is to worship him in a manner acceptable to his Majesty. Now you know it is all one not to worship him at all, as not to worship him in that way he likes to be worshipped. Therefore, the most part of men are but self-worshippers, because they please none but themselves in it. It is not the worship his soul hath chosen, but their own invention; for you must take this as an undeniable ground, that God must be worshipped according to his own will and pleasure, and not according to your humour or invention. Therefore, his soul abhors will-worship, devised by men out of ignorant zeal or superstition, though there might seem much devotion in it, and much affection to God. As in the Israelites sacrificing their children, what more seeming self-denial,—and yet what more real self-idolatry? God owns not such a service, for it is not service and obedience to his will and pleasure, but to men's own will and humour. Therefore, a man must not look for a reward but from himself. Now, it is not only will-worship, when the matter and substance of the worship is not commanded of God, but also when a commanded worship is not discharged in the appointed manner. Therefore, O how few true worshippers will the Father find! True worship must, have truth for the substance, and spirit for the manner of it; else it is not such a worship as the Father seeks and will be pleased with. Divine worship must have truth in it,—that is plain,—but what was that truth? It must be conformed to the rule and pattern of worship, which is God's will and pleasure revealed in the word of truth. True worship is the very practice of the word or truth. It carries the image and superscription and command upon it, which is a necessary ingredient in it, and constituent of it. Therefore, if thy service have the image of thy own will stamped on it, it is not divine worship but will-worship. Thus all human ceremonies and ordinances enjoined for the service of God, carry the inscription not of God, but of man, who is the author and original of them, and so are but adulterated and false coin that will not pass current with God. I fear there be many

rites and vain customs among ignorant people, in which they place some religion, which have no ground in the word of God, but are only 'old wives' fables' and traditions. How many things of that nature are used upon a religious account, in which God hath placed no religion! Many have a superstitious conceit of the public place of worship, as if there were more holiness in it than in any other house; and so they think their prayers in the church are more acceptable than in their chamber. But Christ refutes that superstitious opinion of places, and so consequently of days, meats, and all such external things. The Jews had a great opinion of their temple, the Samaritans of their mountain,—as if these places had sanctified their services. But saith our Lord, (ver. 21,) 'The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father,' but it is any where acceptable, if so be ye worship in spirit and truth. Many of you account it religion to pray and mutter words of your own in the time of public prayer; but who hath required this at your hands? If ye would pray yourselves, go apart; shut the door behind thee, saith Christ. Private prayer should be in private and secret; but where public prayer is, your hearts should close with the petitions, and offer them up jointly to God. It is certainly a great sleight of that deceitful destroyer, the devil, to possess your minds with an opinion of religion in such vain babblings, that he may withdraw both your ears and your hearts from the public worship of God; for when every one is busied with his own prayers, you cannot at all join in the public service of God which is offered up in your name. The like I may say of stupid forms of prayer, and tying yourselves to a platform, written in a book, or to some certain words gotten by the heart? Who hath commanded this? Sure, not the Lord, who hath promised his Spirit to teach them to pray, and help their infirmities, who know not how, nor what to pray. It is a device of your own, invented by Satan to quench the spirit of supplication, which should be the very natural breathing of a Christian. But there are some so grossly ignorant of what prayer is, that they make use of the ten commandments, and creed, as a prayer. So void are they of the knowledge and Spirit of God, that they cannot discern betwixt God's commands to themselves and their own requests to God; betwixt his speaking to men, and their speaking to him; between their professing of him before men, and praying and confessing to him. All this is but forged, imaginary worship,—worship falsely so called, which the Father seeks not, and receives not.

But what if I should say, that the most part of your worship, even that which is commanded of God, as prayer, hearing, reading, &c. hath no truth in it, I should say nothing amiss. For though you do those things that are commanded, yet not as commanded, without any respect to divine appointment; and only because you have received them as traditions from your fathers, and because you are taught so by the precepts of men, and are accustomed so to do: therefore the stamp of God's will and pleasure is not engraven on them, but of your own will, or of the will of men. Let me pose [1](#) your consciences, many of you, what difference is there between your praying and your plowing; between your hearing, and your harrowing; between your reading in the Scriptures, and your reaping in the harvest; between your religious service and your common ordinary actions; I say, what difference is there in the rise of these? You do many civil things out of custom, or because of the precepts of men; and is there any other principle at the bottom of your religious performances? Do you at all consider these are divine appointments,—these have a stamp of his authority on them? And from the conscience of such an immediate command of God, and the desire to please him and obey him, do you go about these? I fear many cannot say it. O, I am sure all cannot, though it may be all will say it. Therefore your religious worship can come in no other account than will-worship, or man-worship. It hath not the stamp of truth on it,—an express conformity to the truth of God as his truth.

But we must press this out a little more. Truth is opposed to a ceremony and shadow. The ceremonies of old were shadows, or the external body of religion, in which the soul and spirit of godliness should have been enclosed; but the Lord did always urge more earnestly the substance and truth than the ceremony,—the weightier matters of the law, piety, equity, and sobriety, than these lighter external ceremonies. He sets a higher account upon mercy than sacrifice, and upon obedience than ceremonies. But this people turned it just contrary. They summed up all their religion in some ceremonial performance, and separated those things God had so nearly conjoined. They would be devout men in offering sacrifices, in their washings, in their rites, and yet made no conscience of heart and soul piety towards God, and upright just dealing with men. Therefore the Lord so often quarrels with them, and rejects all their service as being a

device and invention of their own, which never entered into his heart: Isa. 1.10-15; Jer. 7. throughout; Isa. 66.3,4; Isa. 28. Now, if you will examine it impartially, it is even just so with us. There are some external things in religion, which, in comparison with the weightier things of faith and obedience, are but ceremonial. In these you place the most part if not all your religion, and think yourselves good Christians, if you be baptized, and hear the word, and partake of the Lord's table, and such like; though in the meantime you be not given to secret prayer, and reading, and do not inwardly judge and examine yourselves that ye may flee unto a Mediator,—though your conversation be unjust and scandalous among men. I say unto such souls, as the Lord unto the Jews, 'Who hath required this at your hands?' Who commanded you to hear the word, to be baptized, to wait on public ordinances? Away with all this; it is abomination to his majesty! Though it please you never so well, the more it displeases him. If you say, Why commands he us to hear? &c. I say, the Lord never commanded these external ordinances for the sum of true religion; that was not the great thing which was in his heart, that he had most pleasure unto, but the weightier matters of the law, piety, equity, and sobriety, a holy and godly conversation adorning the gospel: 'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' So then, thou dost not worship him in truth, but in a shadow. The truth is holiness and righteousness. That external profession is but a ceremony. While you separate these external ordinances from these weighty duties of piety and justice, they are but as a dead body without a soul. If the Lord required truth of old, much more now, when he hath abolished the multitude of ceremonies, that the great things of his law may be more seen and loved.

If you would then be true worshippers, look to the whole mind of God, and especially the chief pleasure of God's mind, that which he most delights in; and by any means do not separate what God hath conjoined. Do not divide righteousness towards men from a profession of holiness to God, else it is but a falsehood, a counterfeit coin. Do not please yourselves so much in external church-privileges, without a holy and godly conversation adorning the gospel; but let the chief study, endeavour, and delight of your souls be about that which God most delights in. Let the substantials of religion have the first place in the soul. Pray more in

secret; that will be the life of your souls. You ought, indeed, to attend public ordinances; but, above all, take heed to your conversation and walking at home, and in secret. Prayer in your family is a more substantial worship than to sit and hear prayer in public; and prayer in secret is more substantial than that. The more retired and immediate a duty be, the more weighty it is; the more it crosses thy corruptions, and evidences the stamp of God on thy affections, the more divine it is; and therefore to serve God in these is to serve Him in truth. Practice hath more of truth in it than a profession. 'When your fathers executed judgment, was not this to know me?' Duties that have more opposition from our nature, against them, and less fuel or oil to feed the flame of our self-love and corruption, have more truth in them; and if you should worship God in all other duties, and not especially in these, you do not worship him in truth.

Next, let us consider the manner of divine worship; and this is as needful to true worship as true matter; that it be commanded, and done as it is commanded,— that completes true worship. Now, I know no better way or manner to worship God in, than so to worship him, as our worship may carry the stamp of his image upon it, as it may be a glass wherein we may behold God's nature and properties. For such as himself is, such he would be acknowledged to be. I would think it were true worship indeed, which had engraven on it the name of the true and living God, if it did speak out so much of itself: 'That God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him diligently.' Most part of our service speaks an unknown God, and carries such an inscription upon it, 'To the unknown God.' There is so little either reverence, or love, or fear, or knowledge in it, as if we did not worship the true God, but an idol. It is said, that 'the fool says in his heart, there is no God,' because his thoughts and affections and actions are so little composed to the fear and likeness of that God, as if he did indeed plainly deny him. I fear, it may be said thus of our worship: It says, There is no God. It is of such a nature that none could conclude from it that it had any relation to the true God. Our prayers deny God, because there is nothing of God appears in them. But this is true worship, when it renders back to God his own image and name, *Unde repercussus redditur ipse sibi*. As it is a pure fountain, in which a man may see his shadow distinctly, but a troubled fountain or

mire in which he cannot behold himself; so it is pure worship, which receives and reflects the pure image of God, but impure and unclean worship, which cannot receive it and return it. I pray you, Christians, consider this, for it is such worshippers the Father seeks. And why seeks he such, but because in them he finds himself? So to speak, his own image and superscription is upon them; his mercy is engraven on their faith and confidence; his majesty and power is stamped on their humility and reverence; his goodness is to be read in the soul's rejoicing, his greatness and justice in the soul's trembling. Thus there ought to be some engravings on the soul answering the characters of his glorious name. O how little of this is among them that desire to know something of God! How little true worship, even among them whom the Father hath sought out to make true worshippers! But alas, how are all of us unacquainted with this kind of worship! We stay upon the first principles and practices of religion, and go not on to build upon the foundation. Sometimes your worship hath a stamp of God's holiness and justice, in fear and terror at such a majesty, which makes you tremble before him; but where is the stamp of his mercy and grace which should be written in your faith and rejoicing? Tremble and fear indeed, but 'rejoice with trembling,' because there is mercy with him. Sometimes there is rejoicing and quietness in the soul, but that quickly degenerates into carnal confidence, and makes the soul turn grace into wantonness, and esteem of itself above what is right, because it is not counterpoised with the sense and apprehension of his holiness and justice. But O to have these jointly written upon the heart, in worship, fear, reverence, confidence, humility, and faith! That is a rare thing: it is a divine composition and temper of spirit that makes a divine soul. For the most part, our worship savours and smells nothing of God, neither his power, nor his mercy and grace, nor his holiness and justice, nor his majesty and glory: a secure, faint, formal way, void of reverence, of humility, of fervency, and of faith. I beseech you let us consider, as before the Lord, how much pains and time we lose, and please none but ourselves, and profit none at all. Stir up yourselves as in his sight; for it is the keeping of our souls continually as in his sight which will stamp our service with his likeness. The fixed and constant meditation on God and his glorious properties, this will beget the resemblance between our worship and the God whom we worship: and it will imprint his image upon it; and then it should please him, and then it

should profit thee, and then it should edify others.

But more particularly: the worship must have the stamp of God's spiritual nature, and be conformed to it in some measure, else it cannot please him. There must be a conformity between God and souls. This is the great end of the gospel, to repair that image of God which was once upon man, and make him like God again, Now, it is this way that Jesus Christ repairs this image, and brings about the conformity with God, by the soul's worshipping of God suitable to his nature, which, as it grows more and more suitable to God's nature, it is the more and more like God, and happy in that likeness. Now, 'God is a Spirit,' therefore, saith Christ, you 'must worship him in spirit and in truth.' The worship then of saints must be of a spiritual nature, that it may be like the immortal divine Spirit. It is such worshippers the Father seeks. He seeks souls to make them like himself; and this likeness and conformity to God is the very foundation of the soul's happiness, and eternal refreshment. This is a point of great consequence, and I fear not laid to heart. The worship must be like the worshipped. It is a spirit must worship the eternal Spirit. It is not a body that can be the principal and chief agent in the business. What communion can God have with your bodies while your souls are removed far from him, more than with beasts? All society and fellowship must be between those that are like one another. A man can have no comfortable company with beast, or with stones, or with trees. It is men that can converse with men; and a spirit must worship the self-being Spirit. Do not mistake this, as if under the days of the gospel we were not called to an external and bodily worship,—to any service to which our outward man is instrumental. That is one of the deep delusions of this age, into which some men, 'reprobate concerning the faith,' have fallen, that there should be no external ordinances, but that Christians are now called to a worship all spirit, pure spirit, &c. This is one of the spirits, and spiritual doctrines (that call themselves so) which ye must not receive; for it is neither the Spirit of God nor of Christ that teacheth this. Not the Spirit of God the Creator, because he hath made the whole man, body and soul, and so must be worshipped of the whole man. He hath created man in such a capacity as he may offer up external actions, in a reasonable manner, with the inward affections. As the Lord hath created him, so should he serve him—every member, every part in its own capacity,—the

soul to precede, and the body to follow,—the soul to be the chief worshipper, and the body its servant employed in the worship. True worship hath a body and a soul as well as a true man; and as the soul separated is not a complete man, so neither is the soul separated a complete worshipper without the body. The external ordinances of God is the body, the inward soul-affection is the spirit, which being joined together make complete worship. Neither is it the Spirit of Christ which teacheth this, because our Lord Jesus hath taught us to offer up our bodies and spirits both as a reasonable service, Rom. 12.1,2. The sacrifice of the bodily performance offered up by the spiritual affection and renewed mind is a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, and reasonable. That Spirit which dwelt in Christ above measure, did not think it too base to vent itself in the way of external ordinances. He was, indeed, above all, above the law, yet did willingly come under them, to teach us, who have so much need and want, to come under them. He prayed much, he preached, he did sing and read, to teach us how to worship, and how much need we have of prayer and preaching. This was not the spirit Christ promised to his disciples and apostles, which spirit did breathe most lively in the use of external ordinances, all their days; and this is not the spirit which was at that hour in which Christ spoke, 'the hour is come and now is,' ver. 23, in which the true worship of God shall not be in the external Jewish ceremonies and rites, void of all life and inward sense of piety; but the true worship of God shall be made up of a soul and body,—of spirit and truth,—of the external appointed ordinances according to the word of truth, and the spirit of truth,—and of the spirit and inward soul-affection and sincerity, which shall quicken and actuate that external performance. There were no such worshippers then as had no use of ordinances. Christ was not such, his disciples were not such; therefore it is a new gospel, which, if an angel should bring from heaven, ye ought not to receive it.

As it is certain, then, that both soul and body must be employed in this business, so it is sure that the soul and spirit must be the first mover and chiefest agent in it, because it is a spiritual business, and hath relation to the Fountain-spirit, which hath the most perfect opposition to all false appearances and external shows. That part of man that cometh nearest God, must draw nearest in worshipping God; and if that be removed far

away, there is no real communion with God. Man judges according to the outward appearance, and can reach no farther than the outward man; but God is an all-searching Spirit, who trieth the heart and reins, and therefore he will pass another judgment upon your worship than men can do, because he observes all the secret wanderings and escapes of the heart out of his sight. He misses the soul when you present attentive ears or eloquent tongues. There is no dallying with his Majesty; painting will not deceive him, his very nature is contrary to hypocrisy and dissimulation; and what is it but dissimulation, when you present yourselves to religious exercises as his people, but within are nothing like it, nothing awaking, nothing present? O consider, my beloved, what a one you have to do with! It is not men, but the Father of spirits, who will not be pleased with what pleases men, of your own flesh, but must have a spirit to serve him! Alas! what are we doing with such empty names and shows of religion? Busied with the outside of worship only, as if we had none to do with but men who have eyes of flesh. All that we do in this kind is lost labour, and will never be reckoned up in the account of true worship. I am sure you know and may reflect upon yourselves, that you make religion but a matter of outward fashion and external custom: you have never almost taken it to heart in earnest. You may frequent the ordinances,—you may have a form of godliness consisting in some outward performances and privileges,—and O, how void and destitute of all spirit, and life, and power! Not to speak of the removal of affection and the employing of the marrow of your soul upon base lusts and creatures, or the scattering of your desires abroad amongst them, for that is too palpable; even your very thoughts and minds are removed from this business; you have nothing present but an ear, or eye; and your minds are about other business; your desires, your fears, your joys, and delights, your affections, never did run in the channel of religious exercises; all your passion is vented in other things. But here you are blockish and stupid, without any sensible apprehension of God, his mercy, or justice, or wrath, or of your own misery and want. You sorrow in other things, but none here, none for sin! You joy for other things, but none here, you cannot rejoice at the gospel! Prayer is a burden, not a delight. If your spirits were chiefly employed in religious duties, religion would be almost your element, your pleasure and recreation; but now it is wearisome to the flesh, because the spirit taketh not the chief weight upon it. O! 'be not deceived, God is not mocked.' You

do but mock yourselves with external shows, while you are satisfied with them. I beseech you, look inwardly, and be not satisfied with the outward appearance, but ask at thy soul, where it is, and how it is. Retire within, and bring up thy spirit to this work. I am sure you may observe that any thing goes more smoothly and sweetly with you than the worship of God, because your mind is more upon any thing else. I fear the most part of us who endeavour, in some measure, to seek God, have too much dross of outward formality, and much scum of filthy hypocrisy and guile. O! pray that the present furnace may purge away this scum. It is the great ground of God's present controversy with Scotland; but, alas! the bellows are like to burn, and we not to be purged. Our scum goes not out from us. We satisfy ourselves with some outward exercises of religion. Custom undoes us all; and it was never more undoing than when indignation and wrath are pursuing it. O! that you would ponder what you lose by it,—both the sweetness and advantage of godliness, beside the dishonour of God. You take a formal, negligent, and secure way, as the most easy way, and the most pleasing to your flesh; and I am persuaded you find it the most difficult way, because you want all the pleasant and sweet refreshment and soul-delights you might have in God, by a serious and diligent minding of religion. The pleasure and sweetness of God tasted and found, will make diligence and pains more easy than slothfulness can be to the slothful. This oils the wheels, and makes them run swiftly; formality makes them drive heavily. Thus you live always in a complaining humour, —sighing, and going backward,—because you have some stirring principle of conscience within which bears witness against you; and your formal sluggish disposition on the other hand refuses to awake and work. You are perplexed and tormented between these two. When thy spirit and affections go one way, and thy body another; when thy conscience drives on the spirit, and thy affections draw back, it must needs be an unpleasant business.

---

## LECTURE XII.

### THE UNITY OF THE DIVINE ESSENCE, AND THE TRINITY OF PERSONS.

DEUT . 6.4. "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.*

1 JOHN 5.7. "*There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.*

"'GREAT is the mystery of godliness,' 1 Tim. 3.16. Religion and true godliness is a bundle of excellent mysteries,—of things hid from the world, yea, from the wise men of the world, (1 Cor. 2.6.) and not only so, but secrets in their own nature, the distinct knowledge whereof is not given to saints in this estate of distance and absence from the Lord. There is almost nothing in divinity, but it is a mystery in itself, how common soever it be in the apprehensions of men. For it is men's overly, [That is, careless—E D .] and common and slender apprehensions of them, which make them look so commonly upon them. There is a depth in them, but you will not know it, till you search it, and sound it; and the more you sound, you shall find it the more profound. But there are some mysteries small and some great. There is a difference amongst them; all are not of one stature, of one measure. The mystery of Christ's incarnation and death and resurrection, is one of the great mysteries of religion, 'God manifest in the flesh.' Yet I conceive there is a greater mystery than it, and of all mysteries in nature or divinity I know none equal to this,—the Holy Trinity. And it must needs be greatest of all, and without controversy greatest, because it is the beginning and end of all,—*fons et finis omnium*. All mysteries have their rise here, and all of them return hither. This is furthest removed from the understandings of men,—what God himself is; for himself is infinitely above any manifestation of himself. God is greater than God manifested in the flesh, though in that respect he be too great for us to conceive. There is a natural desire in all men to know; and, if any thing be secret and wonderful, the desire is the more inflamed after the knowledge of it. The very difficulty or impossibility of attaining it, instead of restraining the curiosity of man's spirit, doth rather incense it. *Nititur in vetitum* is the fruit, the sad fruit

we plucked and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If the Lord reveal any thing plainly in his word to men, that is despised and set at nought, because it is plain: whereas the most plain truths, which are beyond all controversy, are the most necessary, and most profitable for our eternal salvation. But if there be any secret mystery in the Scriptures, which the Lord hath only pointed out more obscurely to us, reserving the distinct and clear understanding of it to himself, (Deut. 29.29,)—that is the apple which our accursed natures will long for, and catch after, though there be never so much choice of excellent saving fruit in the paradise of the Scriptures besides. If the ark be covered to keep men from looking into it, that doth rather provoke the curious spirit of man to pry into it, 1 Sam. 6.19. If the Lord show his wonderful glory in the mount, and charge his people not to come near, lest the glorious presence of God kill them, he must put rails about it, to keep them back, or else they will be meddling. Such is the unbridled license of our minds, and the perverse dispositions of our natures, that where God familiarly invites us to come, —what he earnestly presseth us to search and know,—that we despise as trivial and common; and what he compasseth about with a divine darkness of inaccessible light, and hath removed far from the apprehensions of all living, that we will needs search into, and wander into those forbidden compasses, with daring boldness. I conceive this holy and profound mystery is one of those 'secret things' which it belongs to God to know; for who knoweth the Father but the Son, or the Son but the Father, or who knoweth the mind of God but the Spirit? Yet the foolish minds of men will not be satisfied with the believing ignorance of such a mystery, but will needs inquire into those depths, that they may find satisfaction for their reason. But, as it happeneth with men who will boldly stare upon the sun, their eyes are dazzled and darkened with its brightness; or those that enter into a labyrinth, which they can find no way to come out, but the further they go into it, the more perplexed it is, and the more intricate; even so it befalls many unsober and presumptuous spirits, who, not being satisfied with the simple truth of God, clearly asserting that this is, endeavour to examine it according to reason, and to solve all the objections of carnal wit and reason, (which is often 'enmity against God,') not by the silence of the Scriptures, but by answers framed according to the several capacities of men. I say, all this is but daring to behold the infinite glory of God with eyes of flesh, which

makes them darkened in mind, and vanishing in their expressions, while they seek to behold this inaccessible light, while they enter into an endless labyrinth of difficulties out of which the thread of reason and disputation can never extricate them or lead them forth. But the Lord hath showed us 'a more excellent way,' though it may be despicable to men. Man did fall from blessedness by his curious and wretched aim at some higher happiness and more wisdom: the Lord hath chosen another way to raise him up again, by faith rather than knowledge; by believing rather than disputing. Therefore the great command of the gospel is this, to receive with a ready and willing mind whatsoever the Lord saith to us, whatsoever it may appear to sense and reason; to dispute no more, to search no more into the secret of divine mysteries, as if by searching we could find them out 'unto perfection;' but to believe what is spoken, 'till the day break, and the shadows flee away,' and the darkness of ignorance be wholly dispelled by the rising of the Sun of righteousness. We are called then to receive this truth,—That God is one, truly one, and yet there are three in this one, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This, I say, you must believe, because the wisdom of God saith it, though you know not how it is, or how it can be. Though it seem a contradiction in reason, a trinity in unity, yet you must lead your reason captive to the obedience of faith, and silence it with this one answer, The Lord hath said it. If thou go on to dispute, and to inquire, 'How can these things be?' thou art escaped from under the power of faith, and art fled into the tents of human wisdom, where thou mayest learn atheism, but no religion; for 'the world by wisdom knew not God,' 1 Cor. 1.21. And certainly, whoever he be that will not quiet his conscience, upon the bare word of truth in this particular, but will call in the help of reason and disputation, how to understand and maintain it, I think he shall be further from the true knowledge of God and satisfaction of mind than before. There is no way here, but to flee into Paul's sanctuary, 'Who art thou, O man, that disputest?' Whenever thou thinkest within thyself: How may this be, how can one be three, and three one? then withal let this of Paul sound in thine ears, 'Who art thou, O man, who disputest?' Think that *thou* art man, think that *he* is God! Believing ignorance is much better than rash and presumptuous knowledge. Ask not a reason of these things, but rather adore and tremble at the mystery and majesty of them. Christianity is 'foolishness' to the world upon this account, because it is

an implicit faith so to speak, given to God. But there is no fear of being deceived,—though he lead the blind by a way thou knowest not, yet he cannot lead thee wrong. This holy simplicity in believing every word of God, and trusting without more trying by disputation, is the very character of Christianity, and it will be found only true wisdom. For if any will become wise, he must be a fool in men's account. That he may be wise, he must quit his reason to learn true religion, which indeed is a more excellent and divine reason; neither is it contrary to it, though it be high above it.

In this place of Moses, you have the unity of God asserted, 'The Lord thy God is one Lord;' and it is indeed engraven on the very hearts of men by nature, that God is one. For all may know that the common notion and apprehension of God is, that he is a most perfect Being,—the original of all things,—most wise, most powerful, and infinite in all perfections. Now common reason may tell any man that there can be but one thing most perfect and excellent; there can be but one infinite one almighty,—one beginning and end of all,—one first mover, one first cause, 'of whom are all things,' and who is of none.

Again, in this place of John, ye have a testimony of the blessed trinity of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in that holy unity of essence. The great point which John hath in hand is this fundamental of our salvation, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, in whom all our confidence should be placed, and upon whom we should lean the weight of our souls. And this he proves by a twofold testimony,—one out of heaven, another in the earth. There are three bearing witness to this truth in heaven, 'the Father, the Word, (that is, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, whom this apostle calls the Word of God, or Wisdom of God, John 1.1.) and the Holy Ghost.' The Father witnessed to this truth in an audible voice out of heaven, when Christ was baptized, (Mat. 3.17.) 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.' Here is the Father's testimony of the Son when he was baptized, which was given very solemnly in a great congregation of people, and divinely, with great glory and majesty from heaven; as if the heavens had opened upon him, and the inaccessible light of God had shined down on him. This was confirmed in the transfiguration, (Mat. 17.5.) where the Lord gave a

glorious evidence—to time astonishment of the three disciples—how he did account of him,—how all saints and angels must serve him; 'him hath God the Father sealed,' saith John. Indeed, the stamp of divinity, of the divine image, in such an excellent manner upon the man Christ, was a seal set on by God the Father, signifying and confirming his approbation of his well-beloved Son, and of the work he was going about. Then the Son himself did give ample testimony of this. This was the subject of his preaching to the world, 'I am the light and the life of men; he that believeth on me shall be saved.' And therefore he may be called the Word of God, (John 1.1.) and the Wisdom of God, (Prov. 8.) because he hath revealed unto us the blessed mystery of wisdom concerning our salvation. He is the very expression and character of the Father's person and glory, (Heb. 1.3.) in his own person; and he hath revealed and expressed his Father's mind, and his own office, so fully to the world, that there should be no more doubt of it. Out of the mouth of these two witnesses this word might be established; but, for superabundance, behold a third, the Holy Ghost witnessing at his baptism,—in his resurrection,—after his ascension. The Holy Ghost signifieth his presence and consent to that work, in the similitude of a dove; the Holy Ghost testifieth it in the power that raised him from the dead; the Holy Ghost put it beyond all question when he descended upon the apostles according to Christ's promise. For the other three witnesses on earth, we shall not stay upon it; only know, that the work of the regeneration of souls by the power of the Word and Spirit signified by water, the justification of guilty souls signified by the blood of Jesus Christ, and the testimony of the Spirit in our consciences, bearing witness to our spirits, is an assured testimony of this, that Jesus Christ, in whom we believe, is 'the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' The changing, pacifying, and comforting of souls in such a wonderful manner, cries aloud that he in whom the soul believes is the true and living God, whom to know is eternal life. But mark, I pray you, the accuracy of the apostle in the change of speech. 'These three' witnesses on earth, saith he, 'agree in one,' in giving one common testimony to the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. But as for the heavenly witnesses,—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost,—however they be three after an inconceivable manner, and that they do also agree in one common testimony to the Mediator of men, yet moreover they are One. They not only agree in one, but are one God,—

one simple, undivided, self-being, infinite Spirit,—holden out to us in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom be praise and glory.

---

### **LECTURE XIII.**

#### **OF THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD AND THE TRINITY OF PERSONS.**

DEUT. 6.4. "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.*"

1 JOHN 5.7. "*There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.*"

'ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,' 2 Tim. 3.16. There is no refuse in it; no simple and plain history, but it tends to some edification; no profound or deep mystery, but it is profitable for salvation. Whatsoever secrets there be in the mysteries of God, which are reserved from us, though it be given us but to 'know in part,' and 'darkly' through a vail, yet as much is given to us to know as may make the man of God perfect in every good work. As much is given us to know as may build us up to eternal salvation. If there were no more use of these deep mysteries of the holy Trinity, &c. but to silence all flesh, and restrain the unlimited spirits of men, and keep them within the bounds of sobriety and faith, it were enough. That great secret would teach as much by its silence and darkness, as the plainer truths do by speaking out, clearly. O that this great mystery did compose our hearts to some reverend and awful apprehension of that God we have to do with; and did imprint in our soul a more feeling sense of our darkness and ignorance. This were more advantage then all the gain of light, or increase of knowledge that can come from the search of curiosity. If men would labour to walk in that light they have attained, rather than curiously inquire after what they cannot know by inquiry, they should sooner attain more true light. If men would set about the practice of what they know, without doubt they would more readily come to a resolution and clearness in doubtful things. Religion is now turned into questions and school-debates. Men begin to believe nothing, but dispute everything, under a pretence of searching for light and resolution. But for

the most part, while men look after light, they darken themselves; and this is the righteous judgment of the Lord upon the world that doth not receive the truth in love, or walk in the light of what they have already attained; therefore he gives men up to wander in their search into the dark dungeons of human wisdom and fancy, and to lose what they have already. If those things which are 'without controversy' (as the apostle speaks, 1 Tim. 3.16.) were indeed made conscience of, and embraced in love, and practised, it were beyond all controversy that the most part of present controversies would cease. But it falls out with many, as with the dog, that, catching at a shadow in the water, lost the substance in his teeth; so they, pursuing after new discoveries in controverted things, and not taking a heart-hold and inward grip of the substantial truths of the gospel, which are beyond all controversy, do even lose what they have. Thus, even that which they have not is taken from them, because though they have it in judgment, yet they have it not surely and solidly in affection, that it may be holden. So, to this present point if we could learn to adore and admire this holy, holy, holy One,—if we could in silence and faith sit down and wonder at this mystery,—it would be more profitable to us, and make way for a clearer manifestation of God, than if we should search and inquire into all the volumes that are written upon it, thinking by this means to satisfy our reason. I think there is more profoundness in the sobriety of faith than in the depths of human wisdom and learning. When the mystery is such an infinite depth, O but men's eloquence and wisdom must be shallow, far too shallow either to find it out, or unfold it!

But there is yet both more instruction and consolation to be pressed out of this mystery; and, therefore, if you cannot reach it, in itself, O consider what it concerns us, how we may be edified by it, for this is true religion! Look upon that place of Moses,—what is the great instruction he draws from this unity of God's essence? ver. 5. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' Since God is one, then have no God but one, and that the true and living God; and this is the very first command of God, which flows as it were immediately from his absolute oneness and perfection of being. There is no man but he must have some God, that is, something whereupon he placeth his affection most. Every man hath some one thing he loves and respects beyond all other things, some lord and master that commands him. Therefore, saith Christ, 'no man can serve two masters.'

Before a man will want a god to love and serve, he will make them, and then worship them. Yea, he will make himself, his belly, his back, his honour, and pleasure, a god; and sacrifice all his affections and desires and endeavours to these. The natural subordination of man to God, the relation he hath as a creature to a Creator, is the first and fundamental relation beyond all respects to himself or other fellow-creatures. This is the proto-natural [That is, most natural.—E D .] obligation upon the creature; therefore it should have returned in a direct line to his majesty all its affections and endeavours. But man's fall from God hath made a wretched thraw [That is, a twist or undue bend.—E D .] and crook in the soul, that it cannot look any more after him, but bows downwards towards creatures below it, or bends inwardly towards itself; and so since the fall man hath turned his heart from the true God, and set it upon vanity,—upon lying vanities,—upon base dead idols which can neither help him nor hurt him. Your hearts are gone a-whoring from God, O that ye would believe it! None of you will deny but ye have broken all the commands. Yet such is the brutish ignorance and stupidity of the most part, that you will not confess that when it comes to particulars; and especially, if you should be challenged for loving other things more than God, or having other gods besides the true God, you will instantly deny it, and that with an asseveration and aversation,—"God forbid that I have another God!" Alas! this shows, that what you confess in the general is not believed in the heart, but only is like the prating of children, whom you may learn [That is, teach.—JTK] to say any thing. I beseech you consider, that what you give your time, pains, thoughts, and affections to, that is your God. You must give God all your heart, and so retain nothing of your own will if God be your God. But do ye not know that your care and grief and desire and love vents another way, towards base things? You know, that you have a will of your own which goeth quite contrary to his holy will in all things: therefore Satan hath bewitched you, and your hearts deceive you, when they persuade you that you have had no other God but the true God. Christianity raises the soul again, and advances it by degrees to this love of God, from which it had fallen. The soul returns to its first husband, from whom it went a-whoring, and now the stamp of God is so upon it, that it is changed into his image and glory. Having tasted how good this one self-sufficient good is, it gladly and easily divorces from all other lovers. It renounces former lusts of ignorance, and

now begins to live in another. Love transplants the soul into God, and in him it lives, and with him it walks. It is true, this is done gradually, there is much of the heart yet unbroken to this sweet and easy yoke of love, much of the corrupt nature untamed, unreclaimed; yet so much is gained by the first conversion of the soul to God, that all is given up to him in affection and desire. He hath the chief place in the soul. The disposition of the spirit hath some stamp and impression of his oneness and singularity. My beloved is one. Though a Christian is not wholly rid of strange lords, yet the tie of subjection to them is broken. They may often intrude by violence upon him, but he is in a hostile posture of affection and endeavour against them. I beseech you, since the Lord is one, and there is none beside him, O let this be engraven on your hearts, that your inward affections and outward actions may express that one Lord to be your God, and none other beside him! It is a great shame and reproach to Christians, that they do not carry the stamp of the first principle of religion upon their walking. The condition and conversation of many declare how little account they make of the true God. Why do ye enslave your souls to your lusts, and the service of the flesh, if ye believe in this one God? Why do ye all things to please yourselves, if this one Lord be your one God? As for you, the Israel of God, who are called by Jesus Christ to partake with the commonwealth of Israel in the covenant of promises, hear, I beseech you, this, and let your souls incline to it, and receive it: Your God is one Lord; have, then, no other lords over your souls and consciences; not yourselves, not others.

But in the next place, Let us consider to what purpose John leads such three witnesses, that we may draw some consolation from it. The thing testified and witnessed unto is the ground-work of all a Christian's hope and consolation, that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, and Saviour of the world,—one, able to save to the uttermost all that put their trust in him; so that every soul that finds itself lost, and not able to subsist, nor abide the judgment of God, may repose their confidence in him, and lay the weight of their eternal welfare upon his death and sufferings, with assurance to find rest and peace in him to their souls. He is such an one as faith may triumph in him over the world, and all things beside. A believer may triumph in his victory, and in the faith of his victory, over hell and death and the grave; may overcome personally, 'For this is the

victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,' ver. 4. And how could a soul conquer by faith, if he in whom it believes were not 'declared to be the Son of God with power?' There is nothing so mean and weakly as faith in itself. It is a poor despicable thing of itself, and that it sees, and that it acknowledges. Yea, faith is a very act of its self-denial. It is a renouncing of all help without and within itself, save only that which is laid on Christ Jesus. Therefore it were the most unsuitable mean of prevailing, and the most insufficient weapon for gaining the victory, if the object of it were not the strong God, the Lord Almighty, from whom it derives and borrows all its power, and virtue, either to pacify the conscience, or to expiate sin, or to overcome the world. O consider, Christians, where the foundation of your hope is situated! It is in the divine power of our Saviour. If he who declared so much love and good-will to sinners, by becoming so low, and suffering so much, have also all power in heaven and earth; if he be not only man near us, to make for us boldness of access, but God near God to prevail effectually with God, then certainly he is 'a sure foundation' laid in Zion, 'elect and precious.' He is an immovable Rock of Ages; whosoever trusts their soul to him shall not be ashamed. I am sure that many of you consider not this, that Jesus Christ, who was in due time born of the virgin Mary, and died for sinners, is the eternal Son of Gods equal to his Father in all glory and power. O how would this make the gospel a great mystery to souls, and the redemption of souls a precious and wonderful work, if it were considered! Would not souls stand at this anchor immovable in temptation, if their faith were pitched on this sure foundation, and their hope cast upon this solid ground! O know your Redeemer is strong and mighty, and none can pluck you out of his hand, and himself will cast none out that comes! If the multitude of you believed this, you would not make so little account of the gospel that comes to you, and make so little of your sins which behoved to be taken away by the blood of God, and could be expiated by no other propitiation; you would not think it so easy to satisfy God with some words of custom, and some public services of form, as you do; you would not for all the world deal with God alone without this Mediator. And being convinced of sin, if you believe this solidly, that he in whom forgiveness of sin and salvation is preached is the same Lord God whom you hear in the Old Testament, who gave out the law, and inspired the prophets,—the Only Begotten of the Father, in a way infinitely removed

from all created capacities,—you could not but find the Father well-satisfied in him, and find a sufficient ransom in his death and doings to pacify God, and to settle your consciences.

But as the thing testified is a matter of great consolation, so the witnesses testifying to this fundamental of our religion may be a ground of great encouragement to discouraged souls. It is ordinary, that the apprehensions of Christians take up Jesus Christ as very lovely, and more loving than any of the persons of the Godhead, either the Father or the Holy Ghost. There are some thoughts of estrangedness and distance of the Father, as if the Son did really reconcile and gain him to love us, who before hated us; and upon this mistake, the soul is filled with continual jealousies and suspicions of the love of God. But observe, I beseech you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, all of them first agreeing in one testimony. The Father declares from heaven that he is abundantly well-pleased with his Son, not only because he is his Son, but even in the undertaking and performing of that work of redemption of sinners. It is therefore his most serious invitation and peremptory command to all to hear him, and believe in him, Mat. 3.17; 1 John 3.23. Nay, if we speak more properly, our salvation is not the business of Christ alone, as we imagine it, but the whole Godhead is interested in it deeply, and so deeply, that you cannot say who loves it most or likes it most. The Father is the very fountain of it, his love is the spring of all—'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' Christ hath not purchased that eternal love to us, but is rather the gift, the free gift of eternal love. And therefore, as we have the Son delighting among the sons of men, Prov. 8.31; and delighting to be employed and to do his will, Psalm 40.8; so we have the Father delighting to send his Son, and taking pleasure in instructing him and furnishing him for it, Isa. 42.1. And therefore Christ often professed that he was not about his own work, but the Father's work who sent him; and that it was not his own will, but his Father's, he was fulfilling. Therefore we should not look upon the head-spring of our salvation in the Son, but rather ascend up to the Father, whose love and wisdom did frame all this. And thus we may be confident to come to the Father in the Son, knowing that it was the love of the Father that sent the Son, though indeed we must come to him only in the Son, in the name of Christ, and faith of acceptation through a Mediator; not because the

Mediator purchaseth his good-will, but because his love and good-will only vents in his beloved Son Christ; and therefore he will not be known or worshipped but in him, in whom he is near sinners, and reconciling the world to himself. And then the Holy Ghost concurs in this testimony; and as the Son had the work of purchasing rights and interests to grace and glory, so the great work of applying all these privileges to saints, and making them actually partakers of the blessings of Christ's death, is committed in a special way to the Holy Ghost, 'I will send the Comforter,' &c. So then Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all agree in one, that Jesus Christ is a sure refuge for sinners,—a plank for ship-broken men,—a firm and sure foundation to build everlasting hopes upon. There is no party dissenting in all the gospel. The business of the salvation of lost souls is concluded in this holy council of the Trinity with one voice. As at first, all of them agreed to make man,—'let us make man:' so again, they agree to make him again, to restore him to life in the second Adam. Whoever thou be that wouldst flee to God for mercy, do it in confidence. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are ready to welcome thee,—all of one mind to shut out none, to cast out none. But to speak properly, it is but one love, one will, one counsel, and purpose in the Father, Son, and Spirit, for 'these Three are One;' and not only agree in One, they are One; and what one loves or purposes, all love and purpose. I would conclude this matter with a word of direction how to worship God, which I cannot express in fitter terms than these of Nazianzen: "I cannot think upon one, but by and by I am compassed about with the brightness of three; and I cannot distinguish three, but I am suddenly driven back unto one." There is great ignorance and mistake of this even among the best Christians. The grosser sort, when they hear of one God only, think Christ but some eminent man, and so direct their prayers to God only, excluding the Son and Holy Ghost; or when they hear of three persons,—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—they straightway divide their worship, and imagine a trinity of gods. And I fear, those of us who know most, use not to worship God as he hath revealed himself,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and yet one God. Our minds are reduced to such a simple unity as we think upon one of them alone; or else distracted and divided into such a plurality, that we worship in a manner three gods instead of one. It is a great mystery to keep the right middle way. Learn, I beseech you, so to conceive of God, and so to acknowledge him, and pray to him, as you may

do it in the name of Jesus Christ, that all the persons may have equal honour, and all of them one honour; that while you consider one God, you may adore that sacred and blessed Trinity, and while you worship that Holy Trinity, you may straightway be reduced to an unity. To this wonderful and holy One, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all praise and glory.

---

#### **LECTURE XIV.**

##### **OF THE DECREES OF GOD.**

EPH. 1.1. "*Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*"

JOB 23.13. "*He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.*"

Having spoken something before of God, in his nature and being and properties, we come, in the next place, to consider his glorious majesty, as he stands in some nearer relation to his creatures, the work of his hands. For we must conceive the first rise of all things in the world to be in this self-being; the first conception of them to be in the womb of God's everlasting purpose and decree; which, in due time, according to his appointment, brings forth the child of the creature to the light of actual existence and being. It is certain that his majesty might have endured for ever, and possessed himself without any of these things. If he had never resolved to create any thing without himself, he had been blessed then, as now, because of his full and absolute self-sufficient perfection. His purposing to make a world, and his doing of it, adds nothing to his inward blessedness and contentment. This glorious and holy One encloses within his own being all imaginable perfections, in an infinite and transcendent manner; that if you remove all created ones, you diminish nothing; if you add them all, you increase nothing. Therefore it was in the superabundance of his perfection, that he resolved to show his glory thus in the world. It is the creature's indigence and limited condition which maketh it needful to go without its own compass, for the happiness of its own being. Man cannot be happy in loving himself. He is not satisfied with his own intrinsic perfections, but he must diffuse himself by his affections and desires and endeavours, and, as it were,

walks abroad upon these legs, to fetch in some supply from the creature or Creator. The creature is constrained out of some necessity thus to go out of itself, which speaks much indigence and want within itself. But it is not so with his majesty. His own glorious Being contents him; his happiness is to know that, and delight in it, because it comprehends in itself all that is at all possible, in the most excellent and perfect manner that is conceivable, - nay, infinitely beyond what can be conceived by any but himself. So he needs not go without himself to seek love or delight, for it is all within him, and it cannot be without his own Being, unless it flow from within him. Therefore ye may find in Scripture what complacency God hath in himself, and the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Father. We find, Prov. viii., how the wisdom of God, our Lord Jesus, was the Father's delight from all eternity, and the Father again his delight; for he rejoiced always before him, ver. 30. And this was an all-sufficient possession that one had of another, ver. 22. The love between the Father and the Son is holden out as the first pattern of all loves and delights, John xvii. 23, 24. This then flows from the infinite excess of perfection and exundation of self-being, that his majesty is pleased to come without himself, to manifest his own glory in the works of his hands, to decree and appoint other things beside himself, and to execute that decree. We may consider in these words some particulars for our edification:

I. That the Lord hath from eternity purposed within himself and decreed to manifest his own glory in the making and ruling of the world; that there is a counsel and purpose of his will which reaches all things, which have been, are now, or are to be after this. This is clear, for he works all things "according to the counsel of his own will."

II. That his mind and purpose is one mind, one counsel. I mean not only one for ever, that is, perpetual and unchangeable, as the words speak, - but also one for all, that is, with one simple act or resolution of his holy will he hath determined all these several things, all their times, their conditions, their circumstances.

III. That whatsoever he hath from all eternity purposed, he in time practiseth it, and comes to execution and working; so that there is an exact correspondence betwixt his will and his work, his mind and his

hand. He works according to the counsel of his will, and whatsoever his soul desireth that he doeth.

IV. That his purpose and performance is infallible, - irresistible by any created power. Himself will not change it, for 'he is in one mind;' and none else can hinder it, for 'who can turn him?' He desireth and he doeth it, as in the original. There is nothing intervenes between the desire and the doing, that can hinder the meeting of these two.

The first is the constant doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, of which ye should consider four things: 1st, That his purpose and decree is most wise. Therefore Paul cries out upon such a subject, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' Rom. xi. 33. His will is always one with wisdom; therefore you have the purpose of his will mentioned thus, 'the counsel of his will;' for his will, as it were, takes counsel and advice of wisdom, and discerns according to the depth and riches of his knowledge and understanding. We see among men these are separated often, and there is nothing in the world so disorderly, so unruly and uncomely, as when will is divided from wisdom. When men follow their own will and lusts as a law, against their conscience, that is monstrous. The understanding and reason are the eyes of the will; if these be put out, or if a man leave them behind him, he cannot but fall into a pit. But the purposes of God's will are depths of wisdom, nay, his very will is a sufficient rule and law; so that it may be well used of him, *Stat pro ratione voluntas*, Rom ix. 11-18. If we consider the glorious fabric of the world, - the order established in it, - the sweet harmony it keepeth in all its motions and successions, - O it must be a wise mind and counsel that contrived it! Man now having the idea of this world in his mind, might fancy and imagine many other worlds bearing some proportion and resemblance to this. But if he had never seen nor known this world, he could never have imagined the thousandth part of this world; he could in nowise have formed an image in his mind of all those different kinds of creatures. Creatures must have some example and copy to look to; but what was his pattern? 'Who hath been his counselor' to teach him? Rom. xi. 34.. Who gave him the first rudiments or principles of that art? Surely none. He had no pattern given him, - not the least idea of any of these things furnished him, - but it is absolutely and solely his

own wise contrivance. - 2d, This purpose of God is most free and absolute; there is no cause, no reason, why he hath thus disposed all things, and not otherwise, as he might have done, but his own good will and pleasure. If it be so in a matter of deepest concernment, (Rom ix. 18.) it must be so also in all other things. We may find, indeed, many inferior causes, - many peculiar reasons for such and such a way of administration, - many ends and uses for which they serve, - for there is nothing that his majesty hath appointed but it is for some use and reason, - yet we must rise above all these, and ascend into the tower of his most high will and pleasure, which is founded on a depth of wisdom; and from thence we shall behold all the order, administration, and use of the creatures to depend. And herein is a great difference between his majesty's purpose and ours. You know there is still something presented under the notion of good and convenient, that moves our will, and inclines us for its own goodness to seek after it, and so to fall upon the means to compass it. Therefore, the end which we propose to ourselves hath its influence upon our purposes, and pleasures them; so that from it the motion seems to proceed first, and not so much from within; but there is no created thing can thus determine his majesty. Himself, his own glory, is the great end which he loves for itself, and for which he loves other things. But among other things, though there be many of them ordained one for another's use, yet his will and pleasure is the original of that order. He doth not find it, but makes it. You see all the creatures below are appointed for man, as their immediate and next end, for his use and service. But was it man's goodness and perfection which did move and incline his majesty to this appointment? No, indeed! but of his own good will he makes such things serve man, that all of them together may be for his own glory. - 3d, The Lord's decree is the first rise of all things that are, or have been, or are to come. This is the first original of them all, to which they must be reduced as their spring and fountain. All of you may understand that there are many things possible, which yet actually will never be. The Lord's power and omnipotency is of a further extent than his decree and purpose. His power is natural and essential to his being; his decree is of choice, and voluntary. The Father could have sent a legion of angels to have delivered his Son; the Son could have asked them, but neither of them would do it, Matt. xxvi. 53. The Lord could have raised up children to Abraham out of stones, but he

would not, Matt. iii. 9. His power then comprehends within its reach all possible things which do not in their own nature and proper conception imply a contradiction; so that infinite worlds of creatures more perfect than this, - numbers of angels and men above these, - and creatures in glory surpassing them again, - are within the compass of the boundless power and omnipotency of God. But yet for all this it might have fallen out that nothing should actually and really have been, unless his majesty had of his own free will decreed what is, or hath been, or is to be. His will determines his power, and, as it were, puts it in the nearest capacity to act and exercise itself. Here, then, we must look for the first beginning of all things that are. They are conceived in the womb of the Lord's everlasting purpose, as he speaks, Zeph. ii. 2. The decree is, as it were, with child of beings, Isa. xlv. 7. It is God's royal prerogative to appoint things to come, and none can share with him in it. From whence is it, I pray you, that of so many worlds which his power could have framed, this one is brought to light? Is it not because this one was formed, as it were, in the belly of his eternal counsel and will? From whence is it that so many men are, and no more - that our Lord Jesus was slain, when the power of God might have kept him alive, - that those men, Judas, &c. were the doers of it, when others might have done it? From whence are all those actions, good or evil, under the sun, which he might have prevented, but from his good will and pleasure, from his determinate counsel? Acts iv. 28. Can you find the original of these in the creature, why it is thus, and why not otherwise? Can you conceive why, of all the infinite numbers of possible beings these are, and no other? And, what hath translated that number of creatures, which is, from the state of pure possibility to futurity or actual being, but the decisive vote of God's everlasting purpose and counsel? Therefore we should always conceive, that the creatures, and all their actions, which have, or will have any being in the world, have first had a being in the womb of God's eternal counsel, and that his will and pleasure hath passed upon all things that are and are not. His counsel has concluded of things that have been, or will be, that thus they shall be; and his counsel determined of all other things which are also possible, that they shall never come forth into the light of the world, but remain in the dark bowels of omnipotency, that so we may give him the glory of all things that are not, and that are at all. - Then, 4th. We should consider the extent of his decree and counsel; it is passed upon all things; it is

universal, reaching every being or action of the universe. This is the strain of the whole Scripture. He did not, as some dream, once create the creatures in a good state, and put them in capacity henceforth to preserve them selves, or exercise their own virtue and power, without dependence on Him, as an artificer makes an horologe, and orders it in all things, that it may do its business without him. He is not only a general original of action and motion, as if he would command a river to flow by his appointed channels; as if he did only work, and rule the world by attorneys and ambassadors. That is the weakness and infirmity of earthly kings, that they must substitute deputies for themselves. But this King appoints all immediately, and disposes upon all the particular actions of his creatures, good or evil; and so he is universal absolute Lord of the creature, of its being and doing. It were a long work to rehearse what the Scripture speaks of this kind; but O! that ye would read them oftener, and ponder them better, how there is nothing in this world, - which may seem to fall out by chance to you, that you know not how it is to come to pass, and can see no cause nor reason of it, - but it falls out by the holy will of our blessed Father. Be it of greater or less moment, - or be it a hair of thy head fallen, or thy head cut off, - the most casual and contingent thing, - though it surprised the whole world of men and angels, that they should wonder from whence it did proceed, - it is no surprisal to him, for he not only knew it, but appointed it. The most certain and necessary thing, according to the course of nature, it hath no certainty but from his appointment, who hath established such a course in the creatures, and which he can suspend when he pleaseth. Be it the sin of men and devils, which seems most opposite to his holiness, yet even that cannot appear in the world of beings, if it were not, in a holy, righteous, and permissive way, first conceived in the womb of his eternal counsel, and if it were not determined by him, for holy and just ends, Acts iv. 28.

The second thing propounded is, that his mind and counsel is one; one and the same, 'yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Therefore the apostle speaks of God, that there is no shadow of change or turning in him, James i. 17. He is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it?' Numb. xxiii. 19. And shall he decree, and not execute it? Shall he purpose, and not perform it? 'I am the Lord, I change not;' that is his name, Mal. iii. 6. 'The

counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations,' Psal. xxxiii. 1]. Men change their mind oftener than their garments. Poor vain man, even in his best estate, is changeableness, and vicissitude itself, altogether vanity! And this ariseth, partly from the imperfection of his understanding, and his ignorance, because he does not understand what may fall out. There are many things secret and hidden, which if he discovered, he would not be of that judgment; and many things may fall out which may give ground of another resolution: and partly from the weakness and perverseness of his will, that cannot be constant in any good thing, and is not so closely united to it, as that no fear or terror can separate from it. But there is no such imperfection in him, neither ignorance nor weakness. 'All things are naked' before him; all their natures, their circumstances, all events, all emergencies, known to him are they, and 'all his works from the beginning,' as perfectly as in the end. And therefore he may come to a fixed resolution from all eternity; and being resolved, he can see no reason of change, because there can nothing appear after, which he did not perfectly discover from the beginning. Therefore, whenever ye read in the Scripture of the Lord's repenting - as Gen. vi. 7. Jer. xviii. 8. - ye should remember that the Lord speaks in our terms, and, like nurses with their children, uses our own dialect, to point out to us our great ignorance of his majesty, that cannot conceive more honourably of him, nor more distinctly of ourselves. When he changeth all things about him, he is not changed, for all these changes were at once in his mind; but when he changeth his outward dispensations, he is said to repent of what he is doing, because we use not to change our manner of dealing, without some conceived grief, or repentance and change of mind. When a man goes to build a house, he hath no mind but that it should continue so. He hath not the least thought of taking it down again; but afterwards it becomes ruinous, and his estate enlarges, and then he takes a new resolution, to cast it down to the ground and build a better. Thus it is with man; according as he varies his work, he changes his mind. But it is not so with God. All these changes of his works, - all the successions of times, the variation of dealings, the alteration of dispensations in all ages, - were at once in his mind, and all before him; so that he never goes to build a house but he hath in his own mind already determined all the changes it shall be subject to. When he sets up a throne in a nation, it is in his mind within

such a period to cast it down again; when he lifts up men in success and prosperity, he doth not again change his mind when he throws them down, for that was in his mind also; so that there is no surprisal of him by any unexpected emergence. Poor man hath many consultations ere he come to a conclusion; but it is not thus with his counsel. Of all those strange and new things which fall out in our days, he hath one thought of them all from eternity. 'He is in one mind,' and none of all these things have put him off his eternal mind or put him to a new advisement about his great projects. Not only doth he not change his mind, but his mind and thought is one of all, and concerning all. Our poor, narrow, and limited minds, must part their thoughts among many Businesses, - one thought for this, another for that, and one after another. But with him there is neither succession of counsels and purposes, nor yet plurality; but, as with one opening of his eye, he beholds all things as they are, so with one inclination, or nod of his will, he hath given a law, and appointed all things. If we can at one instant, and one look, see both light and colours, and both the glass and the shadow in it, and with one motion of our wills move towards the end and the means; O, how much more may he, with one simple undivided act of his good will and pleasure, pass a determination on all things, in their times, and orders, and in his own infinite and glorious Being perceive them all with one look! How much consolation might redound from this to believing souls! Hath the Lord appointed you to suffer persecution and tribulation here? Hath he carved out such a lot unto you in this life? Then withal consider, that his majesty hath eternal glory wrapt up in the same counsel from which thy afflictions proceed. Hath he made thy soul to melt before him? Hath he convinced thee, and made thee to flee unto the city for refuge, and expect salvation from no other but himself? Then know, that life eternal is in the bosom of that same purpose which gave thee to believe this; though the one be born before the other, yet the decree shall certainly bring forth the other. And for such souls as upon this vain presumption of the infallibility of God's purposes, think it needless to give diligence in religion, know, that it is one mind and purpose that hath linked the end and the means together as a chain; and therefore, if thou expectest to be saved, according to election, thou must, according to the same counsel, make thy calling home from sin to God sure.

Thirdly, What thing soever he hath purposed, he in due time applies to the performance of it, and then the counsel of his will becomes the works of his hands, and there is an admirable harmony and exact agreement between these two. All things come out of the womb of his eternal decree, by the word of his power, even just fashioned and framed, as their lineaments and draughts were proportioned in the decree, nothing failing, nothing wanting, nothing exceeding. There is nothing in the idea of his mind but it is expressed in the work of his hands. There are no raw half-wishes in God. Men have such imperfect desires, - I would have, or do, such a thing if it were not, &c. He wavers not thus in suspense; but what he wills and desires, he wills and desires indeed. He intends, doubtless, it shall be, and what he intends he will execute and bring to pass; therefore his will in due time applies almighty power to fulfil the desire of it; and almighty power being put to work by his will, it cannot but work all things 'according to the counsel of his will;' and whatsoever his soul desireth, that he cannot but do, even as he desires, seeing he can do it. If he will do it, and can do it, what hinders him to work and do? Know then that his commands and precepts to you signifying what is your duty, they do not so much signify what he desires, or intends to work, or have done, as his approbation of such a thing in itself to be your duty; and therefore though he have revealed his will concerning our duty, though no obedience follow, yet is not his intention frustrated or disappointed; for his commands to you say not what is his intention about it, but what is that which he approves as good, and a duty obliging men. But whatsoever thing he purposes and intends should be, certainly he will do it, and make it to be done. If it be a work of his own power alone, himself will do it alone. If he require the concurrence of creatures to it, - as in all the works of providence, - then he will effectually apply the creatures to his work, and not wait in suspense on their determination. If he have appointed such an end to be attained by such means, - if he have a work to do by such instruments, - then, without all doubt, he will apply the instruments when his time comes, and will not wait on their concurrence. You see now strange things done, you wonder at them: how we are brought down from our excellency, - how our land is laid desolate by strangers, - how many instruments of the Lord's work are laid aside, how he lifts up a rod of indignation against us, and is like to overturn even the foundations of our land, - all these were not in our mind before,

but they were in his mind from eternity, and therefore he is now working it. Believe then that there is not a circumstance of all this business, not one point or jot of it, but is even as it was framed and carved out of old. His present works are according to an ancient pattern, which he carries in his mind. All the measures and degrees of your affliction, - all the ounces and grain-weights of your cup, were all weighed in the scales of his eternal counsel; the instruments, the time, the manner, all that is in it. If he change instruments, that was in his mind; if he change dispensations, that was in his mind also; and seeing ye know by the scriptures that a blessed end is appointed for the godly, that all things work for their good, that all is subservient to the church's welfare; seeing, I say, you know his purpose is such as the scripture speaks, then believe his performance shall tie exact accordingly, nothing deficient; no joint, no sinew in all his work of providence, no line in all his book and volume of the creature, but it was written in that ancient book of his eternal counsel, and first fashioned in that, Psal. cxxxix. 16.

Then, lastly, His will is irresistible, his counsel shall stand; who can turn him from his purpose, and who can hinder him from performance? Therefore he attains his end in the highest and most superlative degree of certainty and infallibility. Himself will not change his own purpose; for why should he do it? If he change to the better, then it reflects on his wisdom; if he change to the worse, it reflects both on his wisdom and goodness. Certainly he can see no cause why he should change it. But as himself cannot change, so none can hinder his performance; for what power, think you, shall it be, that may attempt that? Is it the power of men, of strong men, of high men, of any men? No sure! for their breath is in their nostrils, they have no power but as he breathes in them. If he keep in his breath, as it were, they perish. All nations are as nothing before him, and what power hath nothing? Is it devils may do it? No; for they cannot, though they would; he chains them, he limits them. Is it good angels? They are powerful indeed, but they neither can nor will resist his will. Let it be the whole university of the creation, - suppose all their scattered force and virtue conjoined in one, - yet it is all but finite, it amounts to no more, if you would eternally add unto it; but all victory and resistance of this kind must be by a superior power, or at least by an equal. Therefore we may conclude that there is no impediment or let, that

can be put in his way, nothing can obstruct his purpose; if all the world should conspire as one man to obstruct the performance of any of his promises and purposes, they do but rage in vain. Like dogs barking at the moon, they shall be so far from attaining their purpose, that his majesty shall disabuse them, so to speak, to his own purpose. He shall apply them quite contrary to their own mind, to work out the counsel of his mind. Here is the absolute King, only worth the name of a King and Lord, whom all things in heaven and earth obey at the first nod and beckoning to them! Hills, seas, mountains, rivers, sun and moon, and clouds, men and beasts, angels and devils, - all of them are acted, moved, and inclined according to his pleasure; all of them are about his work indeed, as the result of all in the end shall make it appear, and are servants at his command, going where he bids go, and coming where he bids come, led by an invisible hand, though in the meantime they know it not, but think they are about their own business, and applaud themselves for a time in it. *Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*. Godly men who know his will and love it, are led by it willingly, for they yield themselves up to his disposal; but wicked men, who have contrary wills of their own, can gain no more by resisting, but to be drawn along with it.

Now to what purpose is all this spoken of God's decrees and purposes, which he hath called a secret belonging to himself? If his works and judgments be a great depth, and unsearchable, sure his decrees are far more unsearchable; for it is the secret and hidden purpose of God, which is the very depth of his way and judgment. But to what purpose is it all? I say, not to inquire curiously into the particulars of them, but to profit by them. The Scripture holds out to us the unchangeableness, freedom, extent, holiness, and wisdom of them, for our advantage; and if this advantage be not reaped, we know them in vain. Not to burden your memory with many particulars, we should labour to draw forth both instruction and consolation out of them. Instruction, I say, in two things especially, - to submit with reverence and respect to his majesty in all his works and ways, and to trust in him who knows all his works, and will not change his mind.

There is nothing wherein I know Christians more deficient than in this point of submission, which I take to be one of the chiefest and sweetest,

though hardest duties of a Christian. It is hardly to be found among men, - a thorough compliance of the soul to what his soul desires, a real subjection of our spirits to his good-will and pleasure. There is nothing so much blessed in scripture as waiting on him, as yielding to him to be disposed upon, - 'Blessed are all they that wait on him.' Pride is the greatest opposite, and he opposes himself most to that, for it is in its own nature most derogatory to the highness and majesty of God, which is his very glory. Therefore submission is most acceptable to him, when the soul yields itself and its will to him. He condescends far more to it; he cannot be an enemy to such a soul. Submission to his majesty's pleasure, is the very bowing down of the soul willingly to any thing he does or commands, - whatever yoke he puts on, of duty or suffering, to take it on willingly, without answering again, which is the great sin condemned in servants; to put the mouth in the dust, and to keep silence, because he doth it - 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.' *There* is submission indeed, - silence of mind and mouth, - a restraint put upon the spirit to think nothing grudgingly of him for any thing he doth. It is certainly the greatest fault of Christians, and ground of many more, that ye do not look to God, but to creatures in any thing that befalls you; therefore there are so frequent risings of spirits against his yoke, frequent spurnings against it, as Ephraim, unaccustomed with the yoke. So do ye; and this it is only makes it heavy and troublesome. If there were no more reason for it but your own gain, it is the only way to peace and quietness. *Durum: sed levius fit patientia, quicquid corrigere est nefas.* Your impatience cannot help you, but hurt you, it is the very yoke of your yoke; but quiet and silent stooping makes it easy in itself, and brings in more help beside, even divine help. Learn this, I beseech you, to get your own wills abandoned, and your spirits subdued to God, both in the point of duty and dispensation. If duties commanded cross thy spirit - as certainly the reality and exercise of godliness must be unpleasant to any nature - know what thou art called to, to quiet thy own will to him, to give up thyself to his pleasure singly, without so much respect to thy own pleasure or gain. Learn to obey him simply because he commands, though no profit redound to thee; and by this means thou shalt in due time have more sweet peace and real gain, though thou intendedst it not. And in case any dispensation cross thy mind, let not thy mind rise up against it. Do not fall out with Providence, but commit thy way wholly to

him, and let him do what he pleases in that. Be thou minding thy duty. Be not anxious in that, but be diligent in this, and thou shalt be the only gainer by it; besides, the honour redounds to him.

Then I would exhort you, from this ground, to trust in him. Seeing he alone is the absolute Sovereign Lord of all things, - seeing he has passed a determination upon all things, and accordingly they must be, - and seeing none can turn him from his way, - O then, Christians, learn to commit yourselves to him in all things, both for this life and the life to come! Why are ye so vain and foolish as to depend and hang upon poor, vain, depending creatures? Why do ye not forsake yourselves? Why do ye not forsake all other things as empty shadows? Are not all created powers, habits, gifts, graces, strength, riches, &c. like the idols in comparison of him, who can neither do good, neither can they do ill? Cursed is he 'that trusteth in man,' Jer. xvii. 5. There needs no other curse than the very disappointment you shall meet withal. Consider, I beseech you, that our God can do all things, whatever he pleases, in heaven and earth, and that none can obstruct his pleasure. Blessed is that soul for whom the counsel of his will is engaged. And it is engaged for all that trust in him. He can accomplish his good pleasure in thy behalf, either without or against means; all impediments and thorns set in his way, he can burn them up. You who are heirs of the promises, O know your privilege! What his soul desireth, he doth even that; and what he hath seriously promised to you, he desires. If you ask, who are heirs of the promises? I would answer, simply those and those only, who do own them and challenge them, and cling to them for their life and salvation; those who seek the inheritance only by the promise, and whose soul desires them and embraces them. O if you would observe how unlike ye are to God! Ye change often, ye turn often out of the way; but that were not so ill if ye did not imagine him to be like yourselves, and it is unbelief which makes him like to yourselves, - when your frame and tender disposition changes, - when presence and access to God is removed. That is wrong, it speaks out a mortal creature indeed; but if it be so, O do no more wrong! Do not, by your suspicions and jealousies, and questionings of him, imagine that he is like unto you, and changed also. That is a double wrong and dishonour to his majesty. Hath he not said, 'I am the Lord, and change not.' 'He is in one mind, who can turn him?' How comes it then, that ye doubt of his love as oft as ye

change? When ye are in a good temper, ye think he loves you: when it is not so, ye cannot believe but he is angry, and hates you. Is not this to speak quite contrary to the word; that he is a God that changes, - that he is not in one mind, but now in one, and then in another, as oft as the inconstant wind of a soul's self-pleasing humour turns about? Here is your rest and confidence, if you will be established, not within yourselves, - not upon marks and signs within you, which ebb and flow as the sea, and change as the moon, - but, upon his unchangeable nature and faithful promises. This we desire to hold out to you all, as one ground for all. You would every one have some particular ground in your own disposition and condition, and think it general doctrine only which layeth it not home so; but believe it, I know no ground of real soul-establishment, but general truths and principles common to you all; and our business is not to lay any other foundation, - or more foundations, according to your different conditions, - but to lay this one foundation, Christ and God unchangeable; and to exhort every one of you to make that general foundation your own in particular, by leaning to it, and building upon it, and clinging to it. All other are sandy and ruinous.

Let us now, in this sad time, press consolation from this. The Lord's hand is in all this. It is immediate in every dispensation, and it is only carnal mindedness that cannot see him stretching out his hand to every man, with his own portion of affliction. Know this one thing, that God is in one mind; for all these many ways and judgments, he is in one mind, - to gather the saints, to build up the Church, the body of Christ. This is his end, - all other businesses are in the by, and subservient to this. Therefore he will change it as he pleases, but his great purpose of good to his people all the world cannot hinder. Let us then establish our souls in this consideration; all is clear above, albeit cloudy below; all is calm in heaven, albeit tempestuous here upon earth. There is no confusion, no disorder in his mind. Though we think the world out of course, and that all things reel about with confusion, he hath one mind in it, and who can turn him? And that mind is good to them that trust in him; and therefore, who can turn away our good? Let men consult and imagine what they please, - let them pass votes and decrees what to do with his people, - yet it is all to no purpose, for there is a counsel above, an older counsel, which must stand and take place in all generations. If men's conclusions

be not according to the counsel of his will, they are but imaginary dreams, like the fancies of a distracted person, who imagining himself a king, sits down on the throne, and gives out decrees and ordinances. May not he who sits in heaven laugh at the foolishness and madness of men who act in all things as if they had no dependence on him, and go about their business as if it were not contrived already? It is a ridiculous thing for men to order their business, and settle their own conclusions, without once minding One above them, who hath not only a negative, but an affirmative vote in all things. It is true that God, in his deep wisdom, hath kept up his particular purposes secret, that men may walk according to an appointed rule, and use all means for compassing their intended ends; and therefore it is well said, *Prudens futuri temporis exitum caliginosâ nocte premit Deus*. But yet withal we should mind that of James, 'if the Lord will,' and go about all things even the most probably, with submission to his will and pleasure. And therefore, when men go without their bounds, either in fear or danger, or joy conceived in successes, - *ridetque, si mortalis ultra fas trepidet*, &c. - Excess of fear, excess of hope, excess of joy in these outward things is, as it were, ridiculous to him, who hath all these things appointed with him. To him be praise and glory.

---

## LECTURE XV. OF PREDESTINATION.

EPH. 1.11. *"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."* - R OM ,ix. 22, 23. *"What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory."*

IN the creation of the world, it pleased the Lord, after all things were framed and disposed, to make one creature to rule over all; and to him he gave the most excellent nature, and privileges beyond the rest; so that it may appear that he had made all things for man, and man immediately for his own glory. As man was the chief of the works of his hands, so we

may, according to the Scriptures, conceive that he was chiefly minded in the counsels of his heart. And that, as in the execution of his purpose in creating the world, man had the pre-eminence assigned unto him, and all seemed subordinate unto him; so, in the Lord's purposes concerning the world, his purpose about man has the pre-eminence. He, indeed, has resolved to declare the glory of his name in this world; therefore the heavens and the firmament are made preachers of that glory, Psal. xix. 1, 2, &c. But in a special manner, his majesty's glorious name is manifested in man, and about man. He hath set man, as it were, in the centre or midst of the creation, that all the creatures might direct or bring in their praises unto him, to be offered up in his and their name, to the Lord their Maker, by him, as the common mouth of the world; and the Lord hath chosen this creature above all the creatures, for the more solemn and glorious declaration of himself in his special properties. Therefore, we should gather our thoughts in this business, to hear from the Lord what his thoughts are towards us; for, certainly, the right understanding of his everlasting counsel touching the eternal state of man, is of singular virtue to conform us to the praise of his name, and establish us in faith and confidence. Predestination is a mystery, indeed, into which we should not curiously and boldly inquire beyond what is revealed; for then a soul must needs lose itself in that depth of wisdom, and perish in the search of unsearchableness. And thus the word speaks in Scripture of this subject, intimating to us, that it is rather to be admired than conceived; and that there ought to be some ignorance of these secrets, which, conjoined with faith and reverence, is more learned than any curious knowledge. But withal, we must open our eyes upon so much light as God reveals of these secrets, knowing that the light of the word is a saving, refreshing light, not confounding, as is his inaccessible light of secret glory. As far as it pleaseth his majesty to open his mouth, let us not close our ears, but open them also to his instruction, knowing, that as he will withhold no necessary thing for our salvation, so he will reveal nothing but what is profitable. This is the best bond of sobriety and humble wisdom, to learn what he teacheth us; but when he makes an end of teaching, to desire no more learning. It is humility to seek no more, and it is true wisdom to be content with no less.

There is much weakness in our conceiving of divine things. We shape and

form them in our minds according to a mould of our own experience or invention, and cannot conceive of them as they are in themselves. If we should speak properly, there are not counsels and purposes in God, but one entire counsel and resolution concerning all things which are in time, by which he hath disposed all in their several times, seasons, conditions, and orders. But because we have many thoughts, about many things, so we cannot well conceive of God but in likeness to ourselves; and therefore, the Scripture, condescending to our weakness, speaks so. 'How many are thy precious thoughts towards me,' saith David; and yet, indeed, there is but one thought of him, and us, and all, which one thought is of so much virtue, that it is equivalent to an infinite number of thoughts concerning infinite objects. The Lord hath from everlasting conceived one purpose of manifesting his own glory in such several ways; and this is the head-spring of all that befalls creatures, men, and angels. But because, in the execution of this purpose, there is a certain order, and succession, and variety, therefore men do ordinarily fancy such or such a frame and order in the Lord's mind and purpose. And as the astronomers do cut and carve in their imagination cycles, orbs, and epicycles in the heavens, because of the various and different appearances and motions of stars in them, whereas it may be, really, there is but one celestial body in which all these various lights and motions do appear, so do men fancy unto themselves an order in the Lord's decree, according to the phenomena or appearances of his works in the world; whereas, it is one purpose and decree, which in its infinite compass comprehends all these varieties and orders together. This much we may indeed lawfully conceive of his decree, that there is an exact correspondence and suitableness between his majesty's purpose and execution, and that he is a wise Lord, 'wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,' having some great plot and design before his eyes, which he intends to effect, and which is, as it were, the great light and sun of this firmament, unto which, by that same wonderful counsel, all other things are subordinate; and so in the working it shall appear exactly as his counsel did delineate and contrive it.

There is no man so empty or shallow, but he hath some great design and purpose which he chiefly aims at; shall we not then conceive, that the Lord, who instructs every man to this discretion, and teaches him, (Isa.

xxviii. 26,) is himself wise in his counsel, and hath some grand project before him in all this fabric of the world, and the upholding of it since it was made? Certainly he hath. And if you ask what it is, the wise man will teach you in general - 'He made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil,' Prov. xvi. 4. Here, then, is his great design and purpose, - to glorify himself, - to manifest his own name to men and angels. Now, his name comprehends wisdom, goodness, power, mercy, and justice. The first three he declares in all the works of his hands. All are well done and wisely done. The excellency of the work shows the wonderful counsellor and the wise contriver. The goodness of any creature in its kind, declares the inexhausted spring of a self-being from whom it proceeds; and the bringing all these out of nothing, and upholding them, is a glorious declaration of his power. But yet, in all the works of his hands, there is nothing found to manifest his glorious mercy and justice, upon which are the flower and garland of his attributes, and unto which wisdom and power seem to be subservient. Therefore his majesty, in that one entire purpose of his own glory, resolves to manifest his wrath and his mercy upon men and angels, subjects capable of it; which two attributes are as the poles about which all the wheels of election and reprobation turn as you see in that place, Rom. ix. 22, 23. Let this then be established as the end of all his works, as it is designed in his counsel, and nothing else. It is not the creature, nor any thing in the creature, which is first in his mind, but himself, and therefore of him, and for him, are all things. Here they have their rise, and thither they return, even to the ocean of God's eternal glory, from whence all did spring.

The right establishing of this will help us to conceive aright of his counsel of predestination. It is a common cavil of carnal reason, how can the Lord reject so many persons, and fore-ordain them to destruction? It seems most contrary to his goodness and wisdom, to have such an end of eternal predestination before him, in the creating of so many, to make men for nothing, but to damn them. Here carnal reason, which is enmity to God, triumphs; but consider, I say, that this is not the Lord's end and chief design, to destroy men. Even as it is not his majesty's first look, or furthest reach, to give unto others eternal life; so it is not his prime intent to sink them into eternal death, as if that were his pleasure and delight. No, indeed! Neither is the creature's happiness nor its misery that which

first moves him, or is most desired of him, but himself only, and he cannot move out of himself to any business, but he must return it unto himself. Therefore the wise preacher expresses it well, 'He made all for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil.' It was not his great end of creating wicked men to damn them, or creating righteous men to save them, but both are for a further and higher end, - for himself and his own glory.

All seem to agree about this, that the great end of all the Lord's counsels and decrees is his own glory, to be manifested on men and angels; and that this must be first in his mind; not that there is first or last with him, but to speak after the manner of men. If he had many thoughts, as we have, this would be his first thought; and in this one purpose this end is chiefly aimed at, and all other things are by the Lord's counsel subordinate to this, as means to compass that. But as concerning the order of these means, and consequently of his majesty's purpose about them, men, by examining his majesty according to the creature's rules, or according to sense, bring him down far below his own infinite greatness. Some conceive that that was first, as it were, in his mind which is first done. Looking upon the execution of his purpose in the works of his power, they imagine, that as he first created man righteous, so this was his first thought concerning man, to create man for the glory of his goodness and power, without any particular determination as yet of his end. And I conceive, this is the thought of the multitude of people. They think God was disappointed in his work, when they hear he created such a glorious creature that is now become so miserable. They cannot believe that his majesty had all this sin and misery determined with him when he purposed to create him, but look upon the emergent of man's fall into sin and misery as a surprisal of his majesty; - as if he had meant another thing in creating him, and so was, upon this occasion of man's sin, driven to a new consultation about the helping of the business, and making the best out of it that might be. Thus 'through wisdom' the world knows not God. They think God altogether like themselves, and so liken him to the builder of a house, who set nothing before him in doing so, but to build it after that manner for his own ends; but then being surprised with the fall and ruin of it, takes a new advisement, and builds it up again upon another and a surer foundation. But because they cannot say, that God

takes any new advisements in time, but must confess that all his counsels are everlasting concerning all the works of his hands, therefore they bring in foreknowledge to smooth their irreligious conceit of God; as if the Lord, upon his purpose of creating man, had foreseen what should befall him, and so purposed to permit it to be so, that out of it he might erect some glorious fabric of mercy and justice upon the ruins of man. And that little or nothing may be left to the absolute sovereign will of God, to which the Scripture ascribes all things, they must again imagine, that upon his purpose of sending Christ to save sinners, he is yet undetermined about the particular end of particular men, but watches on the tower of foreknowledge to espy what they will do, whether men will believe on his Son or not, whether they will persevere in faith or not; and according to his observation of their doings, so he applies his own will to carve out their reward or portion of life or death. These are even the thoughts which are inbred in your breasts by nature. That which the learned call Arminianism is nothing else but the carnal reason of men's hearts, which is enmity to God. It is that very disputation which Paul in this chapter exclaims against, 'Who art thou, O man, that disputest?'

But certainly, all this contrivance is nothing befitting the wisdom or sovereignty of God, but reflects upon both; upon his wisdom, that he should have thoughts of creating the most noble of his creatures, and yet be in suspense about the end of the creature, and have that in uncertainty what way his glory shall indeed be manifested by it. Is it not the first and chief thought of every wise man, what he intends and aims at in his work, and according to the measure and reach of his wisdom, so he reaches further in his end and purpose? Shall we then conceive the only wise God so far to have mistaken himself, as to do that which no wise man would do? He who is of such an infinite reach of wisdom and understanding, to fall upon the thoughts of making such an excellent creature, and yet to lie in suspense within himself about the eternal estate of it, and to be in a waiting posture what way his glory should be manifested by it; whether in a way of simple goodness only, or in a way of justice, or in a way of mercy, till he should foresee, off the tower of foreknowledge, how that creature should behave itself. Our text speaks not thus; for in the place, (Eph. i.) we have the Lord, in his eternal purpose, carving out to such and such particular persons 'an inheritance,' and 'adoption of children,' for that

great end 'of the glory of his grace,' ver. 11, and 5, 6. And predestination falls out, not according to our carriage, but according to the purpose of him who 'works all things' that he works, 'after the counsel of his own will,' without consulting our will, And if you inquire what are these 'all things,' certainly we must take it simply for all things that are at all, or have any real being: his power, his hand must be in it, and that according to his own counsel, without respect had to the creature's will, according to his own good pleasure, ver. 5, 11. He had no sooner a thought of working and making man, but this purpose was in it, to make such men to the praise of his glorious grace, and to fore-ordain them to an inheritance, and others to make or fit them for destruction, as the text, Rom. ix. 22, bears. Herein the great and unsearchable wisdom of God appears to be a great depth, that when he hath a thought of making such a vessel, he hath this purpose in the bosom of it, what use it shall be for, whether for honour or dishonour; and accordingly, in his counsel, he prepares it either to glory or destruction, and in time makes it fit for its use, either by sin or grace. Here is the depth that cannot be sounded by mortal men. 'O the depth of the riches both of his wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' The whole tenor of the Scriptures shows that his majesty was not surprised and taken at unawares by Adam's fall, but that it fell out according to the determinate counsel of his will. If he knew it, and suffered it to be, certainly he permitted it, because he willed it should be so; and why may he not determine that in his holy counsel which his wisdom can disabuse to the most glorious end that can be? Why may not he decree such a fall, who out of man's ruins can erect such a glorious throne for his grace and justice to triumph into? It is more for the glory of his infinite wisdom, to bring good, and such a good out of evil, than only to permit that good should be.

Then such doctrine is repugnant to the Lord's absolute power and sovereignty, which is Paul's sanctuary, whither he flies unto as a sure refuge, from the stroke or blast of carnal reason. 'Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?' ver. 21. Hath not the Lord more absolute dominion over us, than the potter hath over the clay, for the potter made not the clay, but the Lord hath made us of nothing? so that simply and

absolutely we are his, and not our own, and so he hath an absolute right to make any use of us he pleases, without consulting our wills and deservings. Can any man quarrel him for preparing him to destruction, seeing he owes nothing to any man, but may do with his own what he pleases? What if God, willing to make known his power, and justice, and wrath, have fitted and prepared some vessels for destruction, with which in time he bears much, and forbears long, using much patience towards them, ver. 22. Can any man challenge him for it? And what if God, willing to make known the riches of his grace, have prepared some vessels to glory, shall any man's eye be evil because he is good? ver. 23. Shall man be left to be his own disposer, and the shaper of his own fortune? Sure it was not so with Esau and Jacob: they were alike in the womb. If there was any prerogative, Esau the eldest had it, - they had done neither good nor evil. What difference was then between them to cast the balance of his will? Can you imagine any? Indeed carnal reason will say that God foreknew what they would do, and so he chose or rejected them. But, why doth not the apostle answer thus unto that objection of unrighteousness in God? ver. 14. It had been ready and plain. But rather he opposes the will and calling of God, to all works past or to come. He gives no answer but this, 'he will have mercy because he will have mercy;' that is the supreme rule of righteousness, and hitherto must we flee, as the surest anchor of our hope and stability. Our salvation depends not on our willing or running, on our resolving or doing, but upon this primitive good pleasure and will of God, on which hangs our willing and running and obtaining. It is certainly an unordered order, to flee unto that in men, for the cause of God's eternal counsels, which only flows from his eternal counsel, Eph. i. 4. Hath he chosen us because he did foreknow that we would be holy, and without blame, as men think? Or hath he not rather chosen us to be holy and without blame? He cannot behold any good or evil in the creatures, till his will pass a sentence upon it; for from whence should it come?

Seeing then this order and contrivance of God's purpose is but feigned, it seems to some that the very contrary method were more suitable even to the rules of wisdom. You know what is first in men's intention is last in execution. The end is first in their mind, then the means to compass that end. But in practice again, men fall first upon the means, and by them

come at length to attain their end; therefore those who would have that first, as it were, in God's mind, which he doth first, do even cross common rules of reason in human affairs. It would seem then, say some, that this method might do well; that what is last in his execution, was first in his purpose, and by him intended as the end of what he doth first, and so some do rank his decrees; that he had first a thought of glorifying man, and to attain this end he purposed to give him grace, and for this purpose to suffer him to fall, and for all to create him. But we must not look thus upon it either. It were a foolish and ridiculous counsel, unbeseeming the poor wisdom of man, to purpose the glorifying of man whom he had not yet determined to create. Therefore we should always have it in our mind that the great end and project of all is the glory of his mercy and justice upon men; and this we may conceive is first in order, neither men's life nor death, but God's glory to be manifested upon men. Now, to attain this glorious end, with one inclination or determination of his will, not to be distinguished or severed, he condescends upon all that is done in time, as one complete and entire mean of glorifying himself, so that one of them is not before another in his mind, but altogether. For attaining this, he purposes to create man. He ordains the fall of all men into a state of sin and misery; and some of those, upon whom he had resolved to show his mercy, he gives them to Christ to be redeemed, and restored by grace; others, he fore-ordains them to destruction; and all this at once, without any such order as we imagine. Now though he intend all this at once and together, yet it doth not hence follow that all these must be executed together. As when a man intends to build a house for his own accommodation, there are many things in the house upon which he hath not several purposes; but yet they must be severally, and in some order done. First the foundation laid; then the walls raised; then the roof put on; yet he did not intend the foundation to be for the walls, or the walls for the roof, but altogether for himself. Even so the Lord purposes to glorify his mercy and justice upon a certain number of persons, and for this end to give them a being, to govern their falling into misery, to raise some out of it by a Mediator, and to leave some into it to destruction; and all this as one entire mean to illustrate his glorious mercy and justice. But these things themselves must be done not all at once, but one before another, either as their own nature requires, or as he pleases. The very nature of the thing requires that man be created before he sin; that he sin

and fall before a Mediator suffer for his sin; that he have a being before he have a glorious being; and that he have a sinful and miserable being, before he have this glorious and gracious being which may manifest the grace and mercy of God. But it is the pleasure of the Lord that determines in what time and order Christ shall suffer, either before or after the conversion of sinners, or whether sinners shall be presently instated in glory, and perfectly delivered from all sin at their first conversion, or only in part during this life.

Seeing then this was his majesty's purpose, to make so many vessels of honour, upon whom he might glorify the riches of his grace and mercy; and so many 'vessels of wrath,' upon whom he might show the power of his anger; you may think what needed all this business of man's redemption. Might not God have either preserved so many as he had appointed to glory from falling into sin and misery; or at least have freely pardoned their sin without any satisfaction; and out of the exceeding riches of his mercy and power, have as well not imputed sin to them at all, as imputed their sins to Christ, who was not guilty? What needed his giving so many to the Son, and the Son's receiving them? What needed these mysteries of incarnation, of redemption, seeing he might have done all this simply without so much pains and expense? Why did he choose this way? Indeed, that is the wonder; and if there were no more end for it, but to confound mortality that dare ask him what he doth, it is enough. Should he be called down to the bar of human reason, to give an account of his matters? 'Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him,' that is in the depths of his unsearchable understanding, that he chose to go this round, and to compass his end by such a strange circuit of means, when he might have done it simply and directly without so much pains? Yet it is not so hidden, but he hath revealed as much as may satisfy or silence all flesh. For we must consider, that his great project is not simply to manifest the glory of his goodness, but of his gracious and merciful goodness, the most tender and excellent of all; and therefore man must be miserable, sinful, and vile, that the riches of his grace may appear in choosing and saving such persons. But that it may appear also how excellent he could make man, and how vain all created perfections are, being left to themselves, therefore he first made man righteous, and being fallen into sin and misery, he might

straightway have restored him without more ado. But his purpose was to give an exact demonstration of mercy, tempered and mixed with justice; and therefore he finds out the satisfaction in his eternal counsel, 'I have found a ransom.' And so he chooses Jesus Christ to be the head of these chosen souls, in whom they might be again restored unto eternal life. And these souls, he, in his everlasting purpose, gives over to the Son to be redeemed, and these the Son receives. And thus the glory of mercy and justice shines most brightly, yea, more brightly, than if he had at first pardoned. O how doth his love and mercy appear, that he will transfer our sins upon his holy Son, and accept that redemption for us; and his justice, that a redemption and price he must have, even from his Son, when once he comes in the stead of sinners! And in this point do the songs of eternity concentre.

---

## **LECTURE XVI.**

### **OF PREDESTINATION.**

ROM. 11.22. - *"What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."*

EPH. 1.11. - *"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."*

We are now upon a high subject; high indeed for an eminent apostle, much more above our reach. The very consideration of God's infinite wisdom might alone suffice to restrain our limited thoughts, and serve to sober our minds with the challenge of our own ignorance and darkness; yet the vain and wicked mind of man will needs quarrel with God, and enter the lists of disputation with him, about his righteousness and wisdom in the counsel of election and reprobation: 'But, O man, who art thou that repliest against God,' or disputest? ver. 20. This is a thing not to be disputed, but believed; and if ye will believe no more than ye can comprehend by sense or reason, then ye give his majesty no more credit than to weak mortal man. Whatever secret thoughts do rise up in thy heart when thou hearest of God's foreordaining men to eternal life,

without previous foresight or consideration of their doings, and preparing men to eternal wrath, for the praise of his justice, without previous consideration of their deservings, and passing a definitive sentence upon the end of all men, before they do either good or evil; whenever any secret surmises rise in thy heart against this, learn to answer thus; enter not the lists of disputation with corrupt reason, but put in this bridle of the fear of God's greatness, and the consciousness of thy own baseness, and labour to restrain thy undaunted and wild mind by it. Ponder that well, who thou art who disputest; who God is, against whom thou disputest - and if thou have spoken once, thou wilt speak no more - what thou art, who is as clay formed out of nothing; what he is, who is the former; and hath not the potter power over the clay? Consider but how great wickedness it is so much as to question him, or ask an account of his matters. After you have found his will to be the cause of all things, then to inquire farther into a cause of his will, which is alone the self-rule of righteousness, is to seek something above his will, and to reduce his majesty into the order of creatures. It is most abominable usurpation and sacrilege, for it both robs him of his royal prerogative, and instates the base footstool into his throne; but know, that certainly God will overcome when he is judged, Psal. 1. 6. If thou judge him, he will condemn thee; if thou oppugn his absolute and holy decrees, he will hold thee fast bound by them to thy condemnation; he needs no other defence but to call out thy own conscience against thee, and bind thee over to destruction. Therefore, as one saith well, "Let the rashness of men be restrained from seeking that which is not, lest peradventure they find that which is." Seek not a reason of his purposes, lest peradventure thou find thy own death and damnation infolded in them.

Paul mentions two objections of carnal and fleshly wisdom against this doctrine of election and reprobation, which indeed contain the sum of all that is vented and invented even to this day, to defile the spotless truth of God. All the whisperings of men tend to one of these two, - either to justify themselves, or to accuse God of unrighteousness; and shall any do it and be guiltless? I confess, some oppose this doctrine, not so much out of an intention of accusing God, as out of a preposterous and ignorant zeal for God; even as Job's friends did speak much for God. Nay, but it was not well spoken, they did but speak wickedly for him. Some speak

much to the defence of his righteousness and holiness, and, under pretence of that plea, make it inconsistent with these to fore-ordain to life or death without the foresight of their carriage; but shall they speak wickedly for God, or will he accept their person? He who looks into the secrets of the heart, knows the rise and bottom of such defences and apologies for his holiness to be partly self-love, partly narrow and limited thoughts of him, drawing him down to the determinations of his own greatest enemy, carnal reason. Since men will ascribe to him no righteousness, but such an one of their own shaping, and conformed to their own model, do they not indeed rob him of his holiness and righteousness?

I find two or three objections which may be reduced to this head. First, it seems unrighteousness with God, to predestinate men to eternal death, without their own evil deserving, or any forethought of it, - that before any man had a being, God should have been in his counsel fitting so many to destruction. Is it not a strange mocking of the creatures, to punish them for that sin and corruption, unto which by his eternal counsel they were fore-ordained? This is even that which Paul objects to himself, 'Is there unrighteousness with God?' Is it not unrighteousness to hate Esau before he deserves it? Is he not unrighteous, to adjudge him to death before he do evil? ver. 14. Let Paul answer for us, 'God forbid!' Why, there needs no more answer, but all thoughts or words which may in the least reflect upon his holiness are abomination. Though we could not tell how it is righteous and holy with him to do it, yet this we must hold, that it is. It is his own property to comprehend the reason of his counsels; it is our duty to believe what he reveals of them, without farther inquiry. He tells us, that thus it is clearly in this chapter; this far then we must believe. He tells us not how it is; then farther we should not desire to learn. God, in keeping silence of that, may put us to silence, and make us conceive that there is a depth to be admired, not sounded. Yet he goeth a little farther, and indeed as high as can be, to God's will - 'He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth.' Now, further he cannot go, for there is nothing above this. We may descend from this, but we cannot ascend, or rise above it. But is this any answer to the argument? A sophister could press it further, and take advantage from that very ground - What! is not this to establish a mere tyranny in the Lord; that he

doeth all things of mere will and pleasure, distributes rewards and punishments without previous consideration of men's carriage? But here we must stand, and go no farther than the scriptures walk with us. Whatever reasons or causes may be assigned, yet certainly we must at length come up hither. All things are, because he so willed; and why willed we should not ask a reason, because his will is supreme reason, and the very self-rule of all righteousness. Therefore if we once know his will, we should presently conclude that it is most righteous and holy. If that evasion of the foreknowledge of men's sins and impenitency had been found solid, certainly Paul would have answered so, and not have had his refuge to the absolute will and pleasure of God, which seem to perplex it more. But he knew well that there could nothing of that kind, whether good or evil, either actually be without his will or be to come without the determination of the same will, and so could not be foreseen without the counsel of his will upon it; and therefore it had been but a poor shift to have refuge to that starting-hole of foreknowledge, out of which he must presently flee to the will and pleasure of God, and so he betakes him straightway to that he must hold at, and opposes that will to man's doings. 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' If he had meant only that Jacob and Esau had actually done neither good or evil, he needed not return to the sanctuary of God's will, for still it might be said, it is of him that runs and wills and not of God's will as the first original; because their good and evil foreseen did move him to such love and hatred. It is all alike of works of men, whether these works be present or to come: therefore I would advise every one of you, whatever ye conceive of his judgment or mercy, if he have showed mercy to you, O then rest not in thyself, but arise and ascend till thou come to the height of his eternal free purpose! And if thou conceive thy sin, and misery, and judgment, thou mayest go up also to his holy counsels, for the glory of his name, and silence thyself with them. But it shall be most expedient for thee in the thought of thy miseries, to return always within, and search the corruption of thy nature, which may alone make thee hateful enough to God. If thou search thy own conscience, it will stop thy mouth, and make thee guilty before God. Let not the thought of his eternal counsels diminish the conviction of thy guilt, or the hatred of thyself for sin and corruption; but dwell more constantly upon this, because thou art called and commanded so to do.

One thing remains fixed, - though he hath fore-ordained man to death, yet none shall be damned till his conscience be forced to say, that he is worthy of it a thousand times.

There is another whispering and suggestion of the wicked hearts of men against the predestination of God, which insinuates that God is an accepter of persons, and so accuses him of partial and unrighteous dealing, because he deals not equally with all men. Do ye not say this within yourselves - If he find all guilty, why does he not punish all? Why does he spare some? And if ye look upon all men in his first and primitive thought of them, as neither doing good nor evil, why does he not have mercy on all? But is thine eye evil because he is good? May he not do with his own as he pleases? Because he is merciful to some souls, shall men be displeased, and do well to be angry? Or, because he, of his own free grace, extends it, shall he be bound by a rule to do so with all? Is not he both just and merciful, and is it not meet that both be showed forth? If he punish thee, thou canst not complain, for thou deservest it; if he show mercy, why should any quarrel, for it is free and undeserved grace. By saving some, he shows his grace; by destroying others, he shows what all deserve. God is so far from being an accepter of persons according to their qualifications and conditions, that he finds nothing in any creature to cast the balance of his choice. If he did choose men for their works' sake, or outward privileges, and refuse others for the want of these, then it might be charged on him; but he rather goes over all these, nay, he finds none of these. In his first view of men he beholds them all alike, and nothing to determine his mind to one more than another, so that his choice proceedeth wholly from within his own breast - 'I will have mercy on whom I will.'

But then, thirdly, Our hearts object against the righteousness of God; that this fatal chain of predestination overturns all exhortations and persuasions to godliness, all care and diligence in well-doing. For thus do many profane souls conceive - If he be in one mind, who can turn him? Then, what need I pray, since he has already determined what shall be, and what shall become of me? His purpose will take effect whether I pray or pray not; my prayer will not make him change his mind; and if it be in his mind he will do it; if he hath appointed to save us, saved we shall be,

live as we list; if he hath appointed us to death, die we must, live as we can. Therefore men, in this desperate estate, throw themselves headlong into all manner of iniquity, and that with quietness and peace. Thus do many souls perish upon the stumbling-stone laid in Zion, and wrest the truths and counsels of God to their own destruction, even quite contrary to their true intent and meaning. Paul, (Eph. i. 4.) speaks another language - 'He hath chosen us in him, - that we should be holy and without blame.' His eternal counsel of life is so far from loosing the reins to men's lusts, that it is the only certain foundation of holiness; it is the very spring and fountain from whence our sanctification flows by an infallible course. This chain of God's counsels concerning us, hath also linked together the end and the means, - glory and grace, - happiness and holiness, - that there is no destroying of them. Without holiness it is impossible to see God; so that those who expect the one without any desire of, and endeavour after the other, they are upon a vain attempt to loose the links of this eternal chain. It is the only eternal choosing love of God, which separated so many souls from the common misery of men. It is that only which in time doth appear, and rise as it were from under ground, in the streams or fruits of sanctification. And if the ordinance of life stand, so shall the ordinance of fruits, John xv. 16. Eph. ii. 10. If he hath appointed thee to life, it is certain he has also ordained thee to fruits, and chosen thee to be holy; so that whatever soul casts by the study of this, there is too gross a brand of perdition upon its forehead. It is true, all is already determined with him, and he is incapable of any change, or 'shadow of turning.' Nothing then wants, but he is in one mind about it, and thy prayer cannot turn him. Yet a godly soul will pray with more confidence, because it knows that as he hath determined upon all its wants and receipts, so he hath appointed this to be the very way of obtaining what it wants. This is the way of familiarity and grace. He takes with his own to make them call; and he performs his purpose in answer to their cry. But suppose there were nothing to be expected by prayer, yet I say, that is not the thing thou shouldst look to, hut what is required of thee, as thy duty, to do that simply out of regard to his majesty, though thou shouldst never profit by it. This is true obedience, to serve him for his own pleasure, though we had no expectation of advantage by it. Certainly he doth not require thy supplications for this end, to move him, and incline his affections toward thee, but rather as a testimony of thy

homage and subjection to him; therefore, though they cannot make him of another mind than he is, or hasten performance before his purposed time - so that in reality they have no influence upon him - yet in praying, and praying diligently, thou declarest thy obligation to him, and respect to his majesty, which is all thou hast to look to, committing the event solely to his good pleasure.

The second objection Paul mentions, tends to justify men. 'Why then doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?' Since by his will he hath chained us with an inevitable necessity to sin, what can we do? Men cannot wrestle with him; why then doth he condemn and accuse them? 'But who art thou, O man, who disputest against God?' As if Paul had said, thou art a man, and so I am, why then lookest thou for an answer from me? Let us rather both consider whom we speak of, whom thou accusest, and whom I defend. It is God; what art thou then to charge him, or what am I so to clear him? Believing ignorance is better than presumptuous knowledge, especially in those forbidden secrets in which it is more concerning to be ignorant with faith and admiration, than to know with presumption. Dispute *thou*, O man, *I* will wonder; reply *thou*, *I* will believe! Doth it become thee, the clay, to speak so to thy Former, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' Let the consideration of the absolute right and dominion of God over us, - more than any creature hath over another, yea, or over themselves, - let that restrain us, and keep us within bounds. He may do with us what he pleaseth, for his own honour and praise; but it is his will that we should leave all the blame to ourselves, and rather behold the evident cause of our destruction in our sin, which is nearer us, than to search into a secret and incomprehensible cause in God's counsel.

---

## **LECTURE XVII.**

### **OF CREATION.**

HEB. 11.3. "*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*"

GEN. 1.1. "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*"

W E are come down from the Lord's purposes and decrees to the execution of them, which is partly in the works of creation, and partly in the works of providence. The Lord having resolved upon it to manifest his own glory, did, in that due and predeterminate time, apply his own power to this business. Having in great wisdom conceived a frame of the world in his mind from all eternity, he at length brings it forth, and makes it visible. We shall not insist upon the particular story of it, as it is set down in general, but only point at some things for our instruction.

First, Ye see who is the Maker of all things, of whom all things visible and invisible are,—it is God. And by this he useth to distinguish himself from idols, and the vanities of the nations, that he is that self-being who gave all things a being, who made the heavens and the earth. This is even the most glorious manifestation of an invisible and eternal Being. These things that are made, show him forth. If a man were travelling into a far country, and wandered into a wilderness where he could see no inhabitants, but only houses, villages, and cities built, he would straightway conceive there hath been some workmen at this; this hath not been done casually, but by the art of some reasonable creatures. How much more may we conceive when we look on the fabric of this world,—how the heavens are stretched out for a tent to cover them that dwell on the earth, and the earth settled and established as a firm foundation for men and living creatures to abide on,—how all are done in wisdom and discretion,—we cannot but straightway imagine that there must be some curious and wise contriver, and mighty creator of these things. It is here said, 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed.' Indeed faith only, in the word of God, gives true and distinct understanding of it. Innumerable have been the wanderings and mistakes of the wise of the world about this matter, wanting this lamp and light of the word of God, which alone gives a true and perfect account of this thing. Many strange dotages and fancies have they fallen into; yet certain it is that there is so much of the glory of God engraven without on the creature, and so much reason imprinted on the souls of men within, that, if it were not for that judicial plague of the Lord's darkening their understandings, who do not glorify him in as far as they know him, no man could seriously and soberly consider on the visible world, but he would be constrained to conceive an invisible God. Would not every one think within himself,—all

these things, so excellent as they are, cannot be out of chance, neither could they make themselves, so that of necessity they must owe what they are to something beside themselves? And of this it is certain, that it cannot have its original from any other thing, else there should be no end; therefore it must be some Supreme Being, that is from no other, and of which are all things.

But next, consider when these things were made,—'In the beginning.' And what beginning is that? Certainly the beginning of the creation, and of time, to exclude eternity. Whatever may be said of that subtilty, that God might have created the world from all eternity, for it appears, even in created things, that there is no necessity of the precedent existence of the cause, since in the same instant that many things are brought into being, in the same do they bring forth their effects, as the sun in the first instant of its creation did illuminate; yet certainly we believe, from the word of the Lord, that the world is actually but of a few thousand years standing. Six are not yet run out since the first creating word was spoken, and since the Spirit of the Lord moved upon the waters. And this we know also, that if it had pleased his majesty, he might have created the world many thousand years before that; so that it might have been at this day of ten hundred times ten thousand years standing, and he might have given it as many years as there are numbers of men and angels, beasts, yea, and pickles [grains or particles.—E D .] of sand upon the sea coast. But it was his good pleasure that that very point of time in which it was created should be the beginning of time; and from that he gives us a history of the world, upon which the church of God may rest, and so seek no other god but the God that made these heavens and earth.

This will not satisfy the ungodly curiosity and vanity of men's spirits, who will reproach the Maker for not applying sooner to his work, and sitting idle such an immeasurable space of eternity. Men wonder what he could be doing all that time, if we may call it time which hath no beginning, and how he was employed., I beseech you, restrain such thoughts in you with the fear of his glorious and incomprehensible majesty who gives no account of his matters! It is enough that this is his good pleasure to begin then; and he conceals his reasons, to prove the sobriety of our faith, that all men may learn an absolute and simple stooping to his majesty's

pleasure. Remember that which a godly man answered some wanton curious wit, who in scorn demanded the same of him—"He was preparing hell for curious and proud fools," said he. Let us then keep our hearts as with a bridle, and repress their boundless wanderings within bounds, lest we, by looking upward, before the beginning of the world, to see what God was doing, fall headlong into the eternal pit of destruction, and into the hands of the living God. God hath shown himself marvelously these six thousand years in the upholding this world. If we did consider these continued and repeated testimonies of his glory, we should be overwhelmed with what we find, though we search no farther. And suppose we would please ourselves to imagine that it had been created many years before, yet that doth not silence and stop the insolence of men's minds; for it always might be inquired, what the Lord was doing before that time. For eternity is as immensurable before those multiplied thousands of years as before naked six. Let our imagination sit down to subtract from eternity as many thousands as it can multiply by all the varieties and numbers in the world, yet there is nothing abated from eternity. It is as infinite in extent before that, as before the present six thousand; and yet we may conceive that the Lord hath purposed in the beginning of the world to declare more manifestly to our understanding his eternity, his self-sufficiency, and liberty;—his eternity, that when we hear of how short standing the creature is, we may go upward to God himself; and his everlasting being, before the foundations of it were laid, may shine forth more brightly to our admiration, when we can stretch our conceptions so immensurably as far beyond the beginning of the world: and yet God is still beyond the utmost reach of our imagination,—for who can find out the beginning of that which hath not a beginning to be found out,—and our most extended apprehensions fall infinitely short of the days of the Ancient of days. O how glorious, then, must his being be, and how boundless! His self-sufficiency and perfection doth herein appear, that from such an inconceivable space he was as perfect and blessed in himself as now. The creatures add nothing to his perfection or satisfaction. He was as well-pleased with his own all-comprehending being, and with the very thought and purpose of making this world, as now he is when it is made. The idea of it in his mind gave him as great contentment as the work itself when it is done! O, to conceive this aright, —it would fill a soul with astonishing and ravishing thoughts of his

blessedness! Poor men weary if they be not one way or other employed without; so indigent are all creatures at home, that they would weary if they went not abroad without themselves. But to think how absolutely God is well-pleased with himself, and how all imaginable perfections can add nothing to his eternal self-complacency and delight in his own being, it would certainly ravish a soul to delight in God also. And as his self-sufficiency doth herein appear, so his liberty and freedom is likewise manifested in it. If the world had been eternal, who would have thought that it was free for his majesty to make it or not, but that it had flowed from his glorious being with as natural and necessary a resultance as light from the body of the sun? But now it appears to all men, that for his pleasure they are made, and we are created (Rev. 4.11.); that it was simply the free and absolute motion of his will that gave a being to all things, which he could withhold at his pleasure or so long as he pleased.

Thirdly, We have it to consider in what condition he made all these things, 'very good;' and that to declare his goodness and wisdom. The creature may well be called a large volume, extended and spread out before the eyes of all men, to be seen and read of all. It is certain, if these things,—all of them in their orders and harmonies, or any of them in their beings and qualities,—were considered in relation to God's majesty, they would teach and instruct both the fool and the wise man in the knowledge of God. How many impressions hath he made in the creatures, which reflect upon any seeing eye the very image of God! To consider of what a vast and huge frame the heavens and the earth are, and yet but one throne to his majesty, the footstool whereof is this earth, wherein vain men erect many palaces; to consider what a multitude of creatures, what variety of fowls in the heaven, and what multiplicity of beasts upon the earth, what hosts, as Moses speaks (Gen. 2.1,) and yet that none of them all are useless, but all of them have some special ends and purposes they serve for, so that there is no discord nor disorder, nor superfluity nor want in all this monarchy of the world: all of them conspire together in such a discord, or disagreeing harmony, to one great purpose,—to declare the wisdom of him who 'made every thing beautiful in its time,' and every thing most fit and apposite for the use it was created for; so that the whole earth is full of his goodness. He makes every creature good one to another, to supply one another's necessities; and then, notwithstanding

of so many different natures and dispositions between elements, and things composed of them, yet all these contrarieties have such a commixion, and are so moderated by supreme art, that they make up jointly one excellent and sweet harmony or beautiful proportion in the world. O how wise must he be who alone contrived it all! We can do nothing except we have some pattern or copy before us; but now, upon this ground which God hath laid, man may fancy many superstructures. But when he stretched out the heaven, and laid the foundation of the earth, 'who, being his counsellor, taught him?' At whom did his Spirit take counsel? Certainly, none of all these things would have entered into the heart of man to consider or contrive, Isa. 40.12,13. Some ruder spirits do gaze upon the huge and prodigious pieces of the creation, as whales and elephants, &c.; but a wise Solomon will go to the school of the ant to learn the wisdom of God, and choose out such a simple and mean creature for the object of his admiration. Certainly, there are wonders in the smallest and most inconsiderable creatures which faith can contemplate. O the curious ingenuity and draught of the finger of God, in the composition of flies, bees, flowers, &c. Men ordinarily admire more some extraordinary things; but the truth is, the whole course of nature is one continued wonder, and that greater than any of the Lord's works without the line. The straight and regular line of the wisdom of God, who, in one constant course and tenor, hath ordained the actions of all his creatures, comprehends more wonders and mysteries, as the course of the sun, the motion of the sea, the hanging of the earth in the empty place upon nothing. These, we say, are the wonders indeed, and comprehend something in them which all the wonders of Egypt and the wilderness cannot parallel. But it is the stupid security of men, that are only awakened by some new and unusual passages of God's works beyond that straight line of nature.

Then, fourthly, Look upon the power of God in making all of nothing, which is expressed here in Heb. 11. There is no artificer but he must have matter, or his art will fail him, and he can do nothing. The mason must have timber and stones laid to his hand, or he cannot build a house; the goldsmith must have gold or silver ere he can make a cup or a ring. Take the most curious and quick inventor of them all,—they must have some matter to work upon, or their knowledge is no better than ignorance. All

that they can do is, to give some shape or form, or to fashion that in some new model which had a being before. So that, whatever men have done in the world, their works are all made up of those things which appear, and art and skill to form and fashion that excellently which before was in another mould and fashion. But God needs not sit idle for want of materials, because he can make his materials; and therefore, in the beginning he made heaven and earth, not as they now are, but he made first the matter and substance of this universe, but it was as yet a rude and confused chaos or mass, all in one lump, without difference. But then his majesty shows his wisdom and art, his excellent invention, in the following days of the creation, in ordering and beautifying and forming the world as it is, and that his power might be the more known; for how easy is it for him to do all this? There needs no more for it but a word,—let it be, and it is. 'He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' Not a word pronounced, and audibly composed of letters and syllables—mistake it not so—but a word inwardly formed, as it were, in his infinite Spirit. Even the inclination and beck of his will suffices for his great work. Ye see what labour and pains we have in our business,—how we toil and sweat about it,—what wrestlings and strivings in all things we do; but behold what a great work is done without pain and travail? It is a laborious thing to travel through a parcel of this earth, which is yet but as the point of the universe; it is troublesome to lift or carry a little piece of stone or clay; it is a toil even to look upward and number the stars of heaven. But it was no toil, no difficult thing to his majesty, to stretch out these heavens in such an infinite compass; for as large as the circumference of them is, yet it is as easy to him to compass them, as it is to us to span a finger-length or two. It is no difficulty to him to take up hills and mountains, as 'the dust of the balance,' in his hand, and weigh them in scales. Hath he not chained the vast and huge mass of the weighty earth and sea, in the midst of the empty place, without a supporter, without foundations or pillars? He hangeth it on nothing. Job 26.7. What is it, I pray you, that supports the clouds? Who is it that binds up their waters in such a way that the clouds are not rent under them, even though there be more abundance of water in them than is in all the rivers and waters round about us? Job 26.8. Who is it that restrains and sets bounds to the sea, that the waters thereof, though they roar, yet do not overflow the land, but this almighty Jehovah, whose decree and

commandment is the very compass, the bulwark over which they cannot flow? And all this he doth with more facility than men can speak. If there were a creature that could do all things by speaking, that were a strange power. But yet that creature might be wearied of speaking much. But he speaks, and it is done. His word is a creating word of power, which makes things that are not to be, and there is no wearying of him besides, for he is almighty and cannot faint. But why then did he take six days for his work? Might he not with one word of his power have commanded this world to issue out of his omnipotent virtue thus perfect as it is? What needed all this compass? Why took he six days, who in a moment could have done it all with as much facility? Indeed herein the Lord would have us to adore his wisdom as well as his power. He proceeds from more imperfect things to more perfect ;—from a confused chaos to a beautiful world,—from motion to rest,—to teach man to walk through this wilderness and valley of tears, this shapeless world, into a more beautiful habitation; through the tossings of time, into an eternal sabbath of rest, whither their works shall follow them, and they shall rest from their labours. He would teach us to take a steadfast look of his work, and that we should be busied all the days of our pilgrimage and sojourning in the consideration of the glorious characters of God upon the works of his hands. We see that it is but passing looks and glances of God's glory we take in the creatures; but the Lord would have us to make it our work and business all the week through, as it was his to make them. He would in this teach us his loving care of men, who would not create man till he had made for him so glorious a house, replenished with all good things. It had been a darksome and irksome life to have lived in the first chaos without light; but he hath stretched over him the heavens as his tent, and set lights in them to distinguish times and seasons, and ordained the waters their proper bounds and peculiar channels, and then maketh the earth to bring forth all manner of fruit; and when all is thus disposed, then he creates man. To this God, the Maker of heaven and earth, be glory and praise.

---

## **LECTURE XVIII.**

### **OF CREATION.**

HEB. 11.3. *"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."*

HEB. 1.14. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

THERE is nothing more generally known than this, that God at the beginning made the heaven and the earth, and all the host of them, the upper or the celestial, the lower or sublunary world. But yet there is nothing so little believed or laid to heart. 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed.' It is one of the first articles of the creed, indeed,—'Father, almighty Maker of heaven and earth.' But I fear that creed is not written in the tables of flesh, that is, the heart. There is a twofold mistake among men about the point of believing. Some, and the commoner sort, do think it is no other than simply to know such a thing, and not to question it; to hear it, and not to contradict it, or object against it; therefore they do flatter themselves in their own eyes, and do account themselves to have faith in God, because they can say over all the articles of their belief. They think the word is true, and they never doubted of it. But, I beseech you, consider how greatly you mistake a main matter of weighty concernment. If you will search it, as before the Lord, you will find you have no other belief of these things than children use to have, whom you teach to think or say any thing. There is no other ground of your not questioning these truths of the gospel, but because you never consider them, and so they pass for current. Do not deceive yourselves: 'with the heart man believes.' It is a heart-business, a soul-matter, no light and useless opinion, or empty expression, which you have learned from a child. You say, you believe in God, the Maker of heaven and earth; and so say children, who doubt no more of it than you, and yet in sadness they do not retire within their own hearts, to think what an One he is. They do not remember him in the works of his hands. There is no more remembrance of that true God than if no such thing were known. So it is among you,—you would think we wronged you if we said, ye believed not that God made the world; and yet certainly, all men have not this faith, whereby they understand truly in their heart, the power and wisdom and goodness of God appearing in it; that is the gift of God, only given to them

that shall be saved. If I should say, that you believe not the most common principles of religion, you will think it hard; and yet there is no doubt of it, that the most common truths are least believed. And the reason is plain, because men have learned them by tongue, and there is none that question them; and therefore, very few ever, in sadness and in earnest, consider of them. You say that God made heaven and earth, but how often do ye think on that God? And how often do you think on him with admiration? Do ye at all wonder at the glory of God when ye gaze on his works? Is not this volume always obversant before your eyes—every thing showing and declaring this glorious Maker. Yet who is it that taketh more notice of him than if he were not at all? Such is the general stupidity of men, that they never ponder and digest these things in their heart, till their soul receive the stamp of the glory and greatness of the invisible God, which shines most brightly in those things that are visible; and be in some measure transformed in their minds, and conformed to those glorious appearances of him, which are engraven in great characters in all that do at all appear. There is another mistake peculiar to some, especially the Lord's people, that they think faith is limited to some few particular and more unknown and hidden truths and mysteries of the gospel. Ye think that it is only true believing, to embrace some special gospel-truths, which the multitude of people know nothing of, as the tenor of the covenants of grace and works, &c. And for other common principles of God's making and ruling the world, you think that a common thing to believe them. But, saith the apostle, 'through faith we understand that the worlds were framed.' It is that same faith spoken of in the end of the 10th chapter, by which the 'just shall live.' So then, here is a point of saving faith, to believe with the heart in God, the Creator and Father Almighty; to take a view of God's almighty power, and sufficient goodness and infinite wisdom, shining in the fabric of the world, and that with delight and admiration at such a glorious fountain-being; to rise up to his majesty by the degrees of his creatures. This is the climbing and aspiring nature of faith. You see how much those saints in the Old Testament were in this; and certainly they had more excellent and befitting thoughts of God than we. It should make Christians ashamed, that both heathens, who had no other book opened to them but that of nature, did read it more diligently than we; and that the saints of old, who had not such a plain testimony of God as we now have, did yet learn more

out of the book of the creature than we do both out of it and the scriptures. We look on all things with such a careless eye; and do not observe what may be found of God in them. I think, verily, there are many Christians, and ministers of the gospel, who do not ascend into those high and ravishing thoughts of God, in his being and working, as would become even mere naturalists. How little can they speak of his majesty, or think as it becomes his transcendent glory! There is little in sermons or discourses that holds out any singular admiring thoughts of a Deity; but in all these we are as common and careless as if he were an idol.

It is not in vain that it is expressed thus: 'through faith we know that the worlds were framed.' For certainly the firm believing and pondering of this one truth would be of great moment and use to a Christian in all his journey. You may observe in what stead it is to the saints in scripture: this raises up a soul to high thoughts, and suitable conceptions of his glorious name; and so conforms the worship of his majesty unto his excellency. It puts the stamp of divinity upon it, and spiritualizes the thoughts and affections, so as to put a true difference between the true God, and the gods that made not the heavens and the earth. Alas! the worship of many Christians speaks out no diviner or higher object than a creature; it is so cold, so formal and empty, so vain and wandering. There is no more respect testified unto him, than we would give unto some eminent person. You find in the scripture how the strain of the saints' affections and devotion rises, when they take up God in his absolute supremacy above the creatures, and look on him as the alone fountain of all that is worth the name of perfection in them. A soul in that consideration cannot choose but assign unto him the most eminent seat in the heart, and gather those affections which are scattered after the creatures, into one channel, to pour them out on him who is all in all, and hath all that which is lovely in the creatures in an eminent degree. Therefore know what you are formed for,—to show forth his praise, to gather and take up from the creatures all the fruits of his praise, and offer them up to his majesty. This was the end of man, and this is the end of a Christian. You are made for this, and you were redeemed for this, to read upon the volumes of his works and word, and from thence extract songs of praise to his majesty.

As this would be of great moment to the right worshipping of God, and to the exercise of true holiness, so it is most effectual to the establishing of a soul in the confidence of the promises of God. When a soul by faith understands the world was made by God, then it relies with confidence upon that same word of God, as a word of power, and hopes against hope. There are many things in the Christian's way betwixt him and glory, which look as insuperable. Thou art often emptied into nothing, and stripped naked of all encouragements, and there is nothing remaining but the word of God's promises to thee and to the church, which seems contrary to sense and reason. Now, I say, if thou do indeed believe that the world was made by God, then out of all question thou mayest silence all thy fears with this one thought—God created this whole frame out of nothing, he commanded the light to shine out of darkness, then certainly he can give a being to his own promises. Is not his word of promise as sure and effectual as his word of command? This is the grand encouragement of the church, both offered by God, from Isa. chap. 40., and made use of by his saints, as David, Hezekiah, &c. What is it would disquiet a soul if it were reposed on this rock of creating power and faithfulness? This would always sound in its ears,—'Faint not, weary not, Jacob, I am God, and none else. The portion of Jacob is not like others.' Be it inward or outward difficulties,—suppose hell and earth combined together,—let all the enemies of a soul, or of the church assemble,—here is one for all. The God that made the heaven and the earth can speak, and it is done; command, and it stands fast! He creates peace, and who then can make trouble, when he gives quietness to a nation, or to a person? Almighty power works in saints, and for saints. Let us trust in him!

---

## **LECTURE XIX.**

### **OF THE CREATION OF MAN.**

GEN. 1.26, 27. *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them."*

EPH. 4.24. *"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."*

HEB . 3.10. *"Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways."*

WHILE we descend from the meditation of the glory of God shining in the heavens, in sun, moon, and stars, unto the consideration of the Lord's framing of man after this manner, we may fall into admiration with the Psalmist, (Psalm 8.) 'Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?' It might indeed drown us in wonder, and astonish us, to think what special notice he hath taken of such a creature from the very beginning, and put more respect upon him than upon all the more excellent works of his hands. You find here the creation of man expressed in other terms than were used before. He said, 'Let there be light,' and it was; let there be dry land, &c. But it is not such a simple word as that, but 'let us make man in our image;' as if God had called a consultation about it. What! was there any more difficulty in this than in the rest of his works? Needed he any advisement about his frame and constitution? No certainly, for there was as great work of power, as curious pieces of art and wisdom, which were instantly done upon his word. He is not a man that he should advise or consult. As there is no difficulty nor impediment in the way of his power,—he doth all that he pleases, *ad nutum*, at his very word or nod, so easy are impossibilities to him,—so there is nothing hard to his wisdom, no knot but it can loose, nothing so curious or exquisite but he can as curiously contrive it, as the most common and gross pieces of the creation; and therefore, 'he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.' But ye have here expressed, as it were, a counsel of the holy and blessed Trinity about man's creation; to signify to us what peculiar respect he puts upon that creature, and what special notice he takes of us, that of his own free purpose and good pleasure he was to single and choose out man from among all other creatures, for the more eminent demonstration of his glorious attributes of grace, mercy, and justice upon him; and likewise to point out the excellency that God did stamp upon man in his creation beyond the rest of the creatures, as the apostle shows the excellency of Christ above angels, 'To which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art

my son?' Heb. 1.5. So we may say, of which of the creatures said he at any time, "Come, let us make them in our image after our likeness?" O how should this make us listen to hear, earnest to know what man once was, how magnified of God, and set above the works of his hands? There is a great desire in men to search into their original, and to trace backward the dark footsteps of antiquity, especially if they be put in expectation of attaining any honourable or memorable extraction? How will men love to hear of the worth of their ancestors? But what a stupidity doth possess the most part, in relation to the high fountain and head of all, that they do not aim so high as Adam, to know the very estate of human nature? Hence it is that the most part of people lie still astonished, or rather stupid and senseless, after this great fall of man, because they never look upward to the place and dignity from whence man did fall. It is certain, you will never rightly understand yourselves or what you are, till ye know first what man was made. You cannot imagine what your present misery is, till you once know what that felicity was in which man was made,—'let us make man in our image.' Some have called man microcosmoV , 'a little world,' a compend of the world; because he hath heaven and earth as it were married together in him—two most remote and distant natures, the dust of the earth, and the immortal spirit, which is called the breath of God, sweetly linked and conjoined together, with a disposition and inclination one to another. The Lord was in this piece of workmanship as it were to give a narrow and short compend of all his works, and so did associate in one piece with marvelous wisdom, being, living, moving, sense and reason, which are scattered abroad in the other creatures, so that a man carries these wonders about with him, which he admires without him. At his bare and simple word, this huge frame of the world started out of nothing; but in this, he acts the part of a cunning artificer, —'Let us make man.' He makes rather than creates; first raises the walls of flesh, builds the house of the body with all its organs, all its rooms; and then he puts in a noble and divine guest to dwell in it. He breathes in it the breath of life. He incloses as it were an angel within it, and marries these together in the most admirable union and communion that can be imagined, so that they make up one man.

But that which the Lord looks most into in this work, and would have us most to consider, is that image of himself that he did imprint on man,

—'Let us make man in our own image.' There was no creature but it had some engravings of God upon it, some curious draughts and lineaments of his power, wisdom, and goodness upon it, and therefore the heavens are said to show forth his glory (Psalm 19), &c. But whatever they have, it is but the lower part of that image, some dark shadows and resemblances of him; but that which is the last of his works, he makes it according to his own image, *tanquam ab ultima manu*. He therein gives out himself to be read and seen of all men as in a glass. Other creatures are made as it were according to the similitude of his footstep,—*ad similitudinem vestigii*,—but man *ad similitudinem faciei*,—according to the likeness of his face,—'in our image, after our likeness.' It is true there is only Jesus Christ his Son, who is 'the brightness of his glory, and the express substantial image of his person,' who resembles him perfectly and thoroughly in all properties, so that he is *alter idem*, another self both in nature, properties, and operations,—so like him that he is one with him, so that it is rather an *oneness*, than a likeness. But man he created according to his own image, and gave him to have some likeness to himself,—likeness I say, not sameness or oneness. That is high indeed, to be like God. The notion and expression of it imports some strange thing. How could man be like God, who is infinite, incomprehensible, whose glory is not communicable to another? It is true indeed, in those incommunicable properties he hath not only no equal, but none to like him. In these he is to be adored, and admired as infinitely transcending all created perfections and conceptions. But yet in others he has been pleased to hold forth himself to be imitated and followed. And that this might be done, he first stamps them upon man in his first moulding of him. And if ye would know what these are particularly, the apostle expresses them, 'in knowledge,' (Col. 3.10.) 'in righteousness and true holiness,' Eph. 4.24. This is the 'image of him who created him,' which the Creator stamped on man, that he might seek him, and set him apart for himself to keep communion with him, and to bless him. There is a spirit given to man, with a capacity to know and to will; and here is a draught and lineament of God's face which is not engraven on any sensitive creature. It is one of the most noble and excellent operations of life, in which a man is most above beasts, to reflect upon himself, and to know himself and his Creator. There are natural instincts given to other things, natural propensions to those things that are convenient to their

own nature; but none of them have so much as a capacity to know what they are, or what they have. They cannot frame a notion of him who gave them a being, but are only proportionate to the discerning of some sensible things, and can reach no further. He hath limited the eye within colours and light; he hath set a bound to the ear that it cannot act without sounds; and so to every sense he hath assigned its own proper stanse, in which it moves. But he teaches man knowledge, and he enlarges the sphere of his understanding beyond visible or sensible things, to things invisible,—to spirits. And this capacity he has put in the soul,—to know all things, and itself among the rest. The eye discerns light, but sees not itself; but he gives a spirit to man to know himself and his God. And then there is a willing power in the soul, by which it diffuses itself towards any thing that is conceived as good; the understanding directing, and the will commanding according to its direction, and then the whole faculties and senses obeying such commands, which makes up an excellent draught of the image of God. There was a sweet proportion and harmony in Adam; all was in due place and subordination. The motions of immortal man did begin within. The lamp of reason did shine and give light to it; and till that went before, there was no stirring, no choosing, no refusing; and when reason—which was one sparkle of the divine nature, or a ray of God's light reflected into the soul of man,—when once that did appear to the discerning of good and evil, this power was in the soul, to apply the whole man accordingly, to choose the good and refuse the evil. It had not been a lively resemblance of God to have a power of knowing and willing simply, unless these had been beautified and adorned with supernatural and divine graces of spiritual light and holiness and righteousness. These make up the lively colour, and complete the image of God upon the soul.

There was a divine light which did shine in upon the understanding, ever till sin interposed and eclipsed it; and from the light of God's countenance did the sweet heat and warmness of holiness and uprightness in the affections proceed; so that there was nothing but purity and cleanness in the soul, no darkness of ignorance, no muddiness of carnal affections, but the soul pure and transparent, to receive the refreshing and enlightening rays of God's glorious countenance. And this was the very face and beauty of the soul. It is that only that is the beauty and excellency of the creature,—conformity to God. And this was

throughout, in understanding and affections; the understanding conformed to his understanding, discerning between good and evil. And conformed it behoved to be, for it was but a ray of that sun, a stream of that fountain of wisdom, and a light derived from that primitive light of God's understanding. And then the will did sympathize as much with his will, approving and choosing what he approved, and refusing that which he hated. *Idem velle atque nolle, ea demum firma amicitia est.* That was the conjunction, and it was more strict than any tie among men. There were not two wills; they were, as it were, one. The love of God reflecting into the soul, did, as it were, carry the soul back again unto him; and that was the conforming principle which fashioned the whole man without and within, to his likeness and to his obedience, Thus man was formed for communion with God; this likeness behoved to be, or they could not join as friends.

But now this calls us to a sad meditation, to think from whence we have fallen, and so how great our fall is. To fall from such a blessed estate, that must be great misery! Satan hath spoiled us of our rich treasure, that glorious image of holiness, and hath drawn upon our souls the very visage of hell, the lineaments of his hellish countenance. But the most part of men lie stupid, insensible of any thing, as beasts that are felled with their fall, that can neither find pain nor rise. If we could but return and consider what are all those sad and woful consequences of sin in the world,—what a strange distemper it hath put in the creation,—what miseries that one fall hath brought on all mankind,—I am sure by these bruises we might conjecture what a strange fall it hath been. Sin did interpose between God and us, and this darkened our souls and killed them. The light of knowledge was put out, and the life of holiness extinguished, and now there remains nothing of all that stately building, but some ruins of common principles of reason and honesty engraven on all men's consciences, which may show unto us what the building hath been. We have fallen from holiness, and so from happiness. Our souls are deformed and defiled. You see what an ill-favoured thing it is, to see a child wanting any members [That is, Lacking any parts of its body—JTK]. O if sin were visible, how ugly would the shape of the soul be to us, since it lost the very proportion and visage of it, that is, God's image! Let us consider this doctrine, that we may know from whence we have fallen,

and into what a gulf of sin and misery we have fallen, that the news of Jesus Christ, a Mediator and Redeemer of fallen man, may be sweet unto us. Thus it pleased the Lord to let his image be marred and quite spoiled in us, for he had this design to repair it and renew it better than of old, and for this end he hath created Christ according to his image. He hath stamped that image of holiness upon his flesh to be a pattern,—and not only so, but a pledge also,—of restoring such souls as flee unto him for refuge, unto that primitive glory and excellency. Know then, that he hath made his Son like unto us, that we might again be made like unto him. He said, let one of us be made man, in the counsel of redemption, that so it might again be said, let man be made like unto us, in our image. It is a second creation must do it; and O that you would look upon your hearts to inquire if it be framed in you! Certainly you must again be created into that image if you belong to Christ. To him be praise and glory.

---

## **LECTURE XX.**

### **GOD'S WORKS OF PROVIDENCE.**

ROM. 11.36. *"For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever, Amen."*

PSALM 103.19. *"The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens: and his kingdom ruleth over all."*

MATT. 10.29. *"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."*

THERE is nothing more commonly confessed in words, than that the providence of God reaches to all the creatures and their actions; but I believe there is no point of religion so superficially and slightly considered by the most part of men. The most part ponder none of these divine truths. There is nothing above their senses which is the subject of their meditations. And for the children of God, I fear many do give such truths of God too common and coarse entertainment in their minds, through a conceit of the commonness of them. I know not what we are taken up with in this age,—with some particular truths mere remote from the knowledge of others in former times, or some particular cases

concerning ourselves? You will find the most part of Christians stretch not their thoughts beyond their own conditions or interests, or some particular questions about faith and repentance, &c. And in the mean time the most weighty points of religion, which have been the subject of the meditation and admiration of saints in all ages, are wholly laid aside through a misapprehension of their commonness, as if a man would despise the sun and the air, and prefer some rare piece of stone or timber to them. Certainly, as in the disposal of the world, the Lord hath in great wisdom and goodness made the most needful and useful things most common—those without which man cannot live are always obvious to us, so that if any thing be more rare, it is not necessary—so in this universe of religion, he in mercy and wisdom hath so framed all, that those points of truth and belief which are most near the substance of salvation and necessary to it, and most fit to exercise us in true godliness,—these are everywhere to be found, partly engraven on men's hearts, partly set down most clearly and often in scripture, that a believing soul can look nowhere but it must breathe in that air of the gospel, and look upon that common Sun of righteousness, God the Creator, and the healing Sun, Christ the Redeemer, shining everywhere in scripture. The general providence of God and the special administration of Christ the Saviour, these are common, and these are essential to our happiness. Therefore the meditation of Christians should run most upon them, and not always about some particular questions or debates of the time. It is a strange thing how people should be more affected with a discourse on the affairs of the time, or on some inward thoughts of their own hearts, than if one should speak of God's universal kingdom over all men and nations. That is accounted a general and ordinary discourse; even as if men would set at nought the sun's light, because it shines to all, and every day; or would despise the water, because it may be found everywhere. Let the sun be removed for some few days, and O what would the world account of it beyond all your curious devices or rare enjoyments! This is it which would increase to more true godliness, if rightly believed, than many other things ye are busied withal. It is our general view of them makes them but general. I spoke once upon this word, Rom. 11.36. but only in reference to the end of man, which is God's glory; but the words do extend further, and we must now consider what further they hold forth. The apostle hath been speaking of the Lord's unsearchable ways and

judgments towards men in the dispensation of grace and salvation, how free and how absolute he is in that. And this he strengthens by the supreme wisdom of God, who did direct him. Why dost thou, O man, take upon thee to direct him now? For, where was there any counsellor when he alone contrived all the frame of this world, and then, by sovereign highness and supremacy over the creatures, disposed of them? For he is a debtor to none, therefore none can quarrel him for giving or not giving: for who was it that gave him first, for which he should give a recompense? Was there any could prevent him with a gift? Nay, none could, saith he, 'for of him, and through him, and to him are all things:' and therefore he must prevent men. For from whence should that gift of the creature, which could oblige him, have its rise? It must be of God, if it be a creature, and therefore he is in no man's common; he must give it ere we have it to give him again.

The words are most comprehensive. They comprehend all things, and that is very large. There is nothing without this compass, and they comprehend all the dependence of things. Things depend upon that which made them, that which preserves them, and that for which they are made. All things depend on him as their producing cause that gives them a being; 'for of him are all things.' They also depend on him as their conserving cause, who continues their being by that selfsame influence wherewith he gave it; 'for through him are all things.' And then they depend on him as their final cause, for whose glory they are, and are continued; for, 'to him are all things.' Thus you have the beginning, the continuance, and the end of the whole creation. This word may lead us through all; from God, as the beginning, the alpha and original of their being; through God, as the only supporter, confirmer, and upholder of their being; and unto God, as the very end for which they have their being. Now, to travel within this compass,—to walk continually within this circle, and to go along this blessed round.—to begin at God, and to go along all our way with him, till we arrive and end at God,—and thus to do continually in the journey of meditation, when it surveys any of his works,—this were, indeed, the very proper work, and the special happiness man was created for; and, I may say, a great part of that which a Christian is created for. Again, there would be nothing more powerful to the conforming of a soul to God, and to his obedience and fear than this,

to have that persuasion firmly rooted in the heart—that of God 'are all things;' that whatever it be, good or evil, that befalls us or others,—whatever we observe in the world, that is the subject of the thoughts and discourses of men, and turns men's eyes after them,—that all that is of God; that is, it is in the world; it started out of nothing at his command; it is, because his power gave it a being; and in this consideration to overlook, and in a manner forget, all second causes; to have such affecting and uptaking thoughts of the first principle of all these motions, as to regard the lower wheels, that are next us, no more than the hand or the sword that a man strikes us with: as if these second causes had no influence of their own, but were merely acted and moved by this supreme power, as if God did nothing by them, but only at their presence. We should so labour to look on those things he doth by creatures, as if he did them alone without the creatures; as if he were this day creating a world. Certainly, the solid faith of God's providence will draw off the covering of the creature, and espy the secret almighty power which acts in every thing to bring forth his good pleasure concerning them. And then to consider, with that same seriousness of meditation, that the same everlasting arm which made them, is under them to support them; that the most noble and excellent creatures are but streams, rays, images, and shadows of God's majesty, which, as they have their being by derivation, so they have their continuance by that same continued influence; so that if he would interpose between himself and them, or withdraw his countenance, or stop his influence, the most sufficient of them all should vanish, as the sun-beams dry up the streams of a fountain, and disappear as the image of the glass, Psalm 104.29,30. O that place were a pertinent object of a Christian's meditation; how much of God is to be pressed out of it by a serious pondering of it! 'Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created.' It is even with the very being and faculties of the creature as with the image in the glass, which, when the face removes, it is seen no more. The Lord, as it were, breathes into them a being; and when he takes in his breath they perish; and when he sends it out again they are renewed. We do not wonder at the standing of the world, but think, if we had been witnesses of the making of it, we would have been filled with admiration. But certainly it is only our stupidity that doth not behold that same wonder continued, for what is the upholding

of this by his power, but a very continued and repeated creation,—which influence were able to bring a world out of nothing? If this had not been before the virtue and power he employs now in making them subsist, that same alone, without any addition of power, would have in the beginning made all this to be of nothing; so that the continuance of the world is nothing else but an uninterrupted and constant flux and emanation of these things from God, as of light from the body of the sun. And then to meditate how all these things are for him and his glory, though we know no use nor end of them, yet that his majesty hath appointed them to show forth, one way or other, the glory of his name in them; and those things which to our first and foolish apprehensions seem most contrary to him, and, as it were, to spread a cloud of darkness over his glorious name—the sins and perverse doings of men and angels; the many disorders and confusions in the world, which seem to reflect some way upon him; that yet he hath holy and glorious ends in them all, yea, that himself is the end of all; I say, to meditate on these things till our soul received the stamp of reverence, and fear, and faith in God,—this would certainly be the most becoming exercise of a Christian, to bring all things down from God, that we might return and ascend with all things again unto God.

This is the most suitable employment of a man, as reasonable, much more as a Christian; that very duty he was created for. 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise,' Isa. 43.21. And this is the showing forth of his praise, to follow forth the footsteps of God in the word and in the world; and to ponder these paths of divine power and goodness and wisdom, and to acknowledge him with our heart in all these. He made many creatures on which his glory and praise is showed forth, and he made this creature man to show forth that praise and that glory which is showed forth in other creatures. O but this is a divine office! It is strange how our hearts are carried forth towards base things, and busied in many vain, impertinent, and base employments, and scarce ever mind this great one we were created for.

Certainly, this is the employment we were made for; to deduce all things from God till we can again reduce all to him with glory; to bring all down from his everlasting counsels, until we send all up to his eternal glory, together with the sacrifice of our hearts; to behold all things to be of him,

that is, of his eternal counsel and decree,—to have their rise in the bosom of that; and then, through him, to proceed out of the bosom of his decree and purpose, by his power, *quasi obstetricante potentia*, and then to return with all the praise and glory to his ever-glorious name, 'for whom are all things.' There is none but they will allow God some government in the world. Some would have him as a king, commanding and doing all by deputies and substitutes. Some would have his influence general, like the sun's upon sublunary things; but how shallow are all men's thoughts in regard of that which is? God has prepared, indeed, his throne in the heavens. That is true, that his glory doth manifest itself in some strange and majestic manner above; but the whole tenor of Scripture shows that he is not shut up in heaven, but that he immediately cares for, governs, and disposes all thing in the world; for his kingdom is over all. It is the weakness of kings, not their glory, that they have need of deputies; it is his glory, not baseness, to look to the meanest of his creatures. It is a poor resemblance and empty shadow that kings have of him; he rules in the kingdoms of men, and to him belongs the dominion and the glory. He deserves the name of a king, whose beck heaven and earth obey. Can a king command that the sea flow not? Can a parliament act and ordain that the sun rise not? Or will these obey them? Yet at his decree and command the sun is dark, the sea stands still, the mountains tremble; 'at thy rebuke the sea fled.' Alas! what do we mean that we look upon creatures, and act ourselves as if we were independent in our being and moving? How many things fall out, and you call them casual, and attribute them to fortune? How many things do the world gaze upon, think upon, and discourse upon, and yet not one thought, one word of God all the time? What more contingent than the falling of a sparrow on the ground? And yet even that is not unexpected to him, but it flows from his will and counsel. What less taken notice of or known than the hairs of your head? Yet these are particularly numbered by him, and so that no power in the world can add to them or diminish from them, without his counsel. O what would the belief of this do to raise our hearts to suitable thoughts of God above the creatures; to increase the fear, faith, and love of God; and to abate from our fear of men, and our vain and unprofitable cares and perplexities? How would you look upon the affairs of men,—the counsels, contrivances, endeavours, and successes of men,—when they are turning things upside down, and plotting the ruin of his people, and

establishing themselves alone in the earth? What would you think of all these revolutions at this time? Many souls are astonished at them, and stand gazing at what is done and to be done. And this is the very language of your spirits and ways; The Lord hath forsaken the earth; the Lord seeth not. This is the language of our parliaments and people. They do imagine that they are doing their own business, and making all sure for themselves. But, O what would a soul think that could escape above them all, and arise up to the first wheel of present motions! A soul that did stand upon the exalted tower of the word of God, and looked off it by the prospect of faith, would presently discover the circle in which all these wanderings and changes are confined, and see men, states, armies, nations, and all of them doing nothing but turning about in a round, as a horse in a mill, from God's eternal purpose, by his almighty power, to his unspeakable glory. You might behold all these extravagant motions of the creatures, inclosed within those limits, that they must begin here, and end here, though themselves are so beastly that they neither know of whom nor for whom their counsels and actions are. Certainly, Satan cannot break without this compass, to serve his own humour. Principalities and powers cannot do it. If they will not glorify him [God], he shall glorify himself by them and upon them.

---

## **LECTURE XXI.**

### **OF THE FIRST COVENANT MADE WITH MAN.**

GEN. 2.17. *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."*

GEN. 1.26. *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."*

THE state wherein man was created at first, you heard was exceeding good,—all things very good, and he best of all, the choicest external and visible piece of God's workmanship, made according to the most excellent pattern,—'after our image.' Though it be a double misery to be once

happy, yet seeing the knowledge of our misery is, by the grace of God, made the entry to a new happiness, it is most necessary to take a view of what man once was, that we may be more sensible of what he now is. You may take up this image and likeness in three branches.

First, there was a sweet conformity of the soul in its understanding, will, and affections unto God's holiness and light,—a beautiful light in the mind, derived from that fountain-light, by which Adam did exactly know both divine and natural things. What a great difference doth yet appear between a learned man and an ignorant rude person, though it be but in relation to natural things! The one is but like a beast in comparison of the other. O how much more was there between Adam's knowledge and that of the most learned! The highest advancement of art and industry in this life reaches no further than to a learned ignorance of the mysteries in the works of God, and yet there is a wonderful satisfaction to the mind in it. But how much sweet complacency hath Adam had, whose heart was so enlarged as to know both things higher and lower, their natures, properties, and virtues, and several operations! No doubt could trouble him, no difficulty vex him, no controversy or question perplex him; but above all, the know]edge of that glorious and eternal Being, that gave him a being, and infused such a spirit into him,—the beholding of such infinite treasures of wisdom, and goodness, and power in him, what an amiable and refreshful sight would it be, when there was no cloud of sin and ignorance to interpose and eclipse the full enjoyment of that uncreated light! When the aspect of the sun makes the moon so glorious and beautiful, what may you conceive of Adam's soul framed with a capacity to receive light immediately from God's countenance! How fair and beautiful would that soul be, until the dark cloud of sin did interpose itself! Then consider, what a beautiful rectitude and uprightness, what a comely order and subordination would ensue upon this light, and make his will and affections wonderfully good. 'God made man upright,' Eccles. 7.29. There was no thraw [That is, twist.—E D .] or crack in all,—all the powers of the soul bending upright towards that Fountain of all goodness. Now the soul is crooked and bends downward towards those base earthly things that are the abasement of the soul; then it looked upright towards God,—had no appetite, no delight but in him and his fullness, and had the moon or changeable world under its feet. There was a beauty of holiness

and righteousness which were the colours that did perfect and adorn those lineaments of the image of God which knowledge did draw in the soul. 'He was a burning and a shining light,' may be truly said of Adam, who had as much life as light, as much delight in God as knowledge of him. This was the right constitution and disposition of man,—his head lifted up in holiness and love towards God; his arms stretched out in righteousness and equity towards man; and all the affections of the man under their command, they could not trouble this sea with any tempest, because they were under a powerful commander, who kept them under such awe and obedience as the centurion his servants,—saying to one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, sending out love one way, holy hatred another way. These were as wings to the bird to flee upon, as wheels to the chariot to run upon; though now it be turned just contrary, that the chariot draws the coachman, because the motion is downward. There could be no motion in an upright man's soul till the holy and righteous will gave out a sentence upon it. That was the *primum mobile*, which was turned about itself by such an *intelligentia* as the understanding. And so it was in Christ,—affection could not move him, but he did move his own affections, he troubled himself. In us the servant rides on horses, and the prince walks on foot; even as in a distempered society, the laws and ordinances proceed by an unnatural way, from the violence of unruly subjects usurping over their masters. Holy and righteous man could both raise up his affections, and compose them again, they were under such nurture and discipline. He could have said, Hitherto, and no further; in which there was some resemblance of God ruling the raging and unruly sea. But now, if once they get entry into our city, they are more powerful than the governor, and will not take laws from him, but give him rather. When we have given way to our passions, they do next what they please, not what we permit.

Next his excellency consisted in such an immunity and freedom from all fear of misery and danger, from all touch of sorrow or pain, and did enjoy such a holy complacency and delight in his own estate, as made him completely happy. In this he was like God. This is his blessedness, that he is absolutely well-pleased in himself, that, he is without the reach of fear and danger, that none can impair it, none can match it. 'I am God and none else;' that is sufficiency of delight to know himself, and his own

sufficiency. Indeed, man was made changeable, mutably good, that in this he might know God was above him, and so might have ground of watchfulness and dependence upon him for continuance of his happiness who made him happy. But being made so upright, no disquieting fear nor perplexing care could trouble him. Then, lastly, if you add unto this, holy satisfaction with his own state and freedom, the dominion and sovereignty he had over the creatures, as a consequent flowing from that image, you may imagine what a happy creature he was. Whatsoever contentment or satisfaction the creatures could afford, all of them willingly and pleasantly would concur to bestow it upon man, without his care or toil, as if they had accounted it their happiness to serve him. What more excellent than this order? Man counting it his happiness and delight to serve God, and creatures esteeming it their happiness to serve man, all things running towards him with all their goodness, as to a common centre; and he returning all to God, from whence they did immediately flow. Thus, besides the fullness and riches of God's goodness immediately conferred upon man, he was enriched with all the store and goodness that the earth was full of.

God having made man thus, and furnished him after this manner, he gave him a law, and then he made a covenant with him. There was a law first imprinted into Adam, and then a law prescribed unto him. There was a law written in his heart, the remainder of which Paul saith makes the Gentiles 'inexcusable;' but it was perfectly drawn in him. All the principles and notions of good and evil were exactly drawn in it. He had a natural discerning of them, and a natural inclination to all good, and aversion from all evil, as there is a kind of law imposed by God upon other creatures, which they constantly keep, and do not swerve from, even his decree and commandment, to the obedience of which they are composed and framed. The sea hath a law and command to flow and ebb, and it is that command that breaks its proud waves on the sand, when they threaten to overflow mountains. The beasts obey a law, written in their natures, of eating and drinking, of satisfying their senses, and every one hath its several instinct and propension to several operations; so God gave a more noble instinct unto man, suitable to his reasonable soul,—an instinct and impulse to please God, in such duties of holiness and righteousness, a sympathy with such ways of integrity and godliness, and

an innate antipathy against such ways as were displeasing to him or dishonourable to the creature. There is a kind of comeliness and sweet harmony and proportion between such works, as the love of God and man, the use of all for his glory, of whom all things are, and man's reasonable being. Such a thing doth suit and become it. Again, other things, as the hatred of God and men, neglect and forgetfulness of him, drunkenness and abasing lusts of that kind, do disagree, and are indecent to it. O how happy was Adam, when holiness and righteousness were not written on tables of stone, but on his heart, and when there was no need of external persuasion, but there was an inward impulse, inclining him strongly, and laying a kind of sweet necessity upon him to that which was both his duty to God and men and his own dignity and privilege! This was, no question, the very beauty of his soul,—to be not only under a law proper and peculiar to himself, but to be inwardly framed and moulded to it,—to be a living law unto himself.

But besides this inward imprinted law of holiness and righteousness, which did without more rules direct and determine him to that which is in itself good, it pleased the Lord to prescribe and impose a positive law unto him, to command him abstinence from a thing neither good nor evil, but indifferent, and such a thing as of itself he might have done as well as made use of any other creature. There was no difference between the fruit which was discharged him, and the fruit of the rest of the garden; there was nothing in it did require abstinence, and nothing in him either. Yet for most wise and holy ends, the Lord enjoins him to abstain from that fruit, and puts an act of restraint upon him, to abridge his liberty in that which might prove his obedience, and not hinder his happiness, or diminish it; because he furnished him abundantly beside. You may perceive two reasons of it. One is, that the sovereign power and dominion of God over all men, may be more eminently held forth, and that visibly in such a symbol and sign. He who put man in such a well-furnished house, and placed him in a plentiful and fruitful garden, reserves one tree, 'thou shalt not eat thereof,' to let Adam see and know, that he is the sovereign owner of all things, and that his dominion over the creatures, and their service unto him, was not so much for any natural prerogative of man above them, as out of divine bounty and indulgence, because he had chosen a creature to himself to beautify and make happy. This was a

standing visible testimony, to bring man continually to remembrance of his sovereignty, that being thus far exalted above other creatures, he might know himself to be under his Creator, and that he was infinitely above him; that he might remember his own homage and subjection to God, whenever he looked upon his dominion over the creatures. And truly in other natural duties which an inward principle and instinct drives unto, the suitableness and conveniency or beauty of the thing doth often preponderate, and might make man to observe them without so much regard of the will and pleasure of the Most High. But in this the Lord would have no other reason of obedience to appear but his own absolute will and pleasure, to teach all men to consider in their actings rather the will of the commander than the goodness or use of the thing commanded. And then, for this reason, it was enjoined to make a more exact trial, and to take a more ample proof of Adam's obedience. Oftentimes we do things commanded of God, but upon what ground or motive? Because our own interest lies in them,—because there is an inward weight and *pondus* of affection pressing us to them. The Lord commands the mutual duties between parents and children, between man and wife, between friends, duties of self-preservation and defence, and such like; and many are very exact and diligent in performing these, but from what principle? It is easy to discern. Not because they are commanded of God,—not so much as a thought of that for the most part,—but because of an inward and natural inclination of affection towards ourselves and our relations, which is like an instinct and an impulse driving us to those duties. And truly we may say, it is the goodness and bounty of the Lord that hath conjoined in most parts of commanded duties our own interest and advantage, our own inclination and propension with his authority, or else the toil and pain of them would over-balance the weight of his authority. Now then, in such duties as are already imprinted on man's heart, and consonant to his own reason, there cannot be a clear proof of obedience to God's will. The pure and naked nature of obedience doth not so clearly shine forth in the observation of these. It is no great trial of the creature's subjection of its will to his supreme will, when there are so many reasons besides his will, which may incline man's will unto it. But here, in a matter in itself pleasant to the senses, unto which he had a natural inclination, the Lord interposes himself by a command of restraint, to take full probation whether man would submit to his good pleasure merely for itself, or

whether he would obey merely because God commands. And indeed in such like duties as have no commendation but from the will and authority of the lawgiver, it will appear whether man's obedience be pure and simple obedience, and whether men love obedience for itself alone, or for other reasons. Therefore the Lord saith, Obedience is better than sacrifice, and disobedience is rebellion. Suppose, in such things as can neither hurt us nor help us, God put a restraint upon us,—though obedience may be of less worth than in other more substantial things, yet disobedience in such easy matters is most heinous, because it proclaims open rebellion against God. If it be light and easy, it is more easily obeyed, and the more sin and wickedness in disobeying; and therefore is Adam's sin called 'disobedience' in a signal manner, (Rom. 5.19,) because, by refusing such a small point of homage and subjection, he did cast off God's power and authority over him, and would not acknowledge him for his superior. This should teach us, who believe the repairing of that image by Jesus Christ, to study such a respect and reverence to God's holy will as to do all things without more asking why it is so. If we once know what it is, there is no more question to be asked. Of creatures we must inquire a *quare* after a *quid*,—a why, after we know what their will is. But Christians should have their wills so subdued unto God's, that though no profit nor advantage were to redound by obedience, though it were in things repugnant and cross to our inclination and humour, yet we should serve and obey him as a testimony of our homage and subjection to him. And till we learn this, and be more abstracted from our own interests in the ways of obedience, even from the interests of peace, and comfort, and liberty, we do not obey him because he commands, but for our own sakes. It is the practice of Antinomians, and contrary to true godliness, to look upon the law of God as the creature's bondage, as most of us do in our walking. A Christian, in whom the image of God is renewed according to righteousness and holiness, should esteem subjection and conformity to a law, and to the will of God, his only true liberty, yea, the very beauty of the soul; and never is a soul advanced in conformity to God, till this be its delight, not a burden or task.

---

## LECTURE XXII.

### OF THE FIRST COVENANT.

GAL. 3.12. *"The law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them shall live in them."*

GEN. 2.17. *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."*

THE Lord made all things for himself, to show forth the glory of his name; and man in a more eminent and special manner, for more eminent manifestations of himself; therefore all his dealings towards men, whether righteous or sinful, do declare the glory of God. Particularly, in reference to the present purpose, he resolved to manifest two shining properties,—his sovereignty and goodness. His sovereignty is showed, in giving out a law and command to the creature; and his goodness is manifested in making a covenant with his creature; as here you see the terms of a covenant, a duty required, and a promise made, and, in case of failing, a threatening conformed to the promise. He might have required obedience simply, as the Lord and sovereign owner of the being and operations of the creatures; and that was enough of obligation to bind all flesh, that the Creator is lawgiver, that he who gives a being doth set bounds and limits to the exercise and use of that being. But it pleased the Lord, in his infinite goodness and love, to add a promise and threatening to that law and command, and so turns it to the nature of a voluntary covenant and agreement, whereby he doth mitigate and sweeten his authority and power, and condescends so low to man as to take on himself a greater obligation than he puts upon man, 'Do this, and thou shalt live.' He might then, out of his absoluteness and power, have required at the creature's hand any terms he pleased, even the hardest which could be imagined, and yet no injustice in him. He might have put laws on men to restrain all their natural liberty, and in every thing, to proclaim nothing but his own supremacy. But O what goodness and condescension is even in the very matter of the law; and then in the manner of prescribing it with a promise! In the matter, so just and equitable to convince all men's consciences, yea, even engraven on their hearts, that he lays not many burdens on, but what men's consciences must lay on themselves; that there is nothing in it all, when summed up, harder than this,—love God most of all, and thy neighbour as thyself,

which all men must proclaim to be due, though it had not been required; and but one precept added by his mere will, which yet was so easy a thing, as it was a wonder the Lord of all put no other conditions on the creatures. And then for the manner; that it is propounded covenant-wise, with a promise, not to expect the creature's consent—for it did not depend on his acceptation, he being bound to accept any terms his Lord propounded—but because the matter and all was so equitable, and the conditions so ample, that if it had been propounded to any rational man, he would have consented with an admiration at God's goodness. Indeed, if we speak strictly, there cannot be a proper covenant between God and man,—there is such an infinite distance between such unequal parties, our obedience and performance being absolutely in his power. We cannot promise it as our own, and it being but our duty, we cannot crave or expect a reward in justice, neither can he owe any thing to the creature. Yet it pleased his majesty to propound it in these terms, and to stoop so low unto men's capacities, and, as it were, come off the throne of his sovereignty, both to require such duties of men, and to promise unto them such a free reward. And the reasons of this may be plain upon God's part and upon ours. In such dealing, he consulted his own glory, and man's good. His own glory, I say, is manifested in it, and chiefly the glory of his goodness and love, that the Most High comes down so low as to article with his own footstool, that he changes his absolute right into a moderate and temperate government, and tempers his lordly and truly monarchical power by such a commixture of gentleness and goodness, in requiring nothing but what man behoved to call reasonable and due, and in promising so much as no creature could challenge any title to it. When the law was promulgated, 'Do this,' eat not of this tree, Adam's conscience behoved to say, "Amen, Lord; all is due, all the reason in the world for it." But when the promise is added, and the trumpet sounds longer, "Thou shalt live!" O more than reason, more than is due, must his conscience say! It was reason, that the most high Lord should use his footstool as his footstool, and set his servant in the place of a servant, and so keep distance from him. But how strange is it that he humbles himself to make friendship with man, to assume him in a kind of familiarity and equality? And this Christ is not forgetful of. When he restores men, he puts them in all their former dignities; 'I call you not servants but friends.' Next, his wisdom doth appear in this, that when he had made a reasonable

creature, he takes a way of dealing, suitable to his nature, to bring forth willing and free obedience by the persuasion of such a reward, and the terror of such a punishment. He most wisely did enclose the will of man, as it were, on both sides, with hedges of punishment and reward, which might have been a sufficient defence or guard against all the irruptions of contrary persuasions, that man might continue in obedience, and that when he went to the right hand or left, he might be kept in, by the hope of such an ample promise, and the fear of such a dreadful threatening. But then the righteousness of God doth appear in this; for there is nothing doth more illustrate the justice of the judge, than when the malefactor hath before consented to such a punishment in case of transgression, when the law is confirmed by the consent and approbation of man. Now he has man subscribing already to his judgment, and so all the world must stop their mouth and become guilty in case of transgression of such a righteous command after such warning.

But, in the next place, it is no less for man's good. What an honour and dignity was put upon man, when he was taken into friendship with God! To be in covenant of friendship with a king, O what a dignity is it accounted! And some do account it a great privilege to be in company, and converse with some eminent and great person. But may not men say with the Psalmist, Lord, 'what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?' Psalm 8. Again, what way more fit and suitable to stir up and constrain Adam unto a willing and constant obedience, when he had the encouragement of such a gracious reward, and the determent of such a fearful punishment? Between these two banks might the silver streams of obedience have run for ever without breaking over. He was bound to all, though nothing had been promised. But then to have such a hope, what spirits might it add to him? The Lord had been free, upon man's obedience, either to continue him his happy estate, or to denude him of it, or to annihilate him. There was no obligation lying on him. But now, what confirmation might man have by looking upon the certain recompense of reward—when God brings himself freely under an obligation of a promise, and so ascertains it to his soul, which he could never have dreamed of, and gives him liberty to challenge him upon his faithfulness to perform it!

And then, lastly, There was no way so fit to commend God, and sweeten him unto his soul as this. Adam knew that his goodness could not extend to God; that his righteousness could not help him, nor his wickedness hurt him, and so could expect nothing from his exact obedience. But now, when God's goodness doth so overflow upon the creature, and the Lord takes pleasure to communicate himself to make others happy, though he had need of none, O how must it engage the heart of man to a delightful remembrance, and converse with that God! As his authority should imprint reverence, so his goodness thus manifested should engrave confidence. And thus the life of man was not only a life of obedience, but a life of pleasure and delight; not only a holy, but a happy life, yea, happy in holiness.

Now, as it was Paul's great business in preaching, to ride marches between the covenant of grace, and the covenant of works,—to take men off that old broken ship to this sure plank of grace that is offered by Jesus Christ to drowning souls,—so it would be our great work to show unto you the nature of this covenant, and the terms thereof, that you may henceforth find and know that salvation to be now impossible by the law which so many seek in it. We have no errand to speak of the first Adam, but the better to lead you to the second. Our life was once in the first, but he lost himself and us both; but the second, by losing himself, saves both. We have nothing to do to speak of the first covenant, but that we may lead you, or pursue you rather to the second, established on better terms and better promises.

The terms of this [first] covenant are,—Do this and live. Perfect obedience without one jot of failing or falling,—an entire and universal accomplishment of the whole will of God,—that is the duty required of man. There is no latitude left in the bargain to admit endeavours instead of performance, or desire instead of duty. There is no place for repentance here. If a man fail in one point, he falls from the whole promise; by the tenor of this bargain, there is no hope of recovery. If you would have the duty in a word, it is a love of God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbour as ourselves; and that testified and verified in all duties and offices of obedience to God, and love to men, without the least mixture of sin and infirmity. Now, the promise on God's part is indeed

larger than that duty, not only because undeserved, but even in the matter of it, it is so abundant,—life, eternal life, continuance in a happy estate. There is a threatening added, 'In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die;' that is, thou shalt become a mortal and miserable creature, subject to misery here and hereafter; which is more pressingly set down in that word, 'Cursed is he that abideth not in all things written in the law to do them.' It is very peremptory; that men dream not of escaping wrath when they break but in one, suppose they did abide in all the rest. Cursed is every man from the highest to the lowest; the Lord Almighty is engaged against him. His countenance, his power is against him, to destroy him and make him miserable. Whoever doth fail but in one jot of the commands, he shall not only fall from that blessed condition freely promised, but lose all that he already possessed, fall from that image of God, dominion over the creatures, and incur, instead of that possessed and expected happiness, misery here on soul and body, in pains, sicknesses, troubles, griefs, &c., and eternal misery on both, without measure, hereafter,—'eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.' (2 Thes. 1.9.)

Now, 'the law is not of faith,' saith the apostle. This opens up the nature of the bargain; and the opposition between the present covenant and that which is made with lost sinners with a Mediator. This covenant is called, of works, 'Do this, and live;' to him that worketh is the promise made, though freely too. It is grace, that once a reward should be promised to obedience; but having once resolved to give it, herein justice appears in an equal and uniform distribution of the reward, according to works; so that where there is an equality of works there shall be an equality of reward, and no difference put between persons equal; which is the very freedom of the covenant of grace, that it passes over all such considerations, and deals equally in mercy with unequal sinners, and unequally, it may be, with them that are equal in nature.

You may ask, was not Adam to believe in God and did not the law require faith? I answer, Christ distinguishes a twofold faith: 'You believe in God, believe also in me.' No question he was called to believe in God the creator of the world, and that in a threefold consideration.

First, to depend on God the self-being and fountain-good. His own

goodness was but a flux and emanation from that Sun of Righteousness, and so was to be perpetuated by constant abiding in his sight. The interposition of man's self between him and God did soon bring on this eternal night of darkness. Nature might have taught him to live in him in whom he had life and being and motion, and to forget and look over his own perfections as evanishing shadows. But this quickly extinguished his life, when he began to live in himself.

Next, he was obliged to believe God's word, both threatening and promise, and to have these constantly in his view. And certainly, if he had kept in his serious consideration, the inestimable blessing of life promised, and the fearful curse of death threatened,—if he had not been induced first to doubt, and then to deny the truth and reality of these,—he had not attempted such a desperate rebellion against the Lord.

Then, thirdly, he was to believe and persuade himself of the Lord's fatherly love, and that the Lord was well-pleased with his obedience; and this faith would certainly beget much peace and quietness in his mind, and also constrain him to love him, and live to him who loved him, and gave him life and happiness out of love. Yet this holds true that the apostle saith, 'the law is not of faith,' to wit, in a Mediator and Redeemer. It was a bond of immediate friendship; there needed none to mediate between God and man; there needed no reconciler where there was no odds nor distance. But the gospel is of faith in a Mediator; it is the soul plighting its hope upon Jesus Christ in its desperate necessity, and so supposes man sinful and miserable in himself, and in his own sense too, and so putting over his weight and burden upon one whom God hath made mighty to save. The law is not of faith, but of perfect works,—a watch-word brought in of purpose to bring men off their hankering after a broken and desperate covenant. It admits no repentance, it speaks of no pardon, it declares no cautioner or redeemer. There is nothing to be expected, according to the tenor of that covenant, but wrath from heaven; either personal obedience in all, or personal punishment for ever. That is the very terms of it, and it knows no other thing. Either bring complete righteousness and holiness to the promise of life, or expect nothing but death.

This may be a sad meditation to us, to stand and look back to our former

estate, and compare it with that into which we are fallen. That image we spoke of, is defaced and blotted out, which was the glory of the creation; and now there is nothing so monstrous, so deformed in the world as man. The corruption of the best things is always worst; the ruins of the most noble creature are most ruinous; the spot of the soul most abominable. We are nothing but a mass of darkness, ignorance, error, inordinate lust; nothing but confusion, disorder, and distempers in the soul, and in the conversation of men; and, in sum, that blessed bond of friendship with God broken, discord and enmity entered upon our side and separated us from God, and so we can expect nothing from that first covenant but the curse and wrath threatened. 'By one man's disobedience' sin entered upon all, 'and death by sin;' because in that agreement Adam was a common person representing us, and thus are all men once subject to God's judgment, and come short of the glory of God, fallen from life into a state of death, and, for any thing that could be expected, irrecoverably. But it hath pleased the Lord, in his infinite mercy, to make a better covenant in Christ his Son, that, what was impossible to the law, by reason of our weakness and wickedness, his Son, sent in the flesh, condemned for sin, might accomplish, Rom. 8.3. There is some comfort yet after this; that covenant was not the last, and that sentence was not irrevocable. He makes a new transaction, lays the iniquity of his elect upon Christ, and puts the curse upon his shoulders which was due to them. Justice cannot admit the abrogation of the law, but mercy pleads for a temperament of it. And thus the Lord dispenses with personal satisfaction, which in rigour he might have craved; and finds out a ransom, admits another satisfaction in their name. And in the name of that Cautioner and Redeemer is salvation preached upon better terms: Believe and thou shalt be saved, Rom. 10.9. Thou lost and undone sinner, whoever thou art, that findest thyself guilty before God, and that thou canst not stand in judgment by the former covenant,—thou who hast no personal righteousness, and trustest in none,—come here, embrace the righteousness of thy Cautioner,—receive him, and rest on him, and thou shalt be saved.

---

### **LECTURE XXIII.**

**OF THE STATE WHEREIN MAN WAS CREATED, AND HOW THE**

## IMAGE OF GOD IS DEFACED.

ECCL. 7.29. *"Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."*

THE one half of true religion consists in the knowledge of ourselves, the other half in the knowledge of God; and whatever besides this men study to know and apply their hearts unto, it is vain and impertinent, and like meddling in other men's matters, neglecting our own, if we do not give our minds to the search of these. All of us must needs grant this in the general, that it is an idle and unprofitable wandering abroad, to be carried forth to the knowledge and use of other things, and in the mean time to be strangers to ourselves, with whom we should be most acquainted. If any man was diligent and earnest in the inquiry and use of the things in the world, Solomon was. He applied his heart to seek out wisdom, and what satisfaction was in the knowledge of all things natural; and in this he attained a great degree beyond all other men. Yet he pronounces of it all after experience and trial, that 'this also is vanity and vexation of spirit,'—not only empty and unprofitable, and not conducing to that true blessedness he sought after, but hurtful and destructive, nothing but grief and sorrow in it. After he had proved all, with a resolution to be wise, yet it was far from him; 'I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me,' ver. 23. And therefore, after long wandering abroad, he returns at length home to himself, to know the estate of mankind. 'Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.' When I have searched all other things, and found many things by search, yet, says he, what doth it all concern me, when I am ignorant of myself? There is one thing concerns me more than all,—to know the original of man, what he once was made, and to know how far he is departed from his original. This only I have found profitable to men: and as the entry and preparation to that blessedness I inquire for,—to have the true discovery of our misery.

There are two things, then, concerning man, that you have to search and to know; and that not in a trifling or curious manner, as if you had no other end in it but to know it as men do in other things, but in a serious and earnest way, as in a matter of so much concernment to our eternal well-being. In things that relate particularly to ourselves, we labour to

know them for some advantage besides the knowing of them, even though they be but small and lower things; how much more should we propose this unto ourselves in the search and examination of our own estate, not merely to know such a thing, but so to know it that we may be stirred up and provoked in the sense of it to look after the remedy that God holds forth. There are two things that you have to know,—what man once was made, and how he is now unmade; how happy once, and how miserable now. And answerable to these two, are branches of the text: 'God made man upright;' that he was once; 'and they have sought out many inventions;' not being contented with that blessedness they were created into, by catching at a higher estate of wisdom, have fallen down into a gulf of misery; as the man that gazed on the stars above him, and did not take notice of the pit under his feet till he fell into it; and thus man is now. So you have a short account of the two estates of men; of the estate of grace and righteousness without sin, and the estate of sin and misery without grace. You have the true story of man from the creation unto his present condition; but all the matter is to have the lively sense of this upon our hearts. I had rather that we went home bewailing our loss, and lamenting our misery, and longing for the recovery of that blessedness, than that we went out with the exact memory of all that is spoken, and could repeat it again.

'God made man upright.' At his first moulding, the Lord showed excellent art and wisdom, and goodness too. Man did come forth from under his hand in the first edition very glorious, to show what he could do; upright, that is, all right and very exactly conformed to the noble and high pattern,—endued with divine wisdom, such as might direct him to true happiness,—and furnished with a divine willingness to follow that direction. The command was not above his head as a rod, but within his heart as a natural instinct. All that was within him was comely and beautiful; for that glorious light that shined upon him, having life and love with it, produced a sweet harmony in the soul. He knew his duty, and loved it, and was able to perform it. O how much is in this one word 'upright!' Not only sincerity and integrity in the soul, but perfection of all the degrees and parts; no part of holiness wanting, and no measure of those parts; no mixture of darkness or ignorance,—no mixture of indisposition or unwillingness. Godliness was sweet and not laborious.

The love of God, possessing the heart, did conform all within and without to the will of God; and O how beautiful was that conformity! And that love of God, the fountain-being, did send forth, as a stream, love and good-will to all things, as they did partake of God's image; and so holiness towards God did beget righteousness towards men, and made men to partake of one another's happiness.

This is a survey of him in his integrity as God made him, but there follows a sad 'but,'—a sad and woful exception,—'but they have sought many inventions. We cannot look upon that glorious estate whereunto man was made, but straightway we must turn our eyes upon that misery into which he hath plunged himself, and be the more afflicted with it, that it was once otherwise. It is misery in a high degree to have been once happy. This most of all aggravates our misery, and may increase the sense of it, that such man once was, and such we might have been, if we had not destroyed ourselves. Who can look upon these ruins, and refrain mourning? It is said, that those who saw the glory of the first temple, wept when they beheld the second, because it was not answerable to it in magnificence and glory; so, I say, it might occasion much sadness and grief, even to the children of God, in whom that image is in part repaired, and that by a second creation, to think how much more happy and blessed man once was, who had grace and holiness without sin. But certainly, it should and must be at first, before this image be restored, the bitter lamentation of a soul, to look upon itself wholly ruinous and defaced, in the view of that glorious stately fabric which once was made. How lamentable a sight is it to behold the first temple demolished, or the first creation defaced, and the second not yet begun in many souls, the foundation-stone not yet laid! It was a sad and doleful invention which Satan inspired at first into man's heart, to go about to find out another happiness,—to seek how to be wise as God, an invention that did proceed from hell,—how to know evil experimentally and practically by doing it! That invention hath invented and found out all the sin and misery under which the world groans. It is a poor invention to devise misery and torment to the creature. This was the height of folly and madness, for a happy creature to invent how to make itself miserable and all others. Indeed, he intended another thing—to be more happy; but pride and ambition got a deserved fall; the result of all is sin and misery.

And now from the first devilish invention, the heart of man is possessed with a multitude of vain imaginations. Man is now become vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart is darkened. (Rom. 1.21.) That divine wisdom he was endued withal is eclipsed, for it was a ray of God's countenance; and now he is left wholly in the dark without a guide, without a director or leader. He is turned out of the path of holiness, and so of happiness. A night of gross darkness and blindness is come on, and the way is full of pits and snares, and the end of it is at best eternal misery. And there is no lamp, no light to shine in it, to show him either the misery that he is posting unto, or the happiness that he is fleeing from. There is nothing within him sufficient to direct his way to blessedness, and nothing willing or able to follow such a direction. And thus man is left to the invention and counsel of his own desperately wicked and deceitful heart; and that is above all plagues, to be given up to a reprobate mind. He is now left to such a tutor and guider, and it is full of inventions indeed. But they are all in vain, that is, all of them insufficient for this great purpose. All of them cannot make one hair that is black, white, much less redeem the soul. But besides, they are destructive. They pretend to deliver, but they destroy. A desperate wicked heart imagineth evil continually, evil against God, and evil to our own souls. And a deceitful heart smooths over the evil, and presents it under another notion; and so, under pretence of a friend, it is the greatest enemy a man hath,—a bosom-enemy. All men's inventions, thoughts, cogitations, projects, and endeavours, what do they tend to, but to the satisfaction of their lusts,—either the lusts of the mind, as ambition, pride, avarice, passion, revenge, and such like,—or the lust of the body, as pleasure to the ears and eyes, and to the flesh? Man was made with an upright soul, with a dominion over that brutish part, more like angels; but now, all his invention runs upon that base and beastly part, how to adorn it, how to beautify it, how to satisfy it; and for this his soul must be a drudge and slave. And if men rise up to any thoughts of a higher life, yet what is it for, but to magnify and exalt the flesh—to seek an excellency within, which is lost, and so to satisfy the pride and self-love of the heart. If any man comes this length, as to apprehend some misery, yet how vain are his inventions about the remedy of it. Not knowing how desperate the disease is, men seek help in themselves, and think, by industry and care and art, to raise them up in some measure, and please God by some

expiations or sacrifices of their own works. Now, this tends to no other purpose but to satisfy the lusts of man's pride; and so it increases that which was man's first malady, and keeps them from the true physician. In a word, all man's inventions are to hasten misery on him, or to blindfold himself till it come on; all his invention cannot reach a delivery from this misery. Let us therefore consider this which Solomon hath found out; and if we carefully consider it, and accurately ponder it in relation to our own souls, then have we also found it with him. Consider, I say, what man once was, and what you are now, and bewail your misery and the fountain of it—our departure from the fountain of life and blessedness. Know what you are, not only weak but wicked, whose art and power lies only in wickedness; skillful and able only to make yourselves miserable. And let this consideration make you cast away all your confidence in yourselves, and carry you forth to a Redeemer who hath found a ransom—who hath found out an excellent invention to cure all our distempers and desperate diseases. The counsel of the Holy Trinity that met about—if I may so speak—our creation in holiness and righteousness after his own image, that same hath consulted about the rest of it, and hath found out this course, that one of them shall be made after man's image, and for this purpose, that he may restore again God's image unto us. O bless this deep invention and happy contrivance of heaven, that could never have bred in any breast, but in the depths of eternal wisdom; and let us abandon and forsake our own vain imaginations, and foolish inventions! Let us become fools in our own eyes, that we may become wise. Man by seeking to be wise, became a fool; that was an unhappy invention. Now it is turned contrary; let all men take with their folly and desperate wickedness. Let not the vain thoughts and dreams of our own well-being and sufficiency lodge within us, and we shall be made wise. Come to the Father's wisdom, —unto Jesus Christ, who is that blessed invention of heaven for our remedy. How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you? O when will you be washed from them? How long shall not your thoughts transcend this temporal and bodily life? How long do you imagine to live in sin, and die in the Lord,—to continue in sin and escape wrath? Why do you delude your souls with a dream of having interest in the love of God, and purchasing his favour by your works? These are some of those many inventions man hath sought out.

---

## LECTURE XXIV.

### OF SIN BY IMPUTATION AND PROPAGATION.

ROM. 5.12 *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."*

THIS is a sad subject to speak upon; yet it is not more sad than useful. Though it be unpleasant to hold out a glass to men, to see their own vile faces into, yet is it profitable, yea, and so necessary, that till once a soul apprehend its broken and desolate condition in the first Adam, it can never heartily embrace and come to the second Adam. You have here the woful and dreadful effects and consequents of the first transgression upon all mankind. The effect is twofold,—sin and misery, or sin and death. The subject is universal in both,—'all men,' the whole world. Behold what a flood of calamity hath entered at a small cranny—by one man's transgression! May it not be said of sin in general, what the wise man speaks of strife,—'the beginning of' sin 'is as when one letteth out water?' Therefore it had been good leaving it off before it had been meddled with; it entered at a small hole, but it hath overflowed a whole world since.

That which first occurs, is, that all mankind, proceeding from Adam by ordinary birth, are involved in sin by Adam's transgression. But that may seem a hard saying, that sin and death should flow unto the whole posterity who had no accession to Adam's transgression. It would seem, that every man should die for his own iniquity, and that it should reach no further in justice. But consider, I pray you, the relation that Adam stood into, and in which he is here holden out as a figure of Christ. Adam, the first man, was a common person, representing all mankind, in whose happiness or misery all should share. God contracts with him on these terms, that his posterity's estate should depend on his behaviour. Now, if all mankind would have reaped the benefit and advantage of Adam's perseverance,—if such an undeserved reward of eternal life would have redounded by the free promise unto them all,—what iniquity is it that they also be sharers in his misery? Our stock and treasure was ventured in this vessel; and if we were to partake of its gain, why not of its loss? You see among men, children have one common lot with their parents. If

the father be forfeited, the heirs suffer in it, and are cast out of the inheritance. It might appear a surer way to have the fortunes of all—so to speak—depend upon one, and their happiness assured unto them upon the standing of one, than to have every one left to himself, and his own well-being depending upon his own standing, as it is more likely one, and that the first one, shall not sin, than many; and especially when that one knew that the weight of all his posterity hung upon him, it might have made him very circumspect, knowing of how great moment his carriage was. But certainly we must look a little higher than such reasons; there was a glorious purpose of God's predominant in this, else there was no natural necessity of imputing Adam's sin to the children not yet born, or propagating it to the children. He that brought a holy One and undefiled out of a virgin who was defiled, could have brought all others clean out of unclean parents. But there is a higher counsel about it. The Lord would have all men subject to his judgment,—all men once guilty, once in an equal state of misery, to illustrate that special grace showed in Christ the more, and demonstrate his power and wrath upon others. That which concerns us most is to believe this, that sin hath overspread all; and to have the lively impressions of this were of more moment to true religion than many discourses upon it. I had rather you went home not cursing Adam, or murmuring against the Most High, but bemoaning yourselves for your wretched estate, than be able to give reasons for the general imputation and propagation of sin. You all see it is, and therefore you should rather mourn for it than ask why it is.

There is 'sin entered into the world' by imputation, and also by propagation. Adam's first sin and heinous transgression is charged upon all his posterity, and imputed unto them, even unto them who have not sinned according to 'the similitude of Adam's transgression,' that is, actually as he did. Infants, whom you call innocents, and indeed so they are in respect of you, who are come to age,—yet they are guilty before God of that sin that ruined all. Now, that ye may know what you are, and what little reason you have to be pleased with yourselves, and absolve yourselves as ye do, I shall unbowel that iniquity unto you. First, There was in it an open banner displayed against God. When the sovereign Lord had enjoined his creature such a testimony of his homage and loyalty, and that so easy to be performed, and such as not a whit could abate from

his happiness, what open rebellion was it to refuse it! It was a casting-off the sovereign dominion of God, than which nothing can be more heinous, as if the clay should refuse to serve the potter's pleasure; and therefore it is eminently and signally styled disobedience, as having nothing in it but the pure naked nature of disobedience; no difficulty to excuse it, for it was most easy; no pleasure to plead for it, for there were as good fruit beside, and a world of them; no necessity to extenuate it; so that you can see nothing in it but the ugly face of disobedience and rebellion, (ver. 19,) whereby man draweth himself from his allegiance due to his Maker, and shaketh off the yoke in reproach of the Most High. Next, you may behold the vile and abominable face of ingratitude and unthankfulness in it; and truly heathens have so abhorred unthankfulness towards men, that they could not digest the reproach of it,—*Ingratum si dixeris, omnia dixeris*, if you call me unthankful, you may call me any thing, or all things. It is a compend of all vices. It is even iniquity grown to maturity and ripeness. But that such a fruit should grow out of such a holy and good soil, so well-dressed and manured by the Lord was a wonder! Lord, what was man that thou didst so magnify him, and make him a little lower than the angels,—that thou didst put all things sublunary under his feet, and exalt him above them! For that creature chosen and selected from among all, to be his minion, to stand in his presence, adorned and beautified with such gifts and graces, magnified with such glorious privileges, made according to the most excellent pattern, his own image, to forget all, and forget so soon; and when he had such a spacious garden to make use of, as is supposed to make up the third part of the earth, to eat of no fruit but that which was forbidden,—there is no such monstrous ingratitude can be imagined as here was acted! But then consider the two fountains from which this flowed, unbelief and pride, and you shall find it the heaviest sin in the world,—unbelief of his word and threatening. First, he was brought to question it, and to doubt of it, and then to deny it. A word so solemnly and particularly told him by the truth itself, that ever a question of it could arise in his mind or get entry, what else was it than to impute iniquity to the holy One, and that iniquity, falsehood and lying, which his nature most abhors? What was it but to blaspheme the most high and faithful God, by hearkening to the suggestions of his enemy, and to credit them more than the threatenings of God,—to give the very flat contradiction to God,—we shall not die; and to assent so heartily to

Satan's slanders and reproaches of God? And this unbelief opened a door to ambition and pride, the most sacrilegious ingredient of all, which is most opposite to God, and unto which he most opposed himself from the beginning: "Ye shall be as gods." Was he not happy enough already, and according to God's image? Nay, but this evil principle would arise up to the throne of God, and sit down in his stead. Pride hath atheism in it; to deny the true God, and yet would be a god itself! For the footstool to lift up itself thus, what an indignity was it! And indeed this wretched aim at so high an estate hath thrown us down as low as hell. You see then how injurious this transgression was to God. There was disobedience and rebellion in it, which denies his dominion and supremacy; there was unthankfulness in it, denying his goodness and bounty; there was unbelief in it, contradicting his truth and faithfulness; and finally, pride, opposing itself to all that is in God, reaching up to his very crown of Majesty to take it off. You see then what you are guilty of, in being guilty of Adam's transgression. Many of you flatter yourselves in your own eyes that you have not done much evil, and you will justify yourselves in your comparisons with others; but I beseech you, consider this, though you had never done personally good or evil here, that which drowned the world in misery is your sin, and charged upon you. You are guilty of that which ruined all mankind, and makes the creation 'subject to vanity' and corruption. O if ye believe this, you would find more need of the second Adam than you do! O how precious would his righteousness and obedience be to you, if you had rightly apprehended your interest in the first man's disobedience!

But besides this imputation, there is much more propagated unto all, and that is a total corruption and depravation of nature in soul and body, whereby man is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is truly and spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually, which is commonly called original sin,—a total averseness from God and from all goodness, an antipathy against the ways of holiness,—and a propension and strong impulse towards evil, even as a stone moves downwards. This poison and contagion of sin entering into the world hath infected all, and gone through all the members. Neither is it any wonder that it is so, when this leprosy hath defiled the walls and roof of the house,—I mean, hath made the creation 'subject to vanity' and

corruption; it is no wonder that it spread abroad in his issue, and makes all unclean like himself. And truly this is it which most abases man's nature, and, being seen, would most humble men. Yea, till this be discerned, no man can be indeed humbled. He will never apprehend himself so bad as he is, but still imagine some excellency in himself, till he see himself in this glass. You talk of good natures, and good dispositions, but in our flesh, saith the apostle, 'dwelleth no good thing.' The seeds of all wickedness are in every one of us; and it is the goodness of God for preserving of human society, that they are restrained and kept down in any from the grossest outbreakings. They know not themselves, who know any good of themselves; and they know not themselves, who either are in admiration at, or in bitterness or contempt against, other sinners, whose sins are manifest to all. This were the only way to profit by looking on their evils, if we could straightway retire within and behold the root of that in ourselves, the fountain of it within us, and so grow in loathing, not of those persons, but of human nature, and in suitable thoughts of ourselves and others, and might wonder at the goodness and undeserved bounty of the Lord, that passes an act of restraint upon our corruption, and dams it up. O that we could learn to loathe ourselves in other men's evils! Thus we might reap good out of the evil, and prevent more in ourselves. But the looking upon gross provocations as singularities, makes them more general, because every man does not charge himself with the corruption that is in all these, but prefers himself to another. Therefore are reins loosed to corruption, and a sluice opened that it may come out,—that he who would not see his own image in another's face, may behold it in the glass of his own abominations. There is no point less believed than this though generally confessed, that man is dead in sins and trespasses, and impotent to help himself. You will hardly take with wickedness when you confess weakness; as if nature were only sick, but not dead,—hurt, but not killed. Therefore it is that so many do abide in themselves, and trusting to their own good purposes and resolutions and endeavours, do think to pacify God and help themselves out of their misery. But O look again, and look in upon yourselves in the glass of the word, and there is no doubt but you will straightway be filled with confusion of face, and be altogether spoiled of good confidence and hope, as you call it! You will find yourself plunged in a pit of misery, and all strength gone, and none on the right hand, or the left to help you; and

then, and not till then, will the second Adam's hand, stretched out for help, be seasonable.

That which next follows is that which is the companion of sin inseparably,—'Death hath passed upon all,' and that by sin. Adam's one disobedience opened a port for all sin to enter upon mankind, and sin cannot enter without this companion, death. Sin goes before, and death follows on the back of it; and these suit one another, as the work and the wages, as the tree and the fruit. They have a fitness one to another. Sowing to corruption reaps an answerable harvest, to wit, corruption. Sowing to the wind, and reaping the whirlwind, how suitable are they! That men may know how evil and bitter a thing sin is, he [God] makes this the fruit of it in his first law and sanction given out to men,—he joins them inseparably,—sin and death, sin and wrath, sin and a curse. By death is not only meant bodily death, which is the separation of the soul from the body, but first the spiritual death of the soul, consisting in a separation of the soul from God's blessed, enlightening, enlivening, and comforting countenance. Man's true life, wherein he differs from beasts, consists in the right aspect of God upon his soul,—in his walking with God, and keeping communion with him. All things besides this are but common and base, and this was cut off. His comfort, his joy and peace in God extinct, God became terrible to his conscience; and therefore man did flee and was afraid, when he heard his voice in the garden. Sin being interposed between God and the soul, cut off all the influence of heaven. Hence arises darkness of mind, hardness of heart, delusions, vile affections, horrors of conscience. Look what difference is between a living creature and a dead carcass, so much is between Adam's soul, upright, living in God, and Adam's soul separated from God by sin. Then upon the outward man the curse redounds. The body becomes mortal which had been incorruptible. It is now like a besieged city. Now some outer forts are gained by diseases, now by pains and torments; the outward walls of the body are at length overcome; and when life hath fled into a castle within the city, the heart, that is, last of all, besieged so straitly, and stormed so violently, that it must render unto death upon any terms. The body of man is even a seminary of a world of diseases and grievances, that if men could look upon it aright, they might see the sentence of death every day performed. Then how many evils in estate, in friends and

relations, in employments, which being considered by heathens, hath made them praise the dead more than the living, but him not yet born most of all, because the present life is nothing else but a valley of misery and tears, a sea of troubles, where one wave continually prevents another, and comes on like Job's messengers; before one speaks out his woful tidings, another comes with such like, or worse. But that which is the sum and accomplishment of God's curse and man's misery is that death to come,—eternal death,—not death simply, but an 'everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power;'—an infinite loss, because the loss of such a glorious life in the enjoyment of God's presence; and an infinite hurt and torment beside, and both eternal.

Now this is what we would lay before you. You are under such a heavy sentence from the womb, a sentence of the Almighty, adjudging you for Adam's guilt and your own, to all the misery in this world and in the next,—to all the treasures of wrath that are heaped up against the day of wrath. And strange it is, how we can live in peace, and not be troubled in mind, who have so great and formidable a party! Be persuaded, O be persuaded, that there shall not one jot of this be removed,—it must be fulfilled in you or your cautioner! And why then is a Saviour offered, a city of refuge opened, and secure sinners will not flee into it? But as for as many as have the inward dreadful apprehension of this wrath to come, and know not what to do, know that to you is Jesus Christ preached, the second Adam, a quickening spirit, and in that consideration, better than the first,—not only a living soul himself, but a spirit to quicken you who are dead in sins,—one who hath undertaken for you, and will hold you fast. Adam, who should have kept us, lost himself; Christ in a manner lost himself to save us. And as by Adam's disobedience all this sin and misery hath abounded on man, know, that the second Adam's obedience and righteousness are of greater virtue and efficacy to save, and instead of sin to restore righteousness, and instead of death to give life. Therefore you may come to him, and you shall be more surely kept than before.

---

## LECTURE XXV.

### OF THE WAY OF MAN'S DELIVERY.

1 TIM. 1.15. *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that*

*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."*

OF all doctrines that ever were published to men, this contained here is the choicest, as you see the very preface prefixed to it imports. And truly, as it is the most excellent in itself, it could not but be sweet unto us, if we had received into the heart the belief of our own wretchedness and misery. I do not know a more sovereign cordial for a fainting soul, than this faithful saying, 'That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' And therefore we are most willing to dwell on this subject, and to inculcate it often upon you, that without him you are undone and lost, and in him you may be saved. I profess, all other subjects, howsoever they might be more pleasing to some hearers, are unpleasant and unsavoury to me. This is that we should once learn, and ever be learning—to know him that came to save us, and come to him.

We laboured to show unto you the state of sin and misery that Adam's first transgression hath subjected all mankind unto, which if it were really and truly apprehended, I do not think but it would make this saying welcome to your souls. Man being plunged into such a deep pit of misery, sin and death having overflowed the whole world, and this being seen and acknowledged by a sinner, certainly the next question in order of nature is this, hath God left all to perish in this estate? Is there any remedy provided for sin and misery? And this will be indeed the query of a self condemned sinner. Now there is a plank after this broken ship; there is an answer sweet and satisfactory to this question; 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'

We shall not expatiate into many notions about this, or multiply many branches of this. The matter is plain and simple, and we desire to hold out plainly and simply, that this is the remedy of sin and misery. When none could be found on the right hand or left hand, here a Saviour from heaven comes down from above, whence no good could be expected, because a good God was provoked. 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?'—that was a proverb concerning him. But I think in some sense it might be said, Can any good come down from heaven, from his holy habitation to this accursed earth? Could any thing be expected from heaven but wrath and vengeance? And if no good could be expected that way, what way could it come? Sure if not from heaven, then from no

airth. [That is, quarter.—ED.] Yet from heaven our help is come, from whence it could not be looked for,—even from him who was offended, and whose justice was engaged against man. That he might both satisfy justice and save man,—that he might not wrong himself nor destroy man utterly,—he sends his only begotten Son, equal with himself in majesty and glory, into the world, in the state of a servant, to accomplish man's salvation, and perform to him satisfaction. Therefore Christ came into the world to save sinners.

There were two grand impediments in the way of man's salvation, which made it impossible to man; one is God's justice, another is man's sin. These two behoved to be satisfied or removed, ere there can be access to save a sinner. The sentence of divine justice is pronounced against all mankind, 'death passed upon all,'—a sentence of death and condemnation. Now, when the righteousness and faithfulness of God is engaged unto this, how strong a party do you think that must be? What power can break that prison of a divine curse, and take out a sinner from under Justice's hand? Certainly there is no coming out till the uttermost farthing be paid that was owing,—till complete satisfaction be given for all wrongs. Now, truly, the redemption of the soul had ceased for ever—it is so precious that no creature can give any thing in exchange for it—except Jesus Christ had come into the world, one that might be able to tread that wine-press of wrath alone, and give his life a ransom, in value far above the soul, and pay the debt of sin that we were owing to God. And, indeed, he was furnished for this purpose, a person suited and fitted for such a work;—a man, to undertake it in our name, and God, to perform it in his own strength;—a man, that he might be made under the law, and be humbled even to the death of the cross, that so he might obey the commandment, and suffer the punishment due to us; and all this was elevated beyond the worth of created actions or sufferings, by that divine nature. This perfumed all his humanity, and all done by it, or in it. This put the stamp of divinity upon all, and imposed an infinite value upon the coin of finite obedience and sufferings. And so in his own person, by coming into the world, and acting and suffering in the place of sinners, he hath taken the first great impediment out of the way; taken down the high wall of divine justice which had enclosed round about the sinner, and satisfied all its demands, by paying the price; so that there is nothing

upon God's part to accuse or condemn, to hinder or obstruct salvation.

But then there is an inner wall, or dark dungeon of sin, into which the sinner is shut up, and reserved in chains of his own lusts, until the time of everlasting darkness; and when heaven is opened by Christ's death, yet this keeps a sinner from entering in. Therefore Jesus Christ, who came himself into the world to satisfy justice and remove its plea, that there might be no obstruction from that airth, he sends out his powerful Spirit with the word, to deliver poor captive sinners, to break down the wall of ignorance and blindness, to cast down the high tower of wickedness and enmity against God, to take captive and chain our lusts that kept us in bondage. And, as he made heaven accessible by his own personal obedience and sufferings, so he makes sinners ready and free to enter into that salvation by his Spirit's working in their persons. In the one, he had God, as it were, his party, and him he hath satisfied so far, that there was a voice came from heaven to testify it, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased;' and therefore, in testimony of it, God raised him from the dead. In the other, he hath Satan and man's wicked nature as his party, and these he must conquer and subdue. These he must overcome, ere we can be saved. A strange business indeed, and a great work, to bring two such opposite and distant parties together,—a holy and just God, and a sinful and rebellious creature; and to take them both as parties, that he might reconcile both.

Now what do you think of this, my beloved, that such a glorious person is come down from heaven, for such a work as the salvation of sinners? I put no doubt, it would be most acceptable unto you, if you knew your misery, and knowing your misery, you could not but accept it, if you believed that it were true and faithful. I find one of these two the great obstruction in the way of souls receiving advantage by such glad tidings. Either the absolute necessity and excellency of the gospel is not considered, or the truth and reality of it is not believed. Men either do not behold the beauty of goodness in it, or do not see the light of truth in it. 'Either there is nothing discovered to engage their affections, or nothing seen to persuade their understandings. Therefore the apostle sounds a trumpet, as it were, in the entry, before the publication of these glad news, and commends this unto all men as a true and faithful saying, and

as worthy of all acceptance. There is here the highest truth and certainty to satisfy the mind: It 'is a faithful saying.' And there is here also the chiefest good to satiate the heart: It is 'worthy of all acceptance.' Now, if you do really apprehend your lost and miserable estate, you cannot but behold that ravishing goodness in it; and behold that you cannot, till you see the other first. Whence is it, I pray you, that so many souls are never stirred with the proposition of such things in the gospel,—that the riches and beauty of salvation in Jesus Christ doth not once move them? Is it not because there is no lively apprehension of their misery without him? [The discourse ends so abruptly here, as plainly to show that it is an unfinished production, and was not designed by the learned and pious author for publication.—ED.]

Now, consider what influence all this glorious proclamation had on Moses. It stirs up in him reverence and affection,—reverence to such a glorious Majesty, and great desire to have him amongst them, and to be more one with him. If thy soul rightly discover God, it cannot but abase thee. He 'made haste' to bow down and worship. O, God's majesty is a surprising and astonishing thing! It would bow thy soul in the dust if it were presented to thee. Labour to keep the right and entire representation of God in thy sight,—his whole name, strong, merciful, and just,—great, good, and holy. I say, keep both in thy view, for half-representations are dangerous, either to beget presumption and security when thou lookest on mercy alone; or despair when thou lookest on justice and power alone. Let thy soul consider all jointly, that it may receive a mixed impression of all. And this is the holy composition and temper of a believer,—Rejoice with trembling, love with fear; let all thy discoveries of him aim at more union and communion with him who is such a self-sufficient, all-sufficient, and eternal Being.

The Common Principles of Christian Religion by Hugh Binning,  
Copyright © 2011

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub and .mobi Editions May 2011 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, 14875 S.W. 72nd Ave, Tigard, OR 97224