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Sermons upon

1 JOHN 3

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by Thomas Manton

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SERMON I

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.—1 JOHN 3:1.

THE apostle had said in the close of the former chapter, 'that every one that doeth righteousness is born of God;' now this being so great a privilege to be adopted into God's family, and acknowledged and reckoned among his children, the apostle pauseth on it a while, and doth excite them to wonder and reverence in the contemplation of it, that the argument may have the more force to persuade them to righteousness and holiness, wherein they would resemble God, as children do their father: 'Behold what manner of love,' &c.

In the words we have—

1. A great privilege represented.

2. An anticipation of an objection or an exception made to that privilege. This dignity hath no outward appearance to discover itself to the world. Therefore the privilege must not be esteemed by the world's judgment, who are blind in God's matters: 'Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.'

The first I am to deal with at this time, and there observe—

1. The privilege itself, 'That we should be called the sons of God.'

2. The fountain and rise of this; the love of God is the bottom cause.

3. The wonderful degree of this love as to this instance, effect, or expression of it, 'What manner of love.'

4. The note of attention by which he excites our dull minds to the consideration of it, 'Behold.'

Let me explain these words a little.

1. The privilege itself is to be 'called the sons of God.' Mark, not subjects or servants, but sons; and to be called the sons of God is to be the sons of God, for that is the idiotism of the Hebrew phrase: Isa. 58:13, 'Thou shalt call the sabbath a delight;' that is, make it to be so. So in this matter it is often used: Gen. 21:12, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called;' that is, owned and acknowledged to be thy children: Mat. 5:9, 'They shall be called the children of God.' Yea it is said of our Lord Christ himself, Luke 1:35, 'That holy thing which is born of thee shall be called the Son of God.'

2. The fountain and first rise is the 'love of the Father,' who is everywhere represented as the first cause of our blessedness. Of our

redemption: John 3:16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;' 1 John 4:10, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' The cause of our regeneration: Eph. 2:4, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.' And here it is made the cause of our adoption: 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!' God's love is nothing else but his good-will and resolution to impart such great privileges to us; together with his acquiescence and well-pleas'dness with what he doth for us: he did it because he would do it; he was resolved to do it, and took pleasure in it.

3. The wonderful degree in the expression of his love, 'What manner of love.' The expression noteth not only the quality, but quantity; as in other places: Mat. 8:27, 'What manner of man is this?' or how great a man is this, 'that even the winds and seas obey him?' 2 Peter 3:11, 'What manner of persons ought we to be?' which noteth not only the manner or kind, but the degree of holiness. Therefore I would read it here, not only 'what manner of love,' but 'how great love.'

4. The note of attention, or the term used exciting our attention, 'Behold.' There is a threefold 'behold' in scripture, and they are applicable to this place; as—

[1.] *Ecce demonstrantis*, the behold of demonstration, or pointing with the hand, which is referred to a thing or person present, and noteth the certainty of sense; as John 1:29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.' There he was then before

their eyes, and he pointed at him as present. If prefixed to a doctrine, it noteth the certainty of faith: Job 5:27, 'Lo this, we have searched it; hear it, and know it for thy good;' believe it as a certain truth.

[2.] There is *ecce admirantis aut exultantis*, the behold of admiration, or awakening our drowsy minds, when anything weighty or any extraordinary thing is spoken of; this is to excite our attention as to an important truth, worthy of our most serious thoughts and raised affections. As in a case of evil: Lam. 1:12, 'Behold, see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.' So here in the case of good, 'What manner of love?' is there any love like unto this love? And all is that we may entertain it with wonder and reverence.

[3.] There is *ecce exultantis aut gratulantis*, the behold of gratulation, as rejoicing and blessing ourselves in the privilege: Ps. 121:4, 'Behold, he that keepeth Israel never slumbereth nor sleepeth.'

Now all these take place here. Behold it with faith and confidence as a certain truth; behold it with wonder and reverence as a high dignity; behold it with love and delight as a blessed privilege to have God for our father, Christ for our elder brother, and heaven for our portion; what can we desire more? It is a certain truth, we should believe it more firmly; it is an important truth, we should consider it more seriously; it is a comfortable truth, we should improve it to our greater joy and consolation.

From the whole observe this doctrine—

That the love of God in adopting us into his family, and acknowledging us for his children, is such an act of grace as cannot be sufficiently considered and admired by his people.

I shall prove three things—

1. That there is such a relation as that of father and children between God and his people.
2. That this is a blessed and glorious privilege.
3. That believers ought to be excited to the earnest consideration of it.

I. That there is such a relation as that of father and children between God and his people. There is a relation between God and all his creatures; for as God gave being to all, so he hath an interest and propriety in them. But the inanimate and brute creatures are his instruments by which he serveth his providence: Ps. 119:91, 'They continue this day according to thine ordinance, for they are all thy servants.' All creatures are subjected to the law and overruling government of his providence. Man is under his proper government. Adam in the covenant of works was rather God's subject and hired servant than his son. The children of Israel were his children, but as children in their nonage, as an heir while he is a child: Gal. 4:1, 'An heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all.' A servile spirit was uppermost in that dispensation. But with respect to the gospel covenant of grace, so we are most strictly said to be the children of God: Hosea 1:10, 'In the place where it is said to them, Ye are not my people, there shall it be said that ye are the sons of the living God;' 2 Cor. 6:18, 'I will be a father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters.' He will own us as a father, and we must be to him in the relation of children. God hath a seed among men whom he hath begotten by his Spirit, and hath adopted and taken into his family; he hath a paternal affection towards them, and they filial dispositions towards him; he hath a paternal care and providence over them, and they filial confidence and dependence upon him; he expects the honour of a father, and we

may expect the privileges of children, for he hath begotten us to a lively hope. This special relation is distinct from his common relation to other men.

1. It proceedeth from a distinct cause, his special and peculiar love, not from that common goodness and bounty which he expresseth to all his creatures: Ps. 145:9, 'The Lord is good to all, his tender mercy is over all his works.' But this is the special act of his grace, or of his great love: Eph. 2:4, 5, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.'

2. The foundation of this relation is not our being which we have from him as a creator, but our new being which we have from him as a father in Christ: 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.' As we are men, God is a governor to us, and we are his subjects; but as we are new men, born again, God is a father to us and we are his children: the former relation ceaseth not, but ariseth in it.

3. The whole commerce and communion that is between us and him is on God's part fatherly, on our part childlike. On God's part fatherly, in a way of grace and love, pardoning our sins and frailties, and giving us the helps of his grace: Mal. 3:17, 'I will spare them, as a man spareth his only son that serveth him;' Ps. 103:13, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those that fear him.' A faulty child is a child, and therefore not so easily turned out of the family as a servant. We often forget the duty of children, hut God doth not forget the mercy of a father. So on our part childlike; that is, for the main we are loving and obedient to God, make it our work to love and please him, and count it our happiness to be beloved of him. Love is at the bottom of God's dispensations to us, and at the bottom of our duties to him; he giveth us his choicest benefits, as becomes

his special love to us, and we perform him the best service we can: 'For the love of Christ constraineth us.' He hath given us a heart to know him and love him as a father, and he loveth us as his dear children. In short, fatherly benefits are fullest, sweetest, and surest; for he giveth us himself, his Spirit, grace, glory, every good thing. So filial duty is the choicest: 1 Peter 1:14, 'As dear children, not fashioning yourselves to the former lusts of your ignorance;' Eph. 5:1, 'Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.' No motive so engaging as that, nor none goes so much to the heart of a christian.

II. That this is a blessed and glorious privilege will appear if we consider—

First, The person adopting, the great and glorious God, who is so far above us, so happy within himself, and needeth not us nor our choicest love and service; who had a son of his own, Jesus Christ, the eternally-begotten of the Father, 'the Son of his love,' in whom his soul found such full complacency and delight. If men adopt, it is in *orbitatis gratiam*, as a remedy found out for the comfort of them who have no children. Never was it heard of that a father who had a son should adopt a son. Therefore it heightens the privilege that God who had a son that 'thought it no robbery to be equal with him' in power; a son that 'was the express image of his person,' the object of his full delight, 'being daily his delight, and rejoicing before him;' I say, that God should vouchsafe to such unworthy creatures as we are so dear and honourable a relation to himself is wonderful.

Secondly, The persons who are adopted, miserable sinners, who were strangers and enemies to God: 'Children of wrath, even as others;' those who were born heirs of God's curse, 'dead in trespasses and sins;' who had cast away the mercies of our creation. Now, that strangers should not only be taken into the family, but put in the

place of children, and dealt with as children; that enemies should not only be reconciled, but have the blessed God to become their father in Christ; that children of wrath should be called to inherit a blessing; that those who were dead in trespasses and sins, and had so often offended God, should be begotten to a lively hope; that slaves to sin and Satan should be made free indeed, even called into the glorious liberty of the children of God; this is that we may wonder at, and say, 'What manner of love is this that we should be called the children of God!' The prodigal son, when he returned to his father, said, 'I am not worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.' We have all played the prodigal, cast away the mercies of our creation for a very trifle. We blame Adam for selling himself and his posterity for an apple, and Esau for parting with his birthright for one morsel of meat; but 'we have sold ourselves for nought.' Therefore every son of Adam may say, I am not worthy to be called a son. We have forfeited all comfortable relations to God, and the privileges depending thereupon; therefore what astonishing mercy was this!

Thirdly, The bottom cause and fountain of this mercy and grace, or that which moved God, was his love; this was that which set his power and mercy at work to bring us into this estate.

1. This was an eternal love; the first foundation of it was laid in the election of God; there is the bottom stone in this building: 'From before the foundation of the world we were predestinated to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will.' Then was the way of man's recovery stated, the privileges, the terms, the persons who should enjoy them. Upon these terms it was agreed. Now what are we that the thoughts of God should be taken up about us so long ago, that he should show such favour to lost mankind, and to us in particular?

2. It was a free love: 'I will love them freely.' God was not inclined hereunto by our worth, but out of his own free love was graciously pleased to call us with an holy calling, and to give us a new being and an holy nature, that being regenerated, we might be adopted, that so he might love us tenderly as his children, and seek our felicity. In other adoptions men are at liberty to choose the best and most accomplished. Nature is limited, but adoption is free. Whatever our children be, distorted or deformed in body or depraved in mind, yet they are our children; we cannot cast them off. But where we choose one at our free will and pleasure, we take such as have drawn our affection by some good qualities and carriage of theirs. Now what good endowments had we to commend us to God, who are sinners by nature and practice, children of the devil, enslaved to sin? If God had respected our deservings, he might have cast us into hell rather than taken us into his family, we were so infinitely below him, so rebellious against him; therefore 'behold what manner of love God hath bestowed upon us.'

3. It is special peculiar love, not common to the world; yet this love was bestowed upon us: 'In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil.' Some live and die the children of the devil, always retain the satanical nature, and are not renewed according to the image of God; yea, the greatest part of the world do so: 'We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' Now the difference is not from ourselves, but from God, and cometh from God, that made thee to differ; all our good is from God, and from his mere love and goodness.

4. It is a costly love, considering the way how it is brought about; for before God's eternal purposes could be executed, and conveniently be made known to the world, redemption by Christ was necessary; therefore it is said that 'he was made of a woman, made under the

law, that we that were under the law might receive the adoption of sons.' Sin needed to be expiated by the Son of God in our nature before God would bestow this honour upon us. Christ was to be our brother before God would be our father, and to take a mother upon earth that we might have a father in heaven; yea, to endure the law's curse before we could be instated in the blessing. In the business of our redemption he was treated as a slave or servant, that we might be treated as sons. Judas sold him for thirty pieces of silver, Mat. 26:15, and that was the price of a slave, Exod. 21:32. And the apostle telleth us that he came in the form of a servant, even he that was lord of all: 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' Now when so much is necessary to bring about this privilege, surely it should be the more admired by us. It was pure infinite love, and his love remarkably and particularly expressed towards us, that he will bestow such a privilege upon us: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' It is a great and wonderful love; it cannot be said how or how much.

Fourthly, The dignity itself nakedly considered; it is a greater honour than the world can afford to us, a matter to be rather wondered at than told. Admire it we may, express it to the full we cannot. David saith, 'Seemeth it a light thing to be a king's son-in-law?' We may with better reason say, Is it nothing to be taken into God's family, and to become sons and daughters to the most high God? This was the honour and title of Christ himself, solemnly proclaimed from heaven: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;' and we have it in our proportion and measure: 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' Blessed is that soul that is admitted into such a relation to God. All relations may blush and hide their faces in comparison of this; for all the splendid titles which are so greatly affected by men are but empty shows and shadows in comparison of this glorious and blessed privilege; they come short

behind it, either in true honour or profit; therefore it is a higher instance of the love of God than if he had made us monarchs of the world, or if a man could produce his pedigree from an uninterrupted line of kings and princes. Alas! how much better is it to be born of the Spirit than of the froth of the blood? These things continue with us but to the grave; but to be children of God will be our honour and interest to all eternity.

Fifthly, It is not a naked and empty title, but giveth us a right to the greatest privileges imaginable; as our giving empty titles to God without duty on our part is looked upon as a mockage: Mal. 1:6, 'If I be a father, where is mine honour? if I be a master where is my fear?' As the soldiers called Christ the king of the Jews, and spat upon him and buffeted him. So on God's part, if he called himself a father, he will perform all the parts of a father to us; for he hath more abundant love to us than any title or notion can make out or express.

But what benefits depend upon it? Very many; they may be referred to two heads—what God will do as a father for the present and for the future.

1. With respect to the present state; and there—

[1.] He will give us the Holy Spirit to be our sanctifier, guide, and comforter. This is a gift which he giveth to none but his children, and he giveth it to all his children. This suiteth with the greatness and love of our Father, and it is a father's gift indeed, and absolutely necessary for such children as we are to God. In ourselves (we said before) there is no intrinsic worth in us, but God puts a more excellent spirit into us. God as a creator gave us our natural endowments; but as a father he giveth us the supernatural grace of the Spirit. The Spirit was given to Christ without measure, that all God's children and the members of his mystical body may receive it

from him as the head and fountain of their life: Gal. 4:6, 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' If we have this high privilege of adoption, we have also the Spirit of adoption to reside and dwell in our hearts, to be our sanctifier, guide, and comforter. Our sanctifier to change our hearts, and to transform us into the image of God and Christ: 2 Cor. 3:18, 'But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image;' and Titus 3:5, 'According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' To guide us in all our ways, and restrain us from sin: Rom. 8:13, 'If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' Quickening us to holiness: Ps. 143:10, 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness.' Especially to help us in the great duties of the spiritual life; as prayer: Jude 20, 'Praying in the Holy Ghost;' Rom. 8:26, 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.' That they may address themselves to God as a father, in a familiar manner, with confidence, and yet with a holy reverence becoming both his majesty and his love; with a humble submission, and yet with a holy vehemency and earnestness, opposite to that careless formality and deadness which is in other men's prayers. Now how great a privilege is this, to have such a help at hand, a comforter as a witness! Rom. 8:16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.' As an earnest: 2 Cor. 1:22, 'Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit.' Indeed the Spirit is not so necessarily a comforter as a sanctifier; yet a comforter he is, and if not so explicitly and manifestly, we may blame ourselves. This

is God's allowance, and we deprive ourselves of the benefit of it by our folly and indiscretion.

[2.] He giveth us an allowance of such temporal things, of outward mercies, as are convenient for us: Mat. 6:25, 30, 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and to-morrow is cut down; shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' A christian hath two things to relieve him against all his distrustful fears and cares—adoption and particular providence. He hath his Father, and his Father is not ignorant of his condition and mindless of it; and therefore though he hath little or nothing in his hand, it is enough that his Father keepeth the purse for him, whose care extendeth to all things and persons, who hath the hearts of all men in his hands, and performeth all things according to his own will. He knoweth their persons, necessities, and temptations; and if we trust him for our heavenly inheritance, we may well trust him for our daily maintenance, which he vouchsafeth to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, and also to his enemies; nay, sometimes while they are sinning against him, and dishonouring his name, oppressing his servants, opposing his interest in the world. He that feedeth a kite, will he not feed a child? He that supplieth his enemies, will he not take care of his family? You would think that person monstrously cruel that should feed his dogs and starve his children. This cannot without blasphemy be imagined of our gracious and heavenly Father. If God be your Father, you can want nothing that is good; but the determination of what is good must be left to his wisdom, for we are not so fit to judge of it, and to discern our own good, and therefore must commit all to his fatherly care and wise providence. Indeed he chooseth rather to

profit us than to please us in his dispensations, and it is your duty to refer all to his wisdom and faithfulness.

2. With respect to the life to come. Eternal blessedness is the fruit of adoption: Rom. 8:17, 'If sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified together.' We have a blessed inheritance to look for as soon as we are adopted and taken into God's family, we have a right to it though not admitted into the fruition of it; and the right and hope that we have now is enough to counterbalance all temptations both on the right hand and on the left. The blessedness we hope for doth infinitely outweigh the carnal pleasures and delights of sin, which tempt us to disobey our Father's will. What are the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, to those blessed delights and glorious things which our Father hath provided for us in heaven? It was Esau's profaneness to part with his birthright, Heb. 12:16, and Naboth's generosity to refuse it, 1 Kings 21:3. On the left hand there is enough to allay the fears and sorrows of the present life: Luke 12:32, 'Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' If we have the kingdom at last, it is no great matter what we suffer by the way: Rom. 8:18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.' So that during the time of our hope we have great encouragement. But more of this in the following part of the text. But hereafter we fully receive the fruits of our adoption: Rom. 8:23, 'Waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body.' The manifestation is at the resurrection, the fruition in heaven: Rom. 8:19, 'The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.' Then God's children are seen in all their glory. But in heaven, there we have the fullest and largest demonstration of God's love and favour. It is love and grace now that he is pleased to pass by our offences and take us into his family, to

give us a taste of his love, and a right to his heavenly kingdom, and to employ us in his service, but then it is another manner of love; grace, indeed, when not only taken into his family, but into his presence and palace: John 12:26, 'Where I am, there also shall my servant be.' Not only have the right, but the possession: Mat. 25:34, 'Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' And not only have some remote service and ministration, but be everlastingly employed in loving, delighting, and praising God among those blessed creatures who are our blessed companions with us in this work.

III. That believers ought to be excited to the earnest consideration of it.

1. To quicken our thankfulness, which is the chief motive and principle of gospel-obedience. There is a slackness and slowness of heart in holy things; there are sundry methods, and ways, and means to work upon us, but they may all be reduced to two—love and fear; and hope may be joined herein with love. We are thankful not only for the benefits we have received, but the benefits we expect from the love and goodness of God. Now all the motives that belong to fear do not make so kindly, so strong, and so durable an impression as those that arise from love. In fear we force ourselves, but love begets an inclination: it is love, and not fear, that is the bias and inclination of the soul. And look, what difference there is between a forcible impression and a natural and voluntary inclination, that there is between fear and love. A man is forced to do a thing by fear which he had rather leave undone; but as for love non cogitur, sed cogit—'The love of Christ constraineth us.' The constraints of fear are ingrate, and unacceptable to the soul; but of love, pleasing. This appears by the Israelites making brick for Pharaoh, when forced by their

taskmasters; and the Jews repairing the city and the temple: Neh. 4:6, 'The people had a mind to the work.' Nothing now worketh upon love but love: 1 John 4:19, 'We love him because he loved us first; we love him who first loved us.' And where have we the fairest prospect of God's love, but in this relation of love, and adopting us to be his children, and to be heirs of glory by Jesus Christ? The sum of what is spoken is this: That when we love God most, we are most pleasing to God and ourselves; our duties run on the most freely and sweetly, and we are most like abundantly to love God when our thoughts are most steeped in the love of God.

2. That we may keep up the joy of our faith and comfort in afflictions from the world. Though we be God's children, yet the greatest part of the world treateth us as slaves. The apostle intimateth so much in the text: 'The world knoweth us not.' Princes in disguise in a foreign land may meet with manifold abuses, which otherwise would not be offered to them if their quality and condition were known; so God's children and heirs make no fair show in the flesh. But 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' It doth support us often and frequently to consider the world cannot hate us so much as God loveth us. If the world be an enemy, God is a father; they cannot put so much disgrace and contempt upon us as God will put glory. If you be to them 'the scurf and off-scouring of all things,' you are to God as jewels; if they thrust you out of the world, God will receive you to heaven; if they prepare a dungeon, God hath prepared a kingdom.

3. That we may be satisfied and contented with our portion; if you have God to your Father, what though you be straitened in the world? A man has no interest in spiritual privileges unless he doth prize and value them; for God will not cast pearls before swine, that trample them under their feet. Now the practical estimation

exceedeth the speculative when we are contented in the want of other things; as David saith, Ps. 17:14, 15, 'From men which are thy right hand, O Lord, from men of the world, whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I will be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.' We need not envy others their portion; there should be a well-pleas'dness in our condition: Ps. 16:5-7, 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night-season.'

4. To stir us up to be exemplary in holiness; for if God be matchless in his love, we should be singular in our holiness; our return must carry proportion with our receipts: 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!' Then the inference may well be, 'What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?' and we should study to please him more. As fatherly love, and the benefits depending thereupon, are fullest and surest; so should filial duty be highest and freest.

5. We should consider it, that we may clear up our interest the more in it, and not foolishly content ourselves with an inferior happiness. Surely if it be so certain a truth, and so great a privilege, we should see that it be ours, and be able to say, 'What manner of love hath God bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of the most high God!'

Use 1. And indeed the use that I shall make of it is to persuade you to put in for a share in this blessed privilege. To direct you in this, let me tell you—

1. That this new relation dependeth on the new birth, and that none are adopted but those that are regenerated and renewed to the image and likeness of God; all others, though called christians, are bastards and not sons, that is, not legitimate but degenerate children. The relative change goeth along with the real, or followeth it; for the real is first, John 1:12, 13, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: for we were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'

2. Regeneration is God's act; but repentance and faith, which are the immediate issues of it, are ours, and you must enter by the strait gate if you would enter into God's family, and obtain the privileges of it. We must humbly consent to take Christ upon the ends for which God offereth him, or to be and do what God hath appointed him to be and do for poor sinners: Gal. 3:26, 'Ye are all made children of God, by faith in Jesus 'Christ.' That is our first admission, by a consent to the new covenant, depending upon merit of Christ's sacrifice for the privileges thereof, and binding ourselves by a solemn vow to perform the duties thereof; for he presently speaks of being baptized into Christ, that we may put on Christ.

3. If you would have the privileges of children, you must perform the duties of children; we catch at privileges, but neglect duty. Now the great duty of children is to love, please, and honour their father: 'If I be a father where is mine honour? If I be a master where is my fear?' 1 Peter 1:17, 'If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth every man, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' There must be a tenderness and a fear to offend our heavenly Father. Our privileges are the strongest engagement to duty that can be: Jer. 3:5, 'Thou hast said, Thou art my father; yet thou doest evil yet more and more.' The sons of Rechab are commended for keeping so close

to the institutes of their family: Jer. 35:6, 'But they said, We will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever.' Such a disposition is pleasing to God. So tenderly he loveth the children that are childlike and obedient. How humble and obedient was the Lord Christ, though his only-begotten Son!

4. If we would enjoy the privileges of the family, we must submit to the discipline of the family. God will take his own course in bringing up his children; our fancies and appetites must not prescribe the way, but all must be humbly submitted to his wisdom: Heb. 12:6–10, 'For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Many times his love of good-will maketh use of the rod. Before conversion it is a means to awaken us, but after conversion we are made amiable in his sight, and objects of his love of complacency; yet the rod of correction will not wholly be laid aside. In heaven, where there is no danger of sin, there is no use of the rod. Those that are permitted to go on in their sins have not the benefit of paternal correction; therefore in the 9th and 10th verses before cited, it is said, 'We had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; and shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Children, when they take it ill to be beaten by others, yet

they take it patiently to be beaten for their faults by their parents: they may err for want of wisdom, their chastisements are arbitrary and irregular; but there is more of compassion than passion in God's rod; his chastisements come from purest love, are regulated by perfect wisdom, and tend to and end in our holiness and happiness.

5. You must submit to bear the world's hatred, if God see fit: Rev. 4:29, 'They loved not their lives to the death;' Heb. 2:10, 'For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings.' And therefore, as Christ said, so must we say, John 18:11, 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'

6. Think often and seriously of this wonderful and matchless love; the subject requireth it.

[1.] These are things excellent and great, and such things usually force their way into our minds; all other things are trifles to this love, in making us his children. Alas! what are the things you dote upon, and wherein you applaud yourselves, to this? honours, lands, revenues, to these glorious mysteries? These are the most sweet and ravishing thoughts, a feast to the minds of all spiritual wise men: Eph. 3:18, 'That we may, with all saints, comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ, and to know the love of God, which passeth knowledge;' to know as much as we can, that we may be affected with it.

[2.] These are things that nearly concern us. Needless speculations we may well spare, or other men's matters; all will seek their own things: in temporals it holdeth true. Now what doth more nearly concern us than to have God for our father, Christ for our elder brother, heaven for our inheritance, angels and saints for our fellow-

members in the family? It may be so, if we do not forfeit or lose this privilege by our neglect or contempt. These things are ours by offer; they may be ours by choice. Consideration doth much promote it.

[3.] They are the most necessary things. What is more necessary to our happiness than to love God as a father, which is our work, and to know we are beloved of him as children?

[4.] Things most profitable should be considered by us. There is more profit to be gotten by the tillage of a fruitful land than a barren heath; and it is idle to stand telling stories when we have higher business of concernment in hand; so it is foolishness in us to muse upon vanity when we have the love of God to think of, to let the mill grind chaff when there is such plenty of com at hand.

SERMON II

Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.—1 JOHN 3:1, 2.

IN the first part of these words we have observed two things—

1. A great privilege represented.
2. An anticipation of an objection, or an exception which might be made to that privilege.

For the first, we have discoursed of the excellency of the privilege of adoption, or being God's children.

The second will give us occasion to discourse of the inconspicuousness of this privilege for the present to the world.

The objection or exception may be framed thus: There is little seen of this dignity and prerogative which you speak of as so great and glorious. The world hateth them whom you say God loveth; and their present condition is so unlike such an estate, that how can we believe it? many of God's children being mean, low, indigent, oppressed by the world, harassed with sundry calamities and afflictions, that it doth not appear that we have so great and glorious a Father; yea, what with corruption within and temptations without, we have much ado ourselves to be persuaded that we are the children of God; our condition being so much unsuitable to, and so much beneath, our rights and privileges. This objection the apostle would anticipate and prevent, both to vindicate the truth of the privilege, that it is as great and glorious as he had told them, and also to fortify them against the hatred and persecutions of the world.

But how doth he prevent it? In this prolepsis and anticipation there is—(1.) A concession; (2.) A correction.

1. By way of concession he granteth two things—

[1.] That the children of God are obnoxious to the contempt and hatred of the world, 'Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.'

[2.] That the privilege itself carrieth no splendid appearance in the world; yea, it is much obscured by the present state of those that possess it, 'It doth not appear what we shall be.'

2. By way of correction, wherein—

[1.] He asserts the reality of the privilege notwithstanding the present state, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God.'

[2.] That in the future state the glory of God's children shall be manifest, 'But we know, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.'

First, Of the concession; and there the first granted truth is—

1. That the children of God are obnoxious to the contempt and hatred of the world, 'The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.' By 'the world' is meant unbelievers, or the multitude of those that are without Christ. They know us not so as to own and love us, for they knew him not, that is, Christ. 'Him' is not referred to the next antecedent, the Father; for it is usual to express Christ by the relative word 'he' by way of eminency, as is evident by the next verses, 'For when he shall appear.' Yea, all along the epistle: 1 John 2:4, 'He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments,' &c.; ver. 12, 'Our sins are forgiven for his name's sake;' ver. 25, 'The promise which he hath promised us;' ver. 27, 'The anointing which he hath received from him;' ver. 28, 'When he shall appear, we shall have boldness at his coming.' So after the text, chap. 3:5, 'He was manifest to take away sin;' ver. 16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us;' 1 John 4:17, 'As he is in the world, so are we in the world.' It is by way of eminency appropriated to Christ; so that the meaning is, they do not acknowledge christianity, since they do not acknowledge Christ. Yet I will not rigorously insist upon this interpretation, so as to exclude the Father and the Spirit, because the world neither know Father, Son, nor Spirit, and therefore hate and condemn the people of God, and oppose the life and power of the gospel-dispensation. They know not the Father: John 15:21, 'These things will they do unto you for my

name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.' They know not the Son, and therefore contemn and hate the saints: John 16:3, 'These things will they do unto you, because they know not the Father nor me.' Yea, they know not the Holy Spirit: John 14:17, 'I will send you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him; but ye know him, because he dwelleth in you.' This is the first concession, that the world discerneth not any such great privilege, or dear and near relation between God and us.

2. The second concession is the imperfection of the present state, by which the glory of this privilege is darkened. It doth not appear what we shall be by what we are now. We are stained with sin, and blackened with sufferings. How many infirmities are we compassed about with! How many wants, necessities, and troubles are we pressed with! There is no visible appearance of our great privilege; it doth not appear who are God's children, or how they shall be glorified. The heirs of the world make a great show and noise; they may be pointed at where they go; there goeth such a prince, or such a lord's son and heir; but God's children carry no such port and state.

Secondly, By way of correction; and there—

1. He asserts the reality of the privilege, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God.'

[1.] Now we have the immediate ground and foundation of this new relation, which is the new birth or regeneration, whereby is given to us a new nature, which is called a divine nature, whereby we are made partakers of the life and likeness of God: Titus 3:5, 'According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;' 2 Cor. 5:17, 'If any man be in Christ, he

is a new creature: old things are passed away, and all things are become new.'

[2.] We have the right thence depending; for it is said, John 1:12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;' that is, right or privilege, for so the word is translated, Rev. 22:14, 'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to eat of the tree of life.' A right then we have, though not the possession or full fruition; that is reserved for the life everlasting; but it is a title to a glorious inheritance, that surely and shortly will come in hand. Therefore this present state and condition of ours is the state and condition of the sons of God. There must be a distinction between earth and heaven; though our filiation in the world to come be another thing to what it is in this world, yet now we are dear to God, reckoned to be of his family. God is with us now in our houses of clay, though we be not with him in his palace of glory. He is with us now in fire and water, in all conditions, though we be not in our everlasting condition of peace and rest. He loveth us, and we are precious in his sight: Isa. 43:3, 4, 'For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee; since thou wast precious in my sight, and thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.'

[3.] We have the comfort of it now, and the first-fruits and earnest to show how good and sure it is: Gal. 4:6, 'Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;' 2 Cor. 1:22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit;' Rom. 8:23, 'We ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.'

[4.] Now the fruits and effects do break out in our conversations, so that we are more visibly like unto God than others are, so that there is a manifest difference between the children of God and the children of the devil: 1 John 3:10, 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, nor he that loveth not his brother.' In some sort we are like him now in holiness, hereafter shall be more perfect in purity, blessedness, and immortality. The world is sensible of this difference now: 1 Peter 4:4, 'Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot.' They look on the children of God as contrary to them in nature, interest, and design, having other comforts, other dependencies, other practices. There is a generation of men whose life is not carnal, who have other delights and pleasures than the rest of mankind have. It is no wonder to see men proud, covetous, voluptuous, as it is no wonder to see the sun move, or the earth stand still, or water run downward; but it is a wonder to see men live as born of God, as having other hopes and expectations, to see them renounce what they see and love for God and heaven, which they never saw, to live upon supernatural supports, to comfort themselves with invisible hopes, and to sacrifice interests, life, and all to enjoy him. A christian that roweth against the stream of flesh and blood is the world's wonder and the world's reproof: Heb. 11:7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world.' Well, then, we are the sons of God; we have much in hand, though more in hope.

2. That in the future state the glory of God's children shall be manifest: 'When he shall appear we shall be like him.' That shall be the day of the manifestation of the sons of God: Rom. 8:19, 'The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.' First Christ, and then all the rest of his children:

Col. 3:3, 4, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God; but when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.'

Doct. That though God hath bestowed upon his people the glorious privileges of his children, yet little of this is seen in their present estate in the world.

1. I shall prove that the glory of our privileges and prerogatives is not seen in the present state.

2. Shall give you the reasons.

3. The uses.

I. Our glorious relation to God, with the effects and fruits of it, is a thing hidden and not seen.

1. It is not seen by the world; the world knoweth us not, as it knew him not; it is hidden from the world, as colours from a blind man; they have no eyes to see them—

[1.] Because they are blinded by the delusions of the flesh, and cannot judge of spiritual things: 1 Cor. 2:14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of God, for they are folly to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;' as beasts cannot judge of the affairs of a man; it is a life above them; these are things out of their sphere; they know all things after the flesh, and value them according to the interests of the flesh; spiritual prerogatives are a riddle to them.

[2.] Being blinded with malice and prejudice, they censure this estate perversely, and so malign it and oppose it: 1 Peter 4:4, 5, 'They think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: who shall give an account to him that is ready to

judge the quick and the dead.' They are unwilling that any should part company, that there may be none to make them ashamed; and therefore, if they cannot draw others into a fellowship of their sins, they labour to blacken them with censures, or root them out by furious opposition and persecutions. But their perverse judgment should be no discouragement to the godly in the way of holiness, wherein they endeavour to imitate God, their heavenly Father.

(1.) Because if God be not known nor honoured in the world, nor Christ, nor the Spirit, why should we take it unkindly? We cannot in reason expect better entertainment in the world than Christ found in the world: John 15:20, 'Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than the lord: if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.' He had spoken it before to persuade them to humility and patience.

(2.) Their opinion is little to be valued, and therefore we should rather pity their ignorance than be offended by their censures. Though we be scorned and lightly esteemed, yea, persecuted by them, we must pity their ignorance of God and heavenly things. The world blindeth them: 2 Cor. 4:4, 'In whom the god of this world hath blinded their minds which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them.' They are so transformed into a conformity to those things they lust after, that they know not what is true happiness and excellency. Their being of the world is the cause of their ignorance. God's people are too touchy when they stand so much upon the respects of men. It argueth a secret leaven of pride if they murmur when the world doth not esteem them. A christian is an unknown man in the world, and therefore should not take it ill if he be slighted; he knoweth he hath the favour of God, that his hopes lie elsewhere; if they knew you better, they would use you better. When they slight you, nay,

persecute and hate you, learn of your Lord to say, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

(3.) Christians should be satisfied with the approbation of God: 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God! The world knoweth us not, as it knew him not.' Though the world hate us, yet if God love us, it should be enough: John 5:44, 'How can ye believe, that seek honour one of another, and are not content with the honour that cometh from God only?' We make a strange medley when we would have both. It is enough that we have God's image, God's favour and fellowship, and are taken into God's family.

(4.) It might be cause of suspicion to us if we were hugged and embraced by the world. However, things must be judged according to their intrinsic value and nature, not by the world's love or hatred; this should alleviate the sense of the world's contempt. The world cannot sincerely love that which is good: John 15:19, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' It is better to have the praise of their hatred than the scandal of their love and approbation.

(5.) Those that are truly blessed in their own consciences cannot be truly miserable by the judgment of other men: 2 Cor. 1:12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversations in the world.' The bird of the bosom sings sweetest. If all the world should applaud us, or all the world condemn us, if the world condemn and our consciences acquit us, we need not be troubled; God will not ask their vote and suffrage for our condemnation or absolution.

(6.) The slanders and mockery of worldly men should be no discouragement to us in the ways of the Lord; for God will reckon

with them about their hard speeches against his people: 1 Peter 4:4, 'They speak evil of you, who shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.' There is not an injurious thought in wicked men's hearts, or word in their mouths, but God taketh notice of it. And therefore this may comfort us, that God will call them to a strict account for all their slanders, or at least keep us from discouragement in our duty.

2. As our dignity is not of the world, so in itself it doth not appear during our present state—(1.) Because it is spiritual, there is a veil upon it; (2.) It is hidden; (3.) Because it is future.

[1.] The privileges that belong to our dignity and prerogative of adoption are spiritual, and therefore make no fair show in the flesh; as, for instance—

(1.) The image of God is an internal image: Ps. 45:13, 'The king's daughter is glorious within.' The world is glorious without, but the church is glorious within; its splendour lieth not in large possessions and great revenues, but in a plentiful effusion of gifts and graces. A harlot is more painted and decked with jewels than a matron; so is the false church more adorned with outward splendour than the true: Cant. 1:5, 'I am black, but comely, like the tents of Kedar and the curtains of Solomon.' There are many crosses and comforts, corruptions and graces, beauty and blackness; as the wild and wandering people that carried tents up and down were black in the outside, and sullied with the weather, but carried about with them costly and valuable things; and Solomon's rich hangings and tapestry had other coverings of smaller value, as the ark had of badgers' skins. There may be little splendour to the eye, yet much beauty within; even the beauty of our God may be upon them. The people of God are

not to be judged by their outside, but by this inward glory. The world will not believe that such mean creatures can be the sons of God.

(2.) The life which floweth thence is hidden: Col. 3:3, 'Our life is hid with Christ in God;' like the sap of the tree, which is not seen though the fruit appear.

(3.) Their comforts are spiritual, known by feeling rather than by report and imagination: 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.' It is not learning, but spiritual experience will tell us what this is: Rev. 2:17, 'To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the hidden manna.' It is the heart of the godly that knoweth and feeleth these comforts: 'A stranger intermeddeth not with their joy.' The party that hath them feeleth them, but the bystander knoweth them not.

(4.) The protection and supplies of God's providence; it is a secret, it is a mystery, and a riddle to the world, that must have all under the view of sense: Ps. 31:20, 'Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence, from the pride of men and the strife of tongues;' and so are said to 'dwell in the secret of the Most High,' Ps. 91:1. Again 'the secret of the Lord is upon their tabernacle;' meaning God's protection and providence. This is the special favour of God, which the world knoweth not of, whereby God dwelleth with his people, and doth maintain and prosper them, nobody knoweth how; but there is a secret and insensible blessing on them, as, on the contrary, there is an insensible curse like a moth, that is sufficient to blast the fairest enjoyments of the wicked. God, to provide for his children, can put a very great blessing in a little means.

[2.] Because it is hidden: Col. 3:3, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God;' not only in point of security, as maintained by an invisible

power, but hidden in point of obscurity; there is a veil upon it.

(1.) The spiritual life is hidden under the veil of the natural life: Gal. 2:20, 'The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.' They live in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. It is a life within a life. The spiritual life is nothing else but the natural life sublimated, and overruled to nobler and higher ends. The children of God eat, and drink, and sleep, and marry and give in marriage, as others do; they have not divested themselves of the interests and concernments of flesh and blood, but all these things are governed by grace, and carried on to high and eternal ends. But that grace which overruleth this life is not seen. We can see men move and breathe, and hear them discourse, but we see not the vital principle. We hear the clock strike, but the springs and wheels are out of sight. So are the inward motions of the soul, and the principles by which they are moved and stirred.

(2.) Another veil is that of afflictions and outward meanness and abasement: 'The world was not worthy of them,' yet they 'wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins.' Who would think so much worth should lie hid under a base outside? Would any man judge these to be highest in the favour of God, or heirs of glory? The glory was darkened and obscured by a base outside: 'God hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of a kingdom.' So miserably poor, and yet in such a high relation to God, that they should have most of God's heart who feel his hand so heavy and smart upon them, and have so little of this world's good things: Ps. 68:13, 'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' Sometimes God darkeneth all their outward glory, maketh them as scullions in the kitchen, yet in the meantime beautified with grace, and enriched with the evidences of his love; those that shall be

at length advanced to eternal glory may long lie in a sad, black, destitute, and despised condition.

(3.) Another veil is reproach and calumnies: 2 Cor. 6:8, 'As deceivers, and yet true;' that is, counted in the world a company of dissemblers, and yet the sincere servants and children of God: 'And judged according to men in the flesh, when they live to God in the spirit.' Reproach is the soil and dung whereby God maketh his heritage fruitful; but the devil intendeth it for their destruction and extirpation. Satan is first a liar and then a murderer; as they would invest the christians with bear-skins, and then bait them as bears; and the world doth it to keep up their prejudices, and will not search, because they have a mind to hate.

(4.) There is another veil. Christians quench the vigour, and obscure the glory of this life by their infirmities; they have too much of Adam, and too little of Jesus, and so the spiritual life is carried on darkly and in a riddle; the good herbs and flowers are hidden in neglected gardens by the plenty of weeds. Christians are too negligent, and do not live as those that are born of God; as they said of Hannibal when he was melting his days, his time, and army in the pleasures of Capua, that there was fire in him, but it needeth blowing; so there is grace at the bottom, but it needeth a little stirring and quickening. The best of God's children have their failings: 'In many things we offend all.' Now the wicked insist more upon the faults of God's children than on their graces, as the flies pitch on a sore place, and the vultures fly over the gardens of delight to pitch on carrion. A pearl or diamond in the dirt and mire, its lustre cannot be discerned till it be washed. When corruptions are great and experiences small, a little grace can hardly be discerned; as a staff is sooner found than a needle.

[3.] It is future: 'Now are we the children of God, but it doth not appear what we shall be;' and so our filiation is not only hidden from others, but in a great measure from ourselves. The time of our perfection and blessedness is not yet come, and we cannot for the present judge of it; what God will do for us, and what a glory shall be revealed in us. The glory intended is not fully revealed in scripture, for we have not a heart to conceive of it: 1 Cor. 2:9, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;' 1 Cor. 12:9, 'Prophecy is but in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' And the apostle, when he was rapt into paradise, heard unspeakable words. Heavenly joys cannot be told us in an earthly dialect; the scripture is fain to lisp to us, and speak as we can understand, of things to come by things present; therefore our glory is in a great measure unknown, and will be till we get up and see what a crown of glory is prepared for us.

II. The reasons why this glory doth not appear.

1. Because now is the time of trial, hereafter of recompense; therefore now is the hiding time, hereafter is the day of manifestation of the sons of God. If the glory of the spiritual life were too sensible, there were no trial, neither of the world nor of the people of God. It is meet mere men should be distinguished here; as Christ himself might be discerned by those that had a mind to see him, yet there was obscurity enough in his person to harden those that were resolved to continue in their prejudices. Therefore it is said, Luke 2:34, 'This child was set for the rise and fall of many in Israel, and for a sign of contradiction to be spoken against.' He was a stumbling-block to the wicked. So if the whole excellency of the christian state were laid open, there would be no trial. Christ had his bright side and dark

side, a glory to be seen by those eyes that were anointed with spiritual eyesalve, and affliction and meanness enough to harden them that had no mind to see; so God hath his chosen ones in the world, who keep up his honour and interest; and he hath his ways to express his love to them, but not openly. Now they are called his hidden ones, with respect to his secret blessing and protection: Ps. 80:3, 'Turn again, O God, and cause thy face to shine.' And God hath chosen this way as most suitable, both for our trial and the world.

2. Now is the time of faith, hereafter of sight; and 'faith is the evidence of things not seen.' Therefore in this day of faith God will not too openly express things to the view of sense, for that would destroy faith. Now we are sanctified, and justified, and live by faith.

3. That we may be conformed to our head, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came not with external appearance. The glory of the divine nature was hidden under the veil of his flesh, and his dignity and excellency under a mean and base outside: 'He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.' In this outward state there was nothing lovely to be seen by a carnal eye; though in true beauty surpassing men and angels, but not in outward state and condition of life: 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' He had his veil of reproaches; called 'a wine-bibber,' and that 'he casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.' He was tempted of Satan, persecuted by the sons of violence. He had no sin indeed, yet counted a sinner. Now we must be made like Christ in all things; he sanctified a mean condition to us.

4. God hath chosen this way as most fit to advance his glory; he will give us little in hand, that he may daily hear from us, and we may seek our supplies from him; for the spirit of adoption was given us that we may cry, 'Abba, Father.' And also that his power may be

perfect in our weakness. By infirmities, weaknesses, and wants, his fatherly love more appeareth to us than in an absolute and total exemption from them. God would not hear so often from us, nor should we have such renewed experiences, to revive the sense of his love and grace, which otherwise would be cold and dead in our hearts, were it not for those wants and afflictions during our minority and nonage.

Use 1. Be contented to be hidden from and hated by the world, if the course of your service expose you to it. As much as in him lieth, a christian should seek to be at peace with all, gain the good-will of all, that his service may not be obstructed. But none can carry it so innocently and meekly but he will meet with some opposition; but we should not stumble at the cross, be deterred from a course of godliness, or discouraged in God's stricter ways, because of the vexations and afflictions which accompany them. To this end—

1. Look upon things not as what they are esteemed to be now, but what they will be hereafter; now is the trouble, then the reward. If the blind see not these things, you should see them, 2 Peter 1:10. Present time is quickly past, therefore we should not look at things what they seem at present, but what they will prove to all eternity. Present pleasures, profits, or honours, may easily be counter-balanced by final shame. The derided, vilified believer, oh, how glorious a creature will he be, when Christ shall give him his eternal reward! Mat. 5:11, 12, 'Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, for my name's sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.'

2. Thankfully consider the benefits you have now by holiness, as well as the afflictions. The least cross is usually taken notice of more than

all the advantages which follow holiness. Is your Father strange to you now? Doth not he give an hundred-fold? Mark 10:30; and give you that which is infinitely more worth than that he taketh from you? The world may be bought too dear, but not salvation and the comforts of the Spirit. Yea, as to outward things, you are not cast out of the care of his providence: 2 Cor. 4:9, 'Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.' Though we wrestle with difficulties, yet are supported and maintained; our heavenly Father is fatherly still.

Use 2. Do not affect appearances, nor live by opinion, but content yourselves with the favour and approbation of God; an hypocrite's outside is the best, because he seeketh to please men. But count the inward life the best life, that inward adorning, the hidden man of the heart. The nettle mounteth on high when the violet shroudeth itself under its own leaves, and is only found out by its smell and fragrancy. A christian is satisfied with the honour that cometh of God only. Consider well—

1. Of the honourable estate and privileges to which believers are called, to be sons of God and friends of God.
2. The honour of his approbation in our consciences, and the testimony of our integrity, if approved of God and accepted of God, 2 Cor. 5:9, 2 Cor. 10:18. A good opinion of ourselves, and others' good opinion of us, cannot be so comfortable to us as the testimony of God concerning our sincerity.
3. His respects are many times made conspicuous to the world: 'Those that honour me, I will honour.' When a man sincerely sets himself to exalt God, God will take care to honour him in the sight of the world when it is convenient.

4. God's approbation and testimony of us at the day of judgment, 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Peter 1:7, 'That the trial of your faith may be found to praise and glory.'

5. Eternal glory in heaven: Rom. 2:7, 'To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life.'

Use 3. If your privileges be hidden, let your graces appear in their fruits and effects. Little of your happiness is seen, but your holiness should be apparent and visible; it is for the honour of God that his children should be like him, Mat. 5:16, and 2 Thes. 1:12. If your condition be obscured and darkened by afflictions, let it not be obscured and darkened by sins; and though you live not in a perpetual tenor of happiness, yet there must be a constant course of holiness; no greatness like that of a gracious spirit.

Use 4. Be contented with a mean condition; it is not the day of the manifestation of the sons of God: though others that are wicked have a larger allowance, God doth not misplace his hands, as Joseph thought of his father, that he did not place his hands on the right head, Gen. 48., when he saw Ephraim preferred before Manasseh. In what a poor condition was the only-begotten Son of God when he lived in the world! Though you do not enjoy the pleasures, honours, riches, and esteem that others do, yet if you enjoy the favour of God, it is enough; though mean, yet heirs of glory, James 1:5. God doth not esteem men according to their outward lustre, 1 Sam. 16:7.

Use 5. Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment, John 7:24. Do not judge the people of God by their outside or worldly privileges: Moses could see an excellency in the people of God in their afflicted condition, Heb. 11:25. Do not misjudge yourselves: I am a poor, afflicted, contemptible man; that may prove

a temptation, Ps. 73:13, 14. Do not misjudge others because of some failings; a pearl may lie under a great deal of chaff.

SERMON III

But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.—1 JOHN 3:2.

FROM these words I observe—

That though for the present our adoption be obscured, yet when he shall appear the children of God are sure to enjoy a blessed and glorious estate.

For the clearing of this point I shall show you—

1. The nature of this blessedness.
2. The time when it shall commence.
3. The apprehension we have of it for the present.

Of these in order.

I. Of the nature of this blessed and glorious estate: 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' A transforming vision, or such a vision as changeth us into the likeness of God, is the true blessedness of the saints.

There are three things considerable in our happiness—(1.) The vision of God; (2.) A participation of his likeness; (3.) The satisfaction or delectation thence resulting.

Two of them are in the text: 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' The third is fetched from a parallel place: Ps. 17:15, 'When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thine image and likeness.' The words, 'when I awake,' note the same reason with those in the text, 'when he shall appear;' that is, when we awake out of the sleep of death, at the day of the general resurrection; then we shall be satisfied, or at rest, as having attained our end.

First, For vision; that beginneth the happiness, and maketh way for all the rest: 'We shall see him as he is;' that is, we shall see God in our nature, Christ as he is now in glory, not as he was in the form of a servant. It is not meant of the essence of God, for that cannot be seen of any creature by the eyes of the body or the mind, but of the sight of Christ. It is usual in scripture to express our happiness by sight. We shall see him face to face, and we shall know as we are known; so John 17:24, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' They shall see his face. This sight is either ocular or mental.

1. Ocular; for our senses have their happiness as well as our souls, and there is a glorified eye as well as a glorified mind: Job 19:26, 27, 'And though after my skin, worms destroy this body; yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.' When our bodies are raised up again, we shall in our flesh see God; not our souls only, but our whole man shall enjoy this sight of God; not in another body, but in the same shall we see him. Though the qualities of the body be different and glorious, yet the substance is the same. We shall see the person that redeemed us, that nature wherein he suffered so much for us, and the glory that is upon him in our nature. Many out of curiosity desired to see Christ in the days of his flesh; as those Greeks that came to worship him at Jerusalem;

they came to Philip and said to him, 'Sir, we would fain see Jesus;' and Zaccheus climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him; and some choice apostles were admitted to see him at his transfiguration. But then it shall be the common privilege of all the faithful; they shall see him of whom they have heard so much, and of whose goodness they have tasted so much, and whose laws they have obeyed, and upon whose merits they have depended.

But you will say, How is this so great a privilege to the godly, since the wicked shall see him? Mat. 26:64, 'Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and glory, and coming in the clouds.' They shall see him who spat on him, and buffeted him, and crucified him.

Ans. (1.) That sight they have of Christ shall be but a short glimpse of his glory; for after their doom and sentence is past, they shall be immediately banished out of his presence: Mat. 25:41, 'Then shall he say to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed.' But this sight of the saints shall be perpetual: 1 Thes. 4:17, 'We shall ever be with the Lord.'

(2.) They shall see him with shame and terror, looking upon him as to receive their just punishment: 1 John 2:28, 'And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' Our vision shall be joyful and familiar; but the wicked are not able to endure the sight of God. As a judge they shun it, and fly from it; as Adam hid himself when the Lord God walked in the garden, Gen. 3:8. But to believers, the sight of Christ is comfortable; he cometh for their benefit, and to put them in possession of their everlasting happiness.

(3.) The consideration of the object is different; the one look upon him as their inexorable judge, the other as their merciful saviour; their interest in him maketh him dear to their souls. These look to receive from him the full effect of their redemption and salvation, and so rejoice in his favour and presence; whereas the wicked shall see him as the God of others only, and to their eternal confusion. But to the godly it is comfortable when he shall appear in his glory; it is the glory of their God: Ps. 67:6, 'God, even our God, shall bless us.' It is the glory of him whom they served, and loved, and pleased, even when this glory was under a cloud and concealed from the world. Now their faith and hope is justified, and their loyal service cometh to be rewarded. They shall see him in his glory, not as unconcerned spectators, but as the persons mainly interested therein.

2. Mental vision or contemplation. The angels, which have not bodies, are said to behold the face of our heavenly Father, Mat. 18:10; and when we are said to see God, it is not meant of the bodily eye, for a spirit cannot be seen with bodily eyes; so he is still the invisible God, Col. 1:15. And seeing face to face is opposed to knowing in part. And therefore it implieth a more complete knowledge than now we have. The mind is the noblest faculty, and must have its satisfaction. Now we have dull and low conceptions of God, and are little transformed by them, or weaned from worldly and fleshly lusts. Could we see God in all his glory, nothing would be dreadful, nothing would be snaringly or enticingly amiable to us any more: 1 John 3:6, 'Whosoever sinneth hath not seen God, neither known him.' We can hardly now get such a sight of God as will prevent wilful and heinous sin; but then we shall see him, and sin no more. We shall see then the excellency of his person, the union of the two natures in the person of Christ more exactly: John 14:20, 'At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you.' The clarity of the human nature, and what honour the Father

puts upon him as mediator, all that wisdom, goodness, and power in conducting and bringing the saints into glory, and the happiness God will bestow upon them; it is no longer matter of faith, which is a darker sight, but matter of sense: 2 Cor. 5:7, 'We walk by faith now, and not by sight;' by sight then, and not by faith. Now the more perfectly we understand these things, the greater impression they make upon us. In short, not to ravel into all the particulars which then we shall know, our knowledge must needs be greater then, and more completely satisfying, if we consider what is necessary to such a vision and sight of God as the creature is capable of.

Now three things are necessary—(1.) A prepared faculty; (2.) A suitable object; and (3.) The conjunction of both these. Now in the state of glory all these concur. The faculty is more capacious, the object is more fully represented, and the conjunction and fruition is more intimate and close than it can be elsewhere.

[1.] The faculty is more prepared, as we are more purified and clarified from the dregs of carnal sense, and those worldly vanities and fleshly lusts which do so blind the mind and divert the heart from God: Mat. 5:8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;' Heb. 12:14, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' The mind is now divided or distracted between God and other things; now we have but transient glances of God, and a slight apprehension, but then a full view; and it shall be our whole work to study divinity in the Lamb's face. The more clear the glass is, the more clearly is the image reflected upon it, but the more dusky, the more imperfect is the representation; so here our understandings are not refined as they shall be hereafter.

[2.] The object is manifested and dispensed in a greater latitude; for there God is all in all, 1 Cor. 15:28, without the intervention of

means. When God discovereth himself by means, we know no more of him than can be represented by these means. If a pipe should be put to a great ocean or river, the cistern or conduit can receive no more than the pipe can convey; but there we see him not in a glass, but converse with God immediately: 'We see him face to face.'

[3.] The conjunction is more intimate between the object and faculty. Here the conjunction is by faith and imperfect love, there by clear vision and perfect love: 'He that is joined to the Lord by faith and love is one spirit.' Oh, but what a conjunction will this be, when we shall be joined to the Lord by clear immediate sight and perfect love! Our sight is clear: 1 Cor. 13:12, 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.' Vision shall then succeed faith, and possession hope, and the soul adhereth to him by love, without weakness, weariness, and distraction. Surely then our vision and fruition must needs be greater, and the soul filled up with all the fulness of God, Eph. 3:19. Well, then, gather up the severals of this argument. The understanding is sanctified; God is near to us, and liveth with us and in us; and we live near to him, and in him. We see him whom we love, and love him whom we see. Heaven and earth doth not yield one tempting object to divert us from him: Ps. 73:25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth I desire besides thee.' And therefore our sight is clearer and more comfortable and full. Surely the mind is filled with as much light, and the heart with as much love and joy, as the capacity of it is able to contain. Here we are in an expecting, waiting, longing posture; but there is presence, vision, union, and fruition, our light and love being then perfect.

Secondly, Assimilation or transformation into the image of God and Christ.

Here I shall show—(1.) What likeness is; (2.) How it is the fruit of vision; for it is rendered as a reason of it, it being said, We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

1. What this likeness is. This was man's first ruin, this aspiring to be like God: Gen. 3:5, 'Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;' not in a blessed conformity, but in a cursed self-sufficiency. This was the design of the first transgression: Isa. 14:14, 'I will ascend above the height of the clouds, and will be like the Most High.' It was the cause of the fall of Lucifer: I will be like the Most High; who was therefore brought down wonderfully. The men of the world aspire to be like God in greatness and power, but not in goodness and holiness. We affect or usurp divine honour, and to sit upon even ground with God. Christ came not to gratify our sin, but to make us like unto God, not equal with God. The creature is not deified, but glorified; and that glorification lieth in such a likeness and conformity as is proper to the creature. Man was at first made like God: Gen. 1:26, 27, 'Let us make man after our own image and likeness.' Now, when we fell from that, Christ came to repair what Adam lost, and to restore the image of God again, which was defaced in us; yea, to put more glory upon us than ever we had or could have had in Adam. This work is begun in us in this world: 2 Cor. 3:18, 'Beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, we are changed into his image and likeness from glory to glory.' But it is perfected in heaven; we are there made more like to God. Briefly, we shall be like him in two things—in holiness and felicity.

[1.] In holiness and purity; for that is the chief thing wherein God will be resembled by his creatures. We are made holy as he is holy. Now at that day this is accomplished in the most perfect degree; for it is said, 'He will present us faultless before the presence of his glory,' Jude 24; and 'holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable in his

sight;' Col. 1:22, 'Or without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that ye should be holy, and without blemish,' Eph. 5:27. There is a complete similitude and transformation. Here sin is mortified, but there it is nullified; here grace is mingled with corruption; we are like God by the first-fruits of the Spirit, but unlike him by the remainders of sin; but in heaven we are wholly like him. Here we resemble Christ, but we also resemble Adam, yea, and often show forth more of Adam than Jesus; but there we only show forth the holiness and purity of Christ; his image shineth in us without spot and blemish.

[2.] We are like him in happiness and glory, that is, in a glorious condition: 1 Cor. 15:49, 'And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.' Now the image of the heavenly is glory and immortality. So in the parallel place: Col. 3:4, 'We shall appear with him in glory;' that is, not only as pure and holy creatures, but as glorious and happy creatures. And more particularly it is said, Phil. 3:2, 'That this vile body shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body, for splendour, beauty, and immortality. This is a consequent of the former; for if we be like him in holiness, we shall be like him in felicity; for God, that is a pure and holy being, is also a perfect and happy being: 'And Christ will be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe,' 2 Thes. 1:10. He will set the world a-wondering at the honour he will confer upon those that have honoured him in the world; they shall see him in full glory, sitting upon his throne of judgment, and afterwards at the right hand of his Father for evermore. So that we have honour conferred upon us in the judgment, and shall then abide with him for evermore in a state of glory.

(1.) A relative and adherent glory, as the saints are admitted into a participation of his judicial power: 1 Cor. 6:2, 'Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world, even angels?' They are not only judged,

but judges, and that not only of men, but evil angels, who though they had a long time ago a particular punishment on them, yet then they shall have their solemn doom and sentence and whole punishment. And in this judgment the saints shall be associated with Christ. Christ judgeth by way of original authority, but the saints by consent and suffrage, which is a part of the kingdom and dominion which the upright receive in the morning, Ps. 49:14; that is, in the morning of the resurrection. Those who were slighted, persecuted, and hated in the world, shall then be owned by Christ, and sit with him on the throne. Here the saints judge and condemn the world by their conversations, Heb. 11:7; there by their vote and suffrage.

(2.) Internal and inherent, viz., the glory revealed in us, put into us. Now it is revealed to us, then in us. Our ear hath received a little hereof, but then it shall be fully accomplished in our persons, in our bodies and souls. The body shall be a glorious immortal body, shining as the sun for brightness; not decayed with age, nor wasted with sickness, nor needing the supply of food; in short, freed from all weakness and imperfection, and united to a soul fully sanctified, from which it shall never more be separated, and both together shall be the eternal temple of the Holy Ghost.

2. How it is the fruit of vision? for so it is given as a reason, 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

I answer—There is between light and likeness a circular generation, as there is in most moral things; and on the one side it may be said we shall be like him, therefore we shall see him as he is, and also on the other side, as in the text, 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

[1.] The first is certainly a truth, that they that are like God shall see God as he is; such are included within the promise: Mat. 5:8, 'Blessed

are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' And others are excluded out of it: Heb. 12:14, 'Follow peace and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' And as they are included in the promise, so they are disposed and prepared for the enjoyment of this privilege, by the holy constitution of their souls for the vision and fruition of God. They are suited to this happiness by their love of God and their desire to enjoy him. If they had the happiness of heaven and did not see God, it would not satisfy them. They count it a great mercy to meet with anything of God in the ordinances. Now if you can suppose them to come to heaven, and not meet with God there, and Christ there, it would be a trouble to them in their glorified estate. So much as is pure and holy in their soul carrieth them to God, so much as is base, drossy, fetulent, disposeth them to the world and worldly things. Their hearts would be disaffected and unsuitable to this blessed estate if there were not purity there.

[2.] Vision maketh way for this likeness, which is the thing asserted in the text; take this likeness either for holiness or for glory and immortality.

(1.) For holiness. The work of likeness to God is begun in regeneration, and it entereth into the heart by knowledge or sight: Col. 3:10, 'Renewed after the image of God, by the knowledge of him.' Sight begets likeness; so beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, we are changed into his image and likeness, 2 Cor. 3:18. Now as begun, so it is perfected; when we see better, we shall become better. If sight doth transform us now, much more will it hereafter, when the veil of the flesh doth no more interpose, and we are no more blinded with the delusions thereof. When things now reported to our faith shall be under view, and not only known by hearsay, but by sight, they must needs make a deeper impression upon us.

(2.) If you interpret this likeness of glory and immortality, the glory of God in Christ is represented to us, and impressed upon us; for it is represented that we may participate thereof; and Christ doth appear that we may appear with him in glory, that the whole mystical body may carry a suitableness and conformity to the head. Moses' face shone when he saw God, Exod. 34:29. How much more will it be so in heaven! The object is unspeakably efficacious, the act of intuition is full of vigour, and the subject is prepared and fitted to be receptive of it. Christ in his vehemency of prayer was transfigured, Luke 9:29, having in his natural body a more than ordinary sight of his God: 'As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered.'

Thirdly, The third thing is satisfaction, not mentioned in the text, but implied and supplied from a parallel place; for we having the sight and presence of God, must needs be ravished with it: Ps. 16:11, 'In thy presence,' or face, 'is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' The fruition of God's immediate presence must needs exceed all the joy which the heart of man is capable of. If this breedeth not true contentment and felicity, what will? So our admission into the everlasting estate is called 'an entering into the joy of our Lord,' Mat. 25:41. There must needs arise an incredible delectation from the vision of God, as also from our fruition of him, or being like unto him, and our possession of the whole estate of happiness thence resulting. Our great business will be to love what we see, and our great happiness to have what we love. This will be a full, perpetual, and never-failing delight to us. The vision hath an influence upon this joy. If the light of the sun be pleasant, how comfortable will it be to see the Sun of righteousness shining forth in all his glory? Now, when the mind is a little raised in the thoughts of God, what a delightful thing is it! Ps. 104:34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' Yet how tasteless to our souls are thoughts of God now in comparison of what they will be

then? There is something in us which carrieth us off from God, which liketh not to retain God in our knowledge. Now, when our hearts are more suited and prepared for that sight, our thoughts must needs be glorious and ravishing.

Again, this likeness conduceth to this satisfaction. Take it for holiness, God himself is 'glorious in holiness,' Exod. 15:11. Now to have the beauty of our God upon us is the greatest gift that can be bestowed upon us. When there was a debate in Ahasuerus's court, 'What should be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?' Esther 6:8, it was resolved, 'Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head.' Or take it for glory and immortality: 1 Peter 4:13, 'That when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad with exceeding joy.' This is the soul's rest in God, as satisfied with the full and perfect demonstration of his love; it is the best estate we can be in, for we are not capable of a better. It is the end of our faith, and hope, and labours. Of our faith, 1 Peter 1:5; the end of our hope, Acts 26:7. Now when a man hath obtained his end, then he is satisfied, as being in his perfect estate.

2. It is the utmost period of perfection men can be advanced unto, to enjoy God and be like him. Beyond God and above God nothing can be enjoyed; with God nothing can make us miserable, and without God nothing can make us happy. If a man should enjoy all the world, there is something without him and above him that can make him miserable; if the world smileth and God frowneth, what will you do? Ps. 39:11, 'When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity.' None can obstruct God's vengeance, or stop his wrath; as when the sun is gone, all the candles and torches in the world cannot make it day.

3. If a glimpse of God's love be so precious to the saints, what will the sight of his face be? Ps. 4:6, 7, 'Who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us: thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.' If imperfect holiness be so precious, what will complete holiness be?

II. The season when we shall enjoy this, 'When he shall appear.'

1. I take it for granted that the soul before is not only in manu Dei, in the hand of God, which all assert, but admitted in conspectum Dei, into the sight and presence of the Lord, and to see his blessed face; which opinion the scripture befriendeth in divers places; but it would divert me now to dispute it. The term fixed here is, 'When Christ shall appear;' that is, at the general resurrection; for it concerned the apostle, to comply with his present argument, to mention this season rather than another; for the matter in debate was about the inconspicuousness of the privileges of the gospel. He saith, hereafter it will be glorious and conspicuous, namely, 'When he shall appear.' There are many that had never seen Christ, when he lived upon earth, he lived in a state of obscurity; his godhead sometimes looked out through the veil of his flesh, and discovered itself in a miracle, but generally our Christ was a hidden Christ. Therefore the Jews would not believe him, because he came in such a manner as not to satisfy his own countrymen: John 1:11, 'He came to his own, and they received him not.' In the ordinances we see him, but darkly, as in a glass: 'His kingdom cometh not with observation,' Luke 17:20. It was not set up as other kingdoms are, with warlike preparations and visible power and glory; his people were hated, scorned, reproached, but then he shall appear himself in all his glory.

2. Then we have our solemn absolution from all sins: Acts 3:19, 'Repent, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of

refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.' And our pardon is pronounced by the judge sitting upon the throne. It is great mercy now that he is pleased to pass by our many offences, and take us into his family, and give us a right to his heavenly kingdom; but then it is another manner of grace and favour indeed when our judge shall acquit us with his own mouth, and own us as his faithful servants. Christ himself shall then appear to reward them. There were many that never had a sight of his glorious person; his bodily presence is withdrawn from us for wise reasons, and is contained within the heaven of heavens; and though this doth not hinder his spiritual influence, but we feel his operations; yet at his second coming, then shall his people be pronounced blessed by their king, sitting upon the throne in all his royalty.

3. Then shall we have glorified bodies restored unto us, wherein Christ shall be admired: 2 Thes. 1:10, 'When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.'

4. Then Christ will present us to God by head and poll, and give an account of all that God hath given him, that they may be introduced into their everlasting estate, not one wanting: John 6:40, 'And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day;' and Heb. 2:13, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me.' Man by man he will confess and own them before his Father: Luke 12:8, 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall also the Son of man confess before the angels of God.' This is one of mine: these are those in whom I have been glorified upon earth; and then followeth the eternal kingdom.

III. The apprehension that we should have of it for the present: 'We know.' Knowledge signifieth both acts of the understanding,

apprehension and dijudication. It is usually said that truth is the proper object and good of the understanding. Now when any truth is propounded to the understanding, there are two acts about it; we apprehend the nature and tenor of it, and we judge of it whether it be true or false. Now the first act is usually called knowledge, and when we are sufficiently informed of the nature of anything; the second is called faith and assent, either upon the natural evidence of the thing or the fidelity of the witness; but faith is not so void of evidence as not to be called knowledge also: Job 19:25, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth;' and 2 Cor. 5:1, 'We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;' 1 Cor. 15:58, 'Wherefore, my beloved, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be vain in the Lord.' Invisible things revealed by God are certainly known, though we never saw them. Well, then—

1. It is not a bare conjecture, but a certain knowledge; it is not only we think, we hope well, but we know. No man calleth that knowledge which is but a conjecture. It is not a may-be or a bare possibility; it is possible there may be a heaven and happiness hereafter; but it is true, it is as true as the word of God is true; we have his own hand and seal and earnest for it.

2. It is not a probable opinion, but an evident and infallible truth, as sure as if we saw it with our eyes. How cometh the believer to have such a sure prospect of a future estate? An unseen world is an unknown world; how can we be so sure of it? It is set before us by his precious promises who cannot lie: 'And if we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater;' Heb. 6:18, 'That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon

the hope set before us;' Heb. 12:2, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' That word is not only confirmed by his oath, but also by his seal or miracles, Heb. 3:4; and fulfilled prophecies: 2 Peter 1:19, 'For we have a more sure word of prophecy.' The old testament confirmed the kingdom of the Messiah and the privileges thereof long before it came to pass. The doctrine of the scripture, which assureth us of this estate, bears God's image and superscription, which everything doth that hath passed his hand, even to a gnat and pile of grass; and so shineth to us by its own light, if men were not strangely depraved and corrupted by worldly affections: 2 Cor. 4:2-4, 'But by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.' Besides, God hath blessed that doctrine to the converting, comforting, and quickening of many souls in all ages and places of the world: Col. 1:6, 'The word is come to you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.' That doctrine which bringeth forth the fruit of a holy life, and breedeth a heavenly mind in all that hear it and receive it, that is the truth of God. In the first age Christ did swiftly drive on the chariot of the gospel; for within a few years after his death it obtained its effect in all parts of the world; and ever since it hath held up its head against all encounters of time and revolutions of the world. Well, therefore, since we do not build upon the promise of a deceitful man, but the word of the everlasting God, why should not we be confident? 'We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.'

3. It is not a general belief, but a particular confidence: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth;' and here, that we shall be like him; he speaketh upon the supposition that we are God's children. Now to make this evident, we must have more than a word of promise; we must have the spirit of holiness opening the eyes of our mind, in seeing the truth and worth of this glorious and blessed estate: Eph. 1:17, 18, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints in light;' quickening us in the love of God and heavenly desires, to carry us to this blessed estate, as our only happiness: 2 Cor. 5:5, 'Now he that hath wrought us to this self-same thing, is God, who hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.' Causing us to groan after it, to delight in it, to continue with patience in the pursuit of it: Gal. 5:5, 'We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.' Filling us with joy as we get any hope of it, or sight of our interest in it: 1 Peter 1:8, 'Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' First faith seeth the feast, then love tastes it; those joys being afforded to us in our most sober and serious moods as cannot be a fantastical impression.

Use. To show how much it concerneth us to get it evident that we are the sons of God, if there be such a glorious estate reserved for them. Now this will be made evident—

1. By regeneration; this is our legal qualification and preparative disposition. First, our legal qualification: John 3:3, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;' 1 Peter 1:3, 'Who hath begotten us to a lively hope.' Therefore, till this change be wrought in us, we are altogether without any true and well-grounded

hope of eternal life; but having gotten this new life and a new nature, we may expect this glory and blessedness as our inheritance. Now it is not only our legal qualification, or that which doth constitute our right and title, but, secondly, it is our preparative disposition. The sanctified understanding is only able to behold God, and the sanctified will and affections only capable to enjoy him. These are made meet; as Col. 1:10, 'Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the saints in light.' This concurs conditionally and dispositively. What should a sensual heart do with God and heaven? If they cannot receive or savour spiritual things, what shall they do with heavenly things? Now that they cannot receive and savour them is plain from 1 Cor. 2:14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;' Rom. 8:5, 'For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.' Either heaven must be another thing, or we must be other manner of creatures than we are. Oh, then how much doth it concern us to see whether we have this new life and being; then the first principles of blessedness are introduced into the soul; the soul is a form for this very thing, that it may be like unto God. To pretend to desire heaven and dislike renovation is to pretend you would have that perfected which you cannot endure should ever be begun; therefore see that it be a thorough change, not some faint inclinations to God and the heavenly life.

2. When converted and regenerated, we have the spirit of adoption inclining us to God as a Father: Gal. 4:6, 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;' Rom. 8:15, 'But ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' So that a man is another man to God than he was before. He hath holy longings after him, delights much in converse and communion with him, especially in

prayer: Zech. 10:12, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications.' And Paul is an instance of this; for as soon as converted, he falleth a-praying. God's children have a childlike love to God, and it endeth in a childlike obedience to him, and a childlike dependence upon him for daily supplies: Mat. 6:32, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.' They likewise depend upon him for an everlasting inheritance: 1 Peter 1:3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath, according to his abundant mercy, begotten us to a lively hope.' A child looketh for a child's portion. The soul loveth God, mindeth him in all things, inclineth to the ways of God, and delighteth in them as they tend to God, that he may get nearer to him, and be fitted and prepared to love him, and enjoy him for ever.

3. A holy conversation, and suitable walking: 1 Peter 4:14, 15, 'As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts of your ignorance: but as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' A sincere endeavour of keeping all your Father's commands, and devoting yourselves wholly to his work, is the best way to demonstrate yourselves to be truly the Lord's children: Eph. 5:1, 'Be ye followers of me, as clear children.'

SERMON IV

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—1 JOHN 3:3.

WE have showed you—

1. That the love of God, in acknowledging us for his children, cannot be sufficiently considered and admired by us.

2. That though God hath admitted us into the glorious estate of his children, yet little of this glory is seen in our present condition in this world.

3. That though the glory of adoption be now obscured, yet we are certain that at the appearing of Christ we shall see him as he is, and be like him.

Now having showed what knowledge and certainty of it we have for the present, the apostle comes here to show how this hope worketh; and so this first argument receiveth new strength. If God hath made us children, and children that may expect so great a happiness for their portion, we should endeavour to purify ourselves more and more, that we may both be like our heavenly Father, and also show our thankfulness for so great a privilege: 'And every man that hath this hope in him,' &c.

In the words observe three things—

[1.] That a christian is described by his hope, and that hope specified or restrained to the tenor of the christian faith, 'Every man that hath this hope in him.'

[2.] This hope is described by the effect of it, 'He purifieth himself.'

[3.] And this effect by the pattern of it, 'Even as he is pure,' that is, Christ.

From which I shall make this observation—

Doct. That the hope of this blessed estate hereafter should put us upon a serious endeavour after purity of life, and a more exact conformity to Christ here.

In the handling of this I shall observe this method—

1. I shall discourse something concerning this hope.
2. Of the purity or likeness to Christ, which is the effect of it.
3. The respect or connection between both these, or how the one is inferred from the other.

I. A christian is described by his hope. Hope is a special act of the new life, and an immediate effect of our regeneration: 1 Peter 1:3, 'He hath begotten us to a lively hope.' As soon as we are made children, we begin to think of a child's portion. The new nature was made for another world; it came from thence, and carrieth the soul thither. The animal life fits us to live here, but the spiritual life hath another aim and tendency; it inclineth and disposeth us to look after the world to come, and the happiness which God hath provided for us in the heavens. All men hope for something as their happiness. The new creature liveth upon things future and unseen; for our happiness now consists not in fruition, but hope, and hope carrieth us to something beyond this life, which is our comfort and support during the absence and want of the chiefest good, and the troubles we meet with by the way. Men are as their potent principle is, flesh or spirit: Rom. 8:5, 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.' The flesh inclineth us to present things, the Spirit to future things. I shall a little open the nature, and show you the necessity of this hope.

1. The nature of it; it is a certain and desirous expectation of the promised blessedness: the promise is the ground of it; for hope runneth to embrace what faith has discovered in the promise: Titus 1:2, 'According to the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised before the world began.'

[1.] The expectation is certain, because it goeth upon the same grounds that faith doth, the infallibility of God's promise, backed with a double reason, both of which do strongly work upon our hope. First, The goodness of Christ; he would never proselyte us to a religion that should undo us in this world, if there were not a sufficient recompense appointed for us in another world: 1 Cor. 15:19, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' Surely religion was never intended to make us miserable, but happy. The design of true religion is to persuade us of God's being and bounty. Secondly, The simplicity, and faithful and open plainness which Christ ever used; this is pleaded, John 14:2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you.' His disciples, that were intimately acquainted with him, knew his fidelity, that he told them all things as they really were, and would never flatter them into a vain hope. All his disciples that live now may be confident of it as well as they; he lets us know the worst of the case at first, and doth not allure the senses and court the flesh, but telleth us, that, if we will follow him, we must row against the stream of our natural desires: Mat. 16:24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me;' and Luke 14:20, 'If any man come to me, and hate not father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Therefore the believing soul, finding so much goodness and plainness in Christ, doth certainly expect what he hath promised. Those that conversed with him in the flesh had abundant proof of it; and we that read his doctrine may observe the same goodness and mercy, and also the same simplicity and plainness of heart. And so, upon the solemn declarations of this word, which he has left in pawn with us, we may be confident of that life and immortality which he hath not only brought to light in his doctrine, but assured us of in his covenant and promise.

[2.] The expectation is earnest and desirous, because it is as great a good as human nature is capable of. To see and enjoy God, and to be made like him, what can we desire more? Now to have such a happiness in view and prospect, must needs make us lift up our heads, and wait, and look, and long, till it comes. On this account the saints are said to 'look for his appearing,' Titus 2:13, and 'long for his appearing,' 2 Tim. 4:8, or love it as the most desirable thing that can befall them. With respect to this double property of our expectation, as it is certain and earnest, confident and desirous, you may discern in believers several contrary affections and dispositions of heart; as—

(1.) There is both rejoicing and groaning: Rom. 5:2, 'We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God;' 2 Cor. 5:2, 'We groan earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. They rejoice because they are under hope, they groan because they have not yet attained. We rejoice because the state to come is so excellent and glorious, and offered to us upon such sure and gracious terms; we groan because the present state is so mean and miserable, mean as to our sight of God and conformity to him; and miserable because of the afflictions incident to us: 'Being burdened, we groan,' 2 Cor. 5:4. We rejoice because the estate is so sure and certain; we groan because we are yet conflicting with difficulties, and but making our personal title and claim. We rejoice because at length we shall see God and be like him; and where this hope is lively and strong, it is such a pleasure and such a joy as none but that of actual possession can exceed. 'We rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,' 2 Peter 1:8. We groan because nothing can be so great a burden as the relics of the old nature to a renewed heart: Rom. 7:24, 'Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Afflictions are against our carnal interest, but the remainders of sin are against our nature, that new nature which God hath implanted in

us, and which hath a tender feeling of what is displeasing to God; therefore it is the sorest burden that can be felt.

(2.) There is another seeming contrariety of effects ascribed to hope, and that is, desiring and waiting, longing to enjoy, yet patient in tarrying God's leisure till we do enjoy. Hope is described by both; earnest desire, which showeth our esteem of the benefit, Phil. 1:23, and yet patient, tarrying the Lord's leisure: Rom. 8:25, 'If we hope for it, then do we wait with patience for it.' Both are consistent, as in 2 Peter 3:12, 'Waiting for and hastening to the coming of the Lord.' Contrary words, tarrying and hastening, and different effects, but coming from the same grace. Hope would fain enjoy, yet there is a time for labours, difficulties, and troubles; there is a longing expectation, yet a patient waiting; the time seems long, but the reward is sure. There are desires which quicken us to use all means to attain it, that is hastening; yet we are with patience to tarry God's leisure, while we are exercised with difficulties, that is waiting. They are glorious blessings we expect, when God will open the door, and let us into the enjoyment of them; but we must stay our time, and therefore with patience we submit to God's pleasure.

2. The necessity of this hope, which is twofold—

[1.] To support us under our difficulties; how else could we subsist under the manifold troubles of the present life? Hope is compared in scripture to two things—a helmet and an anchor. Both signify the great use and service of it, as to the encountering our present troubles. As you would not go to sea without an anchor, nor to war without a helmet, so you cannot live in the present world without hope: 1 Thes. 5:8, 'Take to you the helmet of salvation, which is hope.' Among the pieces of the spiritual armour, faith is compared to a shield, which covereth the whole body, but hope to a helmet, which

covereth the head. This makes a believer hold up his head in all straits and difficulties. The policy of the devil is to darken or weaken the hope of eternal life, and then he knows he shall the sooner overcome us. Therefore the care of a christian should be to keep on his helmet, to keep the hopes of his blessed estate lively and fresh, and this will make him bold and undaunted in all oppositions and troubles. Again, it is compared to an anchor: Heb. 6:19, 'Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.' As the anchor holds a ship in a tempest, so doth this hope keep the mind in a constant temper amidst the stormy gusts of temptations. Oh, how would a christian be tossed up and down, and dashed against the rocks, if he were without his anchor! He that knoweth not what shall become of his soul when he dieth, whether he shall go to heaven or hell, cannot endure great afflictions with patience and comfort, but he that knoweth death to be the worst that can befall him in the most troublesome times, can possess his soul in patience; he knoweth what he is born to, and what he shall enjoy when he comes home to God, and therefore his heart is calmed and quieted within him.

[2.] To quicken our diligence, and put life into our endeavours and resolutions, that we may not faint in the way to heaven: Acts 24:16, 'Herein' (or hereupon; upon what? upon this encouragement) 'I have hope towards God, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.' So Acts 26:6, 7, 'Unto which promise our twelve tribes, serving God instantly day and night, hope to come.' Certainly the happiness is so great, that it deserves our best labours; and so sure, that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord; and so near, that it is but a little striving more, and looking longer, and we shall obtain: therefore surely we should follow our work close, night and day. All the world is led by hope; it is the great principle which sets every one a-work in his vocation and calling. The merchant trades in hope, the

husbandman ploughs in hope, and the soldier fights in hope. Why doth the merchant travel to and fro, and run through all the known parts of the world? Hope of gain invites him, and the improvement of his stock by traffic with several nations. Why doth the husbandman till the ground, and continue his labours with such diligence and assiduity, in heats and cold, by night and by day, in showers and fair weather, and so carefully ply his business in all seasons? The harvest, and the hope of a good crop, wherewith he and his family may be sustained, engageth him. What allureth the soldier to the burden and toil of war, to expose himself to the long watches of the night, the wounds and death of the camp, and the manifold inconveniencies of that sort of life? Hope of prey and booty, or of honour and reputation overcometh all. So what sets the christian a-work, notwithstanding the difficulties which attend his service, the temptations which assault his constancy, the calamities which attend his profession, but only hope? You see to what to turn your eye, and direct your pursuit; it is the everlasting fruition of the ever-blessed God. Those that do not look for any great matter, no wonder if their endeavours be remiss and sluggish: 2 Peter 3:14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.' No labour and care can be too much to approve ourselves to God, to get the soul to be without spot, and the life without blame, that we may be every way qualified, and found of him in peace, and so admitted into the joy of our Lord.

Secondly, This hope: it is not said he that hath hope in him, but he that hath this hope; it is not a sensual enjoyment which is propounded as our blessedness, but seeing God as he is, and being like him; if our hearts be set upon the vision and likeness of God, we will be purifying ourselves more and more. It is not a sensual paradise, but a pure sinless state. All religions propound a hope, but none such a hope as the christian religion doth: so pure, so sublime,

so adequate and full to the wants and desires of the creature. Mahomet, like a man absolutely engulphed in the dissoluteness of the flesh, did accordingly propound a suitable happiness to his followers. He telleth them of a paradise watered with fair and delightful fountains, which shall flow as gently as if they were of liquid crystal; and that they shall repose themselves under the shadow of stately thick-leaved trees, which of their own motion shall entwine themselves into pleasant bowers; where they shall eat all sorts of delicious fruits in their season, and be recreated with the melody of birds warbling among their branches; where they shall be attired with magnificent apparel, bedecked with jewels and pearls, and have wives transcendently beautiful, and be feasted with rich banquets and wines served in large goblets of gold. I am loath to rake further in this puddle. In all this do you hear, christians, the voice of a beast or a man? With these baits of wantonness and carnal pleasure he sought to inveigle the minds of his followers. This is a hope fit to make brutes of us, and turn us wholly into flesh: but Christ hath propounded another manner of hope; we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; not only a state of perfect blessedness and glory, but a conformity to Christ in purity and holiness, which is begun here, and perfected there. We shall see the Lord whom we have served, loved, and pleased, and shall be like him; similes, non pares, not equal with him, but like to him; you shall be pure and holy, as he is holy. This is the hope which Christ propoundeth, and wherewith a believer comforteth himself; this is a hope that doth not debase the spirit of a man, but raise it to the greatest excellency and perfection it is capable of.

Thirdly, This hope in him. If we expect to receive it from God, we must receive it upon God's terms, and according to his manner of promising it. Now he promiseth it not absolutely, but conditionally, to the pure and holy, and to none else; for it is said, Mat. 5:8,

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Now the pure in heart are they that hate sin, and love righteousness. And again, Heb. 12:14, 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' To see God is to behold his glory, the privilege reserved for us in heaven, where all unspeakable joys and eternal delights are communicated to us by the sight of God. Now we can never hope for this from God's hands, without holiness, or some conformity to him begun here; this is absolutely, and indispensably required of us. Hope in him is hope according to his word, such as he alloweth and warranteth, and raiseth in our hearts; for he doth not speak of an imaginary hope, but a solid hope, such as is justifiable by God's promises; not a lazy, but a lively hope.

Fourthly, Observe the quantity of the proposition; it is not particular nor indefinite, but it hath an expression of universality affixed; every man that hath this hope. It is not spoken of some eminent saints, who shall have a greater degree of glory than the ordinary sort of christians, but of all who have any interest or share in it. You might imagine else, that common christians might get through in the throng, though they be not so careful of exact purity and holiness as others are. No; every man that hath this hope; which is to show that our hope is groundless and fruitless if we be not always purging both heart and life; it is a dead, not a lively hope, a hope that hath neither comfort or virtue in it, if it doth not run out into holiness, and a continual endeavour to mortify and subdue sin. Some wicked men live in a direct counter-motion to their hopes; they hope well, that that God that made them will save them; but they live as if they fled from heaven and salvation, and were galloping apace to hell. They abandon the company of God, as if his sight were a trouble, and his presence a burden to them, and the everlasting sabbath they shall keep with God were a misery, and not a blessedness. For these to hope, it is as if they went to heaven backward, with their backs

turned upon it. And if any presume upon their good estate, and grow remiss and negligent in holy duties, they cut off their claim; for this is the constant universal rule of all that have this hope, that they are always purifying and cleansing themselves from sin, and using the means that conduce to the obtaining what they hope for; otherwise it is a hope that will leave us ashamed: Rev. 21:27, 'There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.' No unclean thing, no loathsome and filthy creature can enter into heaven.

II. The purity and likeness to Christ, which is the effect of this hope; he purifieth himself as Christ is pure.

1. Here is an act done on the believer's part, he 'purifieth himself,' or a serious endeavour of purity and holiness. God giveth the new nature, first infuseth the habits of grace, and then exciteth them; and being renewed and excited by God, we set ourselves to seek after holiness and purity in heart and life. It is God's work to cleanse the heart; but we must not be idle. We are said 'to cleanse ourselves,' 2 Cor. 7:1, to 'purge ourselves from these,' 2 Tim. 2:21. How can a man that is unclean by nature, purify himself?

Ans. (1.) No question it is our duty, and must be charged upon us to purify ourselves. I say, this debt of duty lieth upon us, and we must discharge it as well as we can. 'Wash you, make you clean,' Isa. 1:16; and 'cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded,' James 4:8. The scripture calls upon man to cleanse his own soul.

(2.) God hath promised to purify the souls of his people: Ezek. 36:25, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness.' God giveth the Holy Spirit to cleanse us, to abide in us as a living spring: though the waters of the fountain be muddy, yet

the living spring worketh itself clean again. Christ purchased it for us, Eph. 5:25–27, Titus 2:14.

(3.) Though God be the author and supreme agent, yet we are to act under him, and by the strength and power of his grace to go on with the work. First he worketh upon us, and then with us and by us: he doth not work upon us, as a carver upon a dead stone; he gave the grace, but we having life, must use it and act by it.

(4.) We have the more encouragement, having not only internal principles, but many outward helps. The ordinances: John 15:3, 'Ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken to you.' Providences: Isa. 27:9, 'By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away sin.' He suiteth his providences and afflictions to the improvement of our spiritual condition. Well, then, we must purify ourselves in a true and proper sense, mind this work, implore the Lord's grace, and improve the appointed means.

2. It noteth a continued act; it is not he hath purified, but, he purifieth himself; he is always purifying, making it his daily work to clarify and refine his soul, that it may be fit for the vision of God, and the fruition of God. By nature we are altogether become filthy and abominable, Ps. 14:2; and after grace received, 'Who can say, My heart is clean; Prov. 10:9. There is a great deal of corruption still remaineth. By grace we cease to be wicked, but we do not cease to be sinners. Indeed, time will come when we shall have no sin, but now we cannot say that we have none: the old corrupt issue that hath long run upon us, is not yet dried up; and therefore we must be still purging and purifying the heart. And for the life, our Lord telleth us, John 13:10, 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet.' Though God's children do not wallow like swine in the puddle, yet by

walking up and down in a dirty world they defile their feet anew. Again, where this likeness to God is begun, the soul purifieth itself till it attains the perfection thereof, and must never be satisfied till it gets more of it. Though you be not perfect, yet you must live as those that aim at, and would be so. Therefore a sincere, hearty, and constant desire of inward cleanness, both to have, and keep it, and increase it, is the fruit and effect of this lively hope. And these being the months of our purification, we must still be following our work, 'Cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' 2 Cor. 7:1. Perfection in holiness is our mark to aim at, as well as complete happiness, and all our actions and endeavours must be levelled at this mark and scope.

3. It noteth a discriminating act, 'He purifieth himself.' It is not said, should purify of right, *de jure*, but *de facto*; he is, and will be in this work. It is not laid down here by way of precept, or as a rule of duty, which yet would be binding upon us, but as an evidence and mark of trial, whereby the heirs of promise are notified and distinguished from others. Indulgence to sensual pleasures, or a liberty of sinning, hath no consistency with this state of blessedness; and if any should let loose the reins upon the pretence of his assurance of the love of God, and confident hopes of eternal life, he showeth that his hope is but a presumption or a groundless hope. The main business of the apostle here is to distinguish the children of God from others. All his children resemble their Father in purity and holiness, which was the proposition to be proved.

4. It noteth an unlimited endeavour, 'He purifieth himself.' He doth not say from what, he leaveth it indefinitely, because he would include all sin, and exclude none. There must be an endeavour after universal purity. A man may purify himself from wantonness, and leave covetousness behind; from sensuality, and leave pride and envy

behind: James 1:21, 'Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness.' Many serve their lusts in a more cleanly manner than others, but yet they serve them, and so become inapt for the sight and fruition of God. Therefore the true believer purifieth himself from carnal vanities, worldly affections, sensual inclinations, envious detractions, proud imaginations. We must not distinguish; a habit of purity worketh out all—all malice, all guile, all hypocrisy, all envious evil-speaking, 1 Peter 4:1. If you will have me descend to particulars, let me warn you of two things—first, fleshly lusts, 1 Peter 2:11; and, secondly, worldly lusts, Titus 2:12.

[1.] Fleshly lusts. Some run into excess of riot, polluting themselves with gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness, and do not keep their vessels in sanctification and honour. Now these that are all for sensual satisfactions, or fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, are wholly strangers to such a hope. Is that soul clarified for the sight and likeness of God that is only employed to cater for the body? or is that body fit to be made like Christ's glorious body which is only used as a strainer for meat and drink to pass through, or as a channel for lusts to run in, that is not kept in sanctification and honour? 1 Thes. 4:4, 5. Surely these wallow in the mire, and bid defiance to this pure hope.

[2.] Worldly lusts. It is 'pure religion to keep ourselves unspotted from the world,' James 1:27. Then a man's heart is pure when it is firmly fixed upon and principally aimeth at the chief good and last end, which is eternal happiness in the enjoying of God; when it desires and intends it so as to be able to command and control all other desires. Any inordinate adhering to the creature, so as to rejoice in it apart from God, is a defilement to the immortal and high-born soul, that was made for God and blessedness to come. Alas! to many a poor despicable wretch worldly vanity is more than the sight of God.

5. This purity is described by the pattern of it, 'As he is pure.' Christ is our pattern in the glorious state, and therefore also in the sanctified and renewed state: Rom. 8:29, 'That we might be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might have the pre-eminence in all things.' First in grace, then in glory. Hereafter 'we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Therefore now we must purify ourselves as he is pure. Besides, he is the perfect pattern and example of all purity; all other patterns of godly men will fail us in something or other, but Christ will fail us in nothing, when we set his pattern before our eyes; 1 Cor. 11:1, 'Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.' Besides, there should be no disproportion in the mystical body; the head and members should be all of a piece: 1 Peter 1:15, 'Be ye holy, as he that hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation.' You would take it as a great dishonour if your face should be pictured, and set to the body of a swine or any filthy beast; a monstrous disproportion in Nebuchadnezzar's image, where the head was gold, the breast silver, the thighs brass, and the feet part iron and part clay. The world should know from us that we have a pure and holy saviour; but alas! we represent a strange Christ to them.

III. I now come to the connection between both these.

1. You may take notice of the suitability of our heart to the object, or the things believed and hoped for. That which we hope for is conformity to Christ, a pure immaculate state of bliss. Men are as their hopes are; if they pitch on carnal things, they are carnal; if upon worldly things, they are worldly. Our affections assimilate us into the objects they fix upon. Thus the psalmist saith of idols, Ps. 115:8, 'They that make them are like unto them, so are all they that put their trust in them;' brutish, senseless, a sort of stocks and stones, as the idols themselves are. A Turkish paradise might breed a brutish

spirit in us; but if we look for a pure estate, to love God with all the heart, and to serve him without spot and blemish, the temper of our souls and hearts will be answerable; such a meetness and worthiness will be found in us, Col. 1:12. If it be good to be pure and holy and without sin, why do not we set about it?

2. It is the condition indispensably required of us; it is not an indifferent thing whether we will be holy, yea or no, but absolutely necessary. Heaven is the portion of the sanctified, Acts 26:18. Many things are ornamental that are not absolutely necessary; as, for instance, wealth, and wisdom with an inheritance, which make us helpful and useful; so for gifts of learning, knowledge, and utterance. Many have gone to heaven that were not learned, but never any went to heaven without holiness. No; it will not be had at a cheaper rate. As to the wicked, that will not submit to these terms, nor leave their sins, the Spirit says of them, Rev. 22:11, 'He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.' It is not a permission or persuasion, but a dreadful commination, and denunciation of as sad a judgment as can light upon a poor creature.

3. It is the beginning of our blessedness; it is begun here, or it will never be perfected there. And how is it begun? Why, in such a sight of God as produceth an endeavour after purity and holiness. A man 'that sinneth hath not seen God, nor known him,' 1 John 2:11; and 'he that doeth evil hath not seen God,' 3 John 11. And it is carried by the renewing and purifying the inner man: 2 Cor. 4:16, 'The inner man is renewed day by day.' A present gradual participation of the divine likeness is the surest pledge of everlasting blessedness, and the greatest justification of your hopes you possibly can have.

4. Out of gratitude since God hath advanced us to so great a privilege: 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed

upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!' Hath God put such honour upon us that we should be his children, provided such a blessed estate for us hereafter, and shall not we prepare to receive it? 1 Thes. 2:12, 'That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory;' 1 Thes. 4:1, 'Furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.' In gratitude we are bound to consider what will please or displease God. If we expect our happiness from him, it is our concernment to serve and please him.

SERMON V

And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as he is pure.—1 JOHN 3:3.

I come now to the application.

Use 1. To show the misery of those men that could never endure this purity of heart and life.

1. Do you count it a happiness to see God and be like him? If you do, why do you not desire it, and endeavour it now? Nothing can be the object of our eternal delight and satisfaction but what is the object of our present desires and endeavours. It is impossible that the soul can be satisfied with any delight and complacency in anything which formerly it was not desirous of. If you desire it not, God doth you no wrong to deny it you; he will not receive any into his blessed presence to whom it will be a burden. Satisfaction is the fulfilling of our desires and the rest of our motions. If you desire it, why do you shun God's presence now, and no more endeavour to be like him? Answer this question which way you will, it will either cut off your

future hopes, or else condemn your present practice as altogether unsuitable and inconsonant thereunto.

2. Are you in a posture to meet with God? Joseph washed himself when he was to come before Pharaoh; so did the Israelites when they came to God to hear the law. Pray what have you done to prepare for this solemn interview? Every one of you must shortly appear before God, and will you appear as a shame to your Redeemer? How will you then look him in the face with this proud, vain, carnal heart or worldly affections? Are you fit to go among the blessed spirits that are made perfect? Do I expect to tread Satan under my feet shortly, and shall I give him entertainment in my heart now? to have sin wholly subdued, and yet cherish it? to be a follower of the Lamb to all eternity, and now walk according to the course of this world? When you are wallowing in your filthiness, is this purifying yourselves as Christ is pure?

Use 2. To press us to endeavour after this purity. I must enforce it upon all sorts, young and old. First for the young: Ps. 119:9, 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.' He doth not say direct and order, but 'cleanse his way.' We are from our birth polluted with sin. A child is not like a vessel that cometh out of the potter's shop, indifferent for good or bad infusions; but the vessel is fusty already, hath a smatch of the old man, and must be cleansed. But then, secondly, for the old, because these are hastening into the other world apace, and therefore must hasten their preparations, and be more diligent in purifying their souls, being shortly to appear before the holy God: 2 Peter 3:14, 'Let us give diligence, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blame.' I must press it upon persons of a public relation, as the apostle doth upon the officers of the church: 1 Tim. 3:9, 'Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.'

Soundness of religion is best retained there where there is not only a clear head but a pure heart, as we put precious liquors in a clean vessel which are apt to be corrupted in a foul one. And also upon all christians in a private station, for without purity of heart no man shall see God, which is the common felicity of all the saints. And therefore purity of heart and life is their common character and qualification: Ps. 73:1, 'Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are of a clean heart.' All are not Israel who are of Israel: the Israel of God are those that are clean of heart. So high and low, rich and poor. God doth not respect men according to their outward condition, but their purity and cleanness of heart. The question is put, Ps. 24:3, 4, 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place?' And it is the most important question that can be put. And the answer is, 'He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.' Every one is not promiscuously admitted into heaven, and brought into his blessed presence, but only such as have clean hands and hearts. Sion hill is a figure both of the church and heaven.

But let me a little more closely show how everything in religion obligeth us to the purifying ourselves yet more and more.

1. With respect to the God, whom we serve in the Spirit, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

[1.] Our God is pure: Hab. 1:13, 'He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;' that is, and let it go unpunished, however men please themselves in it. We should never think of him, but be ashamed of the inward remainders of corruption. The saints always express a deep abhorrency and sense of their own impurity when they have to do with God: Isa. 6:5, 'Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts;' Job 42:5, 6, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,

but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.' When God manifested himself in a way of grace, thus were the saints affected, and deservedly. God is the most holy, pure being, and the fountain of all purity and holiness; so pure, that in comparison of him the greatest purity of the creatures is but pollution: Job 4:18, 'Behold, he puts no trust in his servants, and his angels he chargeth with folly. How much less on them that dwell in houses of clay?' Job 15:15, 16, 'Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints, and the heavens are not clean in his sight: how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh in iniquity as water?' The angels were never defiled with sin, yet because of the mutability of their nature, they are not clean in his sight. God cannot absolutely trust them. Oh, how much more should we confess ourselves to be vile and abhorred, who are actually defiled with sin, and do so often show what dregs and dross remain in our hearts! But though God be so good and holy in himself, yet may he dispense with the unholiness of others? No; this purity, as it implieth an exact holiness in God, and freedom from spot and defilement, so a hatred and aversion from all that is so; for none can have communion with this holy God unless they be pure and holy also: Ps. 73:1, 'God is good to such as are of a clean heart;' Ps. 18:26, 'With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the upright thou wilt show thyself upright.' Well, then, if God be most righteous, pure, and holy, and the angels cover their faces in his presence, and do proclaim him as only holy, and we at our best, since sin hath invaded our nature, have but a ragged, tattered holiness (Isa. 64:6, 'All our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags',) it highly imports us to purify ourselves for the sight and fruition of this blessed, holy, and pure God.

[2.] Look to God incarnate, the second person in the Trinity, our Redeemer and Mediator, he also is pure and holy; and it doth more enforce this purifying ourselves as Christ is pure, so it is said in the

text; whether you consider his person, or the design of his coming into the world. For his person: Heb. 7:26, 'Such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners.' This was he who is to bring us to God, and who was set up as a pattern of holiness in our nature. He was pure and holy in his conception, birth, life, and death; as innocent and harmless as the new-born child, never tainted with the least sin; being more like God, and nearer to him, than any creature possibly can be; who chose not a monkish sequestration, but a free life of conversation with men, yet never was defiled, and made partaker in their sins. And shall we be so unlike him as we are? Certainly if our hearts and lives be spotted with envy, malice, lust, ambition, affectation of greatness, and esteem in the world, and an excessive use of the pleasures thereof, to live a life so unlike to Christ is to contradict and defy our profession, and to be called christians to Christ's dishonour; for his design in coming and dying was to cleanse, and purify, and sanctify us: Eph. 5:25-27, 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish.' The Lord Jesus, when he undertook the recovery of lapsed mankind, wanted not love to intend us the greatest benefit, nor wisdom to choose it, nor merit and worth to purchase it. But what did he intend, choose, and purchase, but that he might sanctify and cleanse us? Herein he showed the fervency of his love, the wisdom of his choice, the value of his purchase. He saw that our great misery was that we were polluted and unclean by sin, and so made loathsome to God. Therefore, as the fervency of his love inclined him not to loath us, but to seek our good, so out of the infinite wisdom of his choice he did pitch upon the most proper and necessary benefit for us; and because of the value of his sufferings, he despaired not to get us made clean, and accordingly pursueth that work till it comes

to its final perfection, and he at length takes us home to himself, as fully pure and perfect, without any spot or remnant of sinful defilement. Now this being Christ's design, unless we would directly cross it, we are obliged to purify ourselves yet more and more.

[3.] If you look to God the Spirit, still the argument returneth upon you with the more force and efficacy; the Spirit is to make up the match between us and our Redeemer, and to bring us to Christ, as Christ to bring us to God. Now the Spirit is a holy Spirit: Eph. 1:13, 'Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.' The sanctifying of our natures, and the purifying the heart by grace is his great work. If you look into the scriptures, you shall find that the soul is purified by the Spirit and for the Spirit.

(1.) By the Spirit; and therefore he is called 'the Spirit of sanctification,' Rom. 1:4. And sanctification is called 'the sanctification of the Spirit,' 2 Thes. 2:13, because he is the great agent sent into our hearts, to begin and promote this work. He converteth us as a Spirit of holiness; he quickeneth us as a Spirit of holiness; he comforteth and sealeth us, and marketh us out for God, as a Spirit of holiness; so that if we purify not ourselves, we obstruct and hinder his special work. Indeed, the main business of a christian is to obey his sanctifying motions: 1 Peter 1:22, 'Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit.' The Spirit is always counselling, directing, persuading us to purify ourselves by some notable truth or other; and as we yield to these motions, this work is carried on and prevaileth more and more.

(2.) As our souls are purified by the Spirit, so they are purified for the Spirit, that they may be made temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; the place of his abode and residence must be kept pure and clean: 1 Cor. 3:16, 'Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost,

and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.' The temple of old was consecrated to God, and there was his symbolical presence. Whoever did bring in any unclean thing, he did pollute it, and was to be punished. So it is a known truth, which none ought to be ignorant of, that the soul of a christian is God's spiritual temple, wherein he manifests his spiritual presence; to defile it is to dishonour God, and contract a great guilt upon ourselves. Surely every dirty lodging is not fit for so noble a guest; he will not dwell in an impure, an unclean heart. Where he dwelleth, he must dwell commodiously and according to his own liking. Now this consideration should the rather prevail upon us, because the dwelling of the Spirit in our hearts is the earnest and pledge of our dwelling for ever with God, and beginneth that vision and fruition of God which is perfected in heaven: 2 Cor. 1:22, 'Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit into our hearts.' Thus with respect to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

2. With respect to the ordinances.

[1.] The word of God which is given to us to purify and cleanse us: Ps. 119:140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' He that looketh upon an axe will soon see that this is an instrument made to cut; so upon the word; it is fitted to cleanse and purify the souls of men from their sinful spots and stains. The precepts require this purity, the promises and threats enforce it, and the Spirit blesseth this means as appointed and chosen by Christ. The precepts call upon us everywhere: Jer. 4:14, 'Wash thy heart from wickedness; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?' and in many other places: 'Wash you, make you clean,' Isa. 1:4. The promises enforce it. There are promises of purity, and promises to purity. Promises of purity: Ezek. 36:25, 26, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you,

and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you: a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh.' And promises made to purity: Ps. 119:1, 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way.' The pure are blessed, and shall be blessed: 2 Cor. 7:1, 'Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' The threatenings enforce it also, for the impure are cut off from this happiness: Rev. 21:27, 'There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.' The Holy Ghost blesseth this means: John 17:17, 19, 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify, myself that they may be sanctified through the truth.' He doth not join the powerful operations of his Spirit with any other doctrine, that it may be known to be his word; he will honour and own it by the concomitant operation of his Spirit: Gal. 3:2, 'Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' Now they that profess to believe this word, and do accept of it for the cure and health of their souls, are highly obliged to purify themselves yet more and more.

[2.] Prayer; it is to a holy God we pray, and from whom we expect our answer. Now a holy God expects they should be a holy people that are thus familiar with him, and beginning the acquaintance which shall be perfected in heaven: 1 Tim. 2:8, 'Lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting;' and Zeph. 3:9, 'I will turn to them a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord.' None are fit to call upon God but those that have a pure lip; and therefore the apostle, when he speaketh of drawing nigh to God, presently speaketh of purifying, James 4:8, showing that the greatest intimacy of converse is between the holy God and a holy people.

[3.] Baptism, which engageth us to purify ourselves, and assureth us also of the purifying virtue of the Lord's grace; for if I do my part, God will on his part give grace, whereby your hearts may be purified and cleansed. It is the visible act by which we profess the acceptance of the gospel covenant; and it is but a nullity and an empty formality if this be not done. It signifieth the washing away of sin: Acts 22:16, 'Arise and be baptized, for the washing away of thy sins;' and in Titus 3:5, 'The washing of regeneration.' It alludeth to baptism, wherein water is used, which by its nitrous quality doth purge and cleanse; and it is the rite used at your first dedication to God. Now the external application is nothing without the internal effect, or the, renewing of the Holy Ghost. Unless the soul be purged and washed, what will the washing of the body do you good? 1 Peter 3:21, baptism is called 'the answer of a good conscience towards God.' Carnal careless christians forget their baptismal covenant: 2 Peter 1:9, 'He hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.' But few regard it; others renounce it, but these forget it. There was water sprinkled on their bodies, but the Spirit is not sprinkled on their souls.

[4.] The Lord's supper, which supposeth purity of heart in all that come to it, because in foro ecclesie they must be baptized before they can communicate. Christ washed his disciples' feet before he would admit them to his table, and flatly telleth Peter, John 13:8, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.' As no part in Christ, so no part with him, no admittance to spiritual communion. Now, as it supposeth it in some degree, it promoteth and advanceth it to a further degree, as we remember Christ's blood, 'which cleanseth us from all sin,' 1 John 1:7, and bind ourselves anew to purge out all sin, 'and keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' In this holy ordinance we partake more of the sanctifying

Spirit, and are encouraged to pursue after holiness in a confidence of this blessing.

Thus much with respect to the ordinances.

3. With respect to graces, we must purify ourselves yet more and more. I will instance in the three great graces of faith, hope, and love.

[1.] Faith: Acts 15:9, 'Purifying our hearts by faith,' partly as it is an assent to the truths of the gospel, for it is a strong assent which enliveneth all truths, and maketh them effectual. They work not unless they be mingled with faith in the hearing: 1 Thes. 2:13, 'The word of God which ye received of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe.' There are so many cleansing truths in the gospel, that if they be received and improved by faith, we cannot but set upon purifying. Partly as in the use of means. It dependeth on the blood of Christ for this sanctifying virtue, which was purchased thereby, John 17:19. And partly as it worketh by reflection, and so it is the same with love, Gal. 5:6. As it represented our future hopes, so it is the same with hope in the text; but certain we are that if faith be in any considerable strength, it will produce purity and holiness.

[2.] Hope doth the like, as here. Hope is a desirous expectation; for can a man hope for that he careth not for? Hope for it as good, and fly from it as evil, it cannot be. If we hope for anything, it is a sign we love it and like it, and as much as we can would get it into our hands; so if we hope to see God, and be like him, if this be our blessed and satisfying hope, we will be purifying ourselves for the present, and resemble God as much as we can for the present; for it is a contradiction that a man should be afraid of his hopes, and keep at a distance from his hopes. No; but he will pursue after them, and hasten for them.

[3.] Love will set us a-purifying. Love to God begets hatred of sin: Ps. 97:10, 'Ye that love the Lord hate evil.' The one is as natural to the new nature as the other; and the one is inferred out of the other. Now where there is a hatred of sin, there will be an extermination of it; not a scratching at the face, but a digging at the root of it; not a little faint resistance, but a striving to get rid of the being of it; or else a groaning under it as a sore burden: Rom. 7:24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Therefore nothing puts us upon this perfecting holiness so much as love.

4. Our felicity and state of blessedness to which we are invited is pure and holy: 1 Peter 1:4, 'An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved for you in the heavens.' And it is elsewhere called 'the inheritance of the saints in light,' Col. 1:12. It must needs be so, for it is nothing else but the Lord himself to be enjoyed to all eternity. Now holy men are only fit for holy things. These are the months of our purification, as Esther purified herself when she was to come into the presence of Ahasuerus, Esther 2:9.

Secondly, Having given you reasons, let me now give you some directions about the nature of this purity that ye must seek after.

1. Let it be a universal purity, beginning at the heart, and flowing from thence into the conversation. It must begin at the heart. The prophet, to cure the brackishness of the waters, casts salt into the spring; and the scripture speaketh of a pure heart as the fountain of all godliness: 2 Tim. 1:5, 'The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned.' Now a pure heart is such a disposition or constitution of soul as consists in a hatred of sin and love to righteousness; and till this be in us, there is no purity. The operation of the Spirit beginneth at the soul, and from the soul it is derived to the outward man; for from the polluted fountain of the

heart floweth all the pollution of life: Mat. 15:19, 20, 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man.' Now as pollution began there, so doth purity also: Mat. 23:26, 'Thou blind pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.' First purify the heart within, and then purity of life will follow of its own accord; yea, if we should be defiled where the constitution and settled disposition of the heart is for purity, you will sooner recover your state; as a living spring, when the waters are mudded and troubled, will work itself clean again. But, on the contrary, the apostle telleth us that 'some who had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, were again entangled and overcome,' 2 Peter 2:20. The constitution of their hearts was not altered, but they lived in secret love with their sins, while they seemed for a while to avoid some grosser shameful acts. Therefore the temper of your souls must be altered, that you may not delight to wallow in this muddle like swine in the mire. But it may be a thing hateful to you to sin, not only contrary to your interest, but your very nature. But then the temper of the heart being changed, you must look to the operations of the thoughts, words, and actions: Prov. 15:26, 'The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord; but the words of the pure are pleasant words.' There is a defect in both parts of the proverb, to be supplied from the former branch to the latter, and the latter branch from the former; thus as the thoughts of the wicked, so their words are abominable to the Lord; and as the words, so the thoughts of the godly are pure and acceptable. The words depend much on the thoughts, as the thoughts do on the constitution and frame of the heart. The tap runneth according to the liquor with which the vessel is filled. We are responsible to God for thoughts, therefore our hearts should be good and holy. So also for words; the impurity of the heart bewrayeth itself much in rottenness of speech.

Therefore, as the heart must be pure, so must the tongue and lip. The prophet saith, Isa. 6:5, 'I am a man of polluted lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.' Faultiness in this kind is very frequent, and not without difficulty avoided. Then for our actions, and first for sacred ones: 2 Tim. 2:22, 'Call on the Lord out of a pure heart;' and Mal. 1:11, 'They shall bring a pure offering.' So for ordinary conversation: Prov. 21:8, 'The work of the pure is right.' A man that is pure must be pure throughout, that there be no blot upon him, or spot that is not as the spot of God's children.

2. Let it be an increasing growing purity, that every day we may be more holy and undefiled: 2 Cor. 3:18, 'Changed into the image and likeness of Christ, from glory to glory.' God having appointed us to be like his Son, fits us by degrees; and Christ by his Spirit is sanctifying and cleansing us more and more, that 'there may be no, spot and blemish in us,' Eph. 5:27. And let us also be 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' 2 Cor. 7:1. The more progress we have made, the more we are fitted to make a further progress, as having received more grace, and being more confirmed in a state of holiness. Sin is a deep stain that can hardly be gotten out. Ye have purified your souls to the obedience of the truth; and you must purify still, and persevere in this work, improving all advantages: be not satisfied with any low degree of purity.

Thirdly, About the means and helps: how shall we get this clean heart, and purify ourselves as Christ is pure? (1.) Consider what God hath done; (2.) What we must do.

1. What belongeth to God.

[1.] Certain it is that none can change his own heart: Job 14:4, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' There is no sound part in us to mend the rest. Our pollution is so universal, that there is no

principle of operation left untainted; mind, will, affections, sensual appetite, all is corrupt, and the deepness of the pollution showeth it, as well as the universality. It is not a slight tincture, but a deep dye, like cloth dyed in the wool: Isa. 1:18, 'Though your sins were as scarlet,' or like the spots of a leopard, Jer. 13:13; not spots accidental, but natural; not of an external adherency but engrained, belonging to the constitution. Therefore it is God must begin to purify the heart, as the principal efficient cause. He challengeth it as proper to himself: Ezek. 36:25, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean.'

[2.] What God doth he doth by Christ; he is the great remedy that God hath provided for healing and cleansing of mankind; his blood is the fountain opened for uncleanness, Zech. 13:1, with 1 John 1:7. And it is said, 'He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,' Rev. 1:5; and the saints are washed in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. 7:14. More literally and plainly we have it, Titus 2:14, where it is said, 'He hath redeemed us from all iniquity.' There was the price paid for the washing of our guilty and sinful souls, both for renewing and reconciling grace, that we may recover both the favour and image of God.

[3.] What Christ doth, he doth by the Spirit; and without the Spirit we can never cleanse and purify ourselves: 1 Cor. 6:11, 'And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;' and Titus 3:5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.'

[4.] What the Spirit doth he doth by the ordinances. There are certain ordinances and duties appointed by Christ for the purifying of our hearts, especially the word and sacraments: Eph. 5:26, 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word.' Well, then, if we would be made clean, we must go to God; but God without Christ will not look towards us, but being propitiated by him, he is willing to give us grace. God sendeth us to Christ, in whom alone he is well pleased; and Christ sendeth us to the Spirit, and his Spirit we hear of in the ordinances, which are solemnly appointed and blessed by Christ to this end: 'Ye are clean through the word spoken to you,' John 15:3.

2. What we must do. It was Naaman's error that he would be cleansed of his leprosy and sit still, and Elisha must do all; but the prophet biddeth him go and wash; he must wash himself if he would be whole. Yea, in the general law for cleansing of the leper, after the sprinkling of the priest, the man was to wash himself, Lev. 14:6–8, to show that there is some work required on our part.

But what must we do? Certainly we are to make conscience of this work of purifying and cleansing and preparing ourselves for our great hopes; for it is we that repent, believe, strive, watch against sin, though still by the power of his grace.

In short, we must earnestly deal with God about it: 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,' Mat. 8:2. You must depend upon the all-sufficiency of Christ's merit and satisfaction, for the saints washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb.' You must obey the Spirit's sanctifying motions: Rom. 8:13, 'If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live; 1 Peter 1:22, 'Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit,' &c. You

must lie at the pool. All that conscientiously use his ordinances, have some help for this holy work. It is you must keep the purifying graces, faith, hope, and love, in lively act and exercise; it is you must be careful to keep yourselves from the pollutions of the world, to prevent all sins of infirmity, and be sensible of them, and to mourn for them; and it is you must crucify the flesh more and more, check the pleasures of sin, by balancing them with your great hopes, and lament that the satisfying of the desires of the flesh have so sweet a relish. It is you must remember your baptismal vow. In short, you must get a greater hatred of sin, and a more universal care and study to please God in all things.

SERMON VI

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is a transgression of the law.—1 JOHN 3:4.

IN the words we have a new argument to persuade to holiness. He had reasoned before from the dignity of our adoption; now from the indignity or base nature of sin, which is an act of rebellion and disloyalty against the sovereignty of God; it is in effect to proclaim war, or to break out into open rebellion against his laws: for 'whosoever committeth sin,' &c.

In which words observe—

1. A proposition concerning the danger of committing sin, 'Whosoever committeth sin.'
2. The proof of it from the proper definition of sin, it 'is a transgression of the law.'

The proposition respects the state of the sinner, the proof is taken from the nature of sin; the proposition showeth who is in the state of sin, the proof what is sin.

1. Who is in the state of sin; and so every transgressor of the law, even according to the new-covenant interpretation of it.

Observe here—

[1.] The subject, 'He that committeth sin.' To commit sin differeth from sinning simply taken; we all have sin in the habit: 1 John 1:8, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in

us;' and 'If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us,' ver. 10. We have sin in us, and we have sinned; but committing sin implieth something more than bare sinning: John 8:34, 'Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;' 1 John 3:8, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil;' they that give up themselves to a trade of sin. It is not meant of those who have sin in them, or are conscious to daily infirmities and failings, and lament and strive against them, and labour to purify themselves yet more and more: *quisquis dat operam peccato*; so Beza rendereth it, one that is addicted to sin, and liveth in sin, against the checks of his own conscience, and doth not purify himself, and apply himself to a course of godliness.

[2.] The predicate, 'He transgresseth the law.' I would render it committeth a transgression of the law, or studiously breaketh it, and so forfeiteth the blessing of the gospel; for wittingly and willingly to break the law of God showeth we are under the curse of it. All are under the rule of the law, but the impenitent are under the curse of the law. It is not meant of those who sin out of infirmity, either through ignorance or incogitancy or general frailty; but of those who delight in sin, of those in whom sin reigneth; of those who deliberately, voluntarily, easily, freely, frequently break God's laws. It is opposed to him that purifieth himself; as sin and purity are contrary, so to purify ourselves and encourage sin, are exactly contrary.

(1.) Their designs are contrary; the one is fitting himself for his everlasting estate, the other satisfieth his present lusts, and liveth according to the inclination of the flesh.

(2.) They are different in their course; the one bendeth all his endeavours to be holy and pure, as Christ is pure, the other giveth up

himself to a sinful life; either maketh it his design to sin, or he giveth the boat to the stream, and does not heartily check and resist sin. Some wicked men's hearts are set in them to do evil; but if they go not so far to make it their design and work to sin, yet they are grossly negligent; they do not make it their work not to sin, but let it reign in them. Of one sort of unregenerate men it may be said, non proponunt peccare; but of all unregenerate men, proponunt non peccare. Some are sons of Belial, who have no regard to the law of God, but live in an utter contempt and defiance thereof; but others do not frame their doings to observe it, nor improve the aids of grace to keep themselves from it, but customarily break it, live under a continual tenor and course of sin. Now if sin reign in them, they are not under grace, but under the law, transgressors in the new covenant sense.

2. The reason, 'For sin is a transgression of the law;' and wilful sin is a contempt of the law in general. It doth not become christians to do anything which doth disagree with the law of their Father; but though God dispenses with infirmities, he will not bear with iniquities; therefore if we remain in a sinful state, or live a sinful life, what manner of persons soever we are by profession, or how little soever those sins which we live in he esteemed in the world, they will prove baneful to our souls. Many carnal men, under colour of being freed from the curse of the law by Christ, indulge themselves in their sins, and either think they shall not be called to an account for these things, or, if they cry to God for mercy, think all is well, though they frequently, constantly, easily relapse into those sins again and again, and so turn the grace of God into wantonness, Jude 4; christian liberty into licentiousness, 2 Peter 2:19. Now these are transgressors of the law, and must appear as such, and answer as such before the bar of God. And it is also a caution to good men; they must not flatter themselves in their sins, nor give way even to their infirmities, as if

they were no sins. No; they are breaches of the law, and if we give way to them, we are pronounced as transgressors of it: Num. 14:41, 'Wherefore should ye transgress the commandment of the Lord your God?' Dan. 9:11, 'All Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us.'

Doct. He that liveth in a course of sin forfeits the privileges of adoption offered to him, and maketh himself guilty before God as a breaker of the law:

In pursuing this point, I shall do three things—

1. Show that all mankind is under the law of God, which still remaineth in force as an inviolable rule of righteousness.
2. That the nature and heinousness of sin is to be determined by a contrariety or want of conformity to this law.
3. That those that live in sin, or the allowed breach of the law, cannot look upon themselves as God's adopted children, but are still under the curse of it.

I. For the first, that all mankind are under the law of God, it will be evidenced by these considerations—

1. That man is God's creature, and therefore his subject. The subjection of man to God is built upon this ground, his total and absolute dependence upon God, both as to creation and preservation. We have life and breath, and all things from him, from whence there resulteth an obligation to obey him; for dependence inferreth inferiority, obedience, and subjection, such as children owe to their parents, from whom, under God, they had their being. He that made

us and kept us may dispose of us at his own pleasure; for God being a creator, he is an owner; and being an owner, he is a ruler. The dominion of jurisdiction is founded in the dominion of propriety: Mat. 20:15, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?'

2. Man being God's subject, hath a certain law given to him, which doth require obedience from him, and doth determine his duty, particularly wherein it shall consist: Micah 6:8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to love mercy, and do justice, and to walk humbly with thy God?' This law is partly made known to us by the light of natural conscience: Rom. 2:14, 'The gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law;' partly by scripture; so more clearly in Ps. 147:19, 'He hath showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments to Israel; he hath not dealt so with every nation.' Now nothing is sin but what is against this law, and all that is a breach of it is a sin.

3. Man being under a law, should be very tender of breaking or disobeying it, for God never dispenseth with it, as it is purely moral, and standeth much upon keeping up his legislative authority; which may appear by these considerations—

[1.] If man could have kept it, he would have gotten life by it; that was God's first intention; and the reason why it succeeded not was through our sin. The law could not make us happy, because it became weak through our flesh, Rom. 8:3, and Gal. 3:21, 'If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law;' but a righteousness fully satisfying the demands of the law now in the fallen estate is impossible; the gospel therefore offereth another righteousness, to which the law is not contrary, but subservient.

[2.] In that God would not release the penalty of the law, nor pardon any sin against it, without satisfaction first made by the blood of Christ; the law is both the rule of our duty and God's judgment; it showeth what is due from us to God, and also what is due from God to us in case of disobedience. Now before God would save man, Jesus Christ must be subject to the law, to suffer what is imposed as a punishment, before God would save us from it: Gal. 4:4, 5, 'But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.'

[3.] Before man can have actual benefit by this satisfaction, he must consent to return to the duty of the law, and live in obedience to God; for God never pardoneth any while they are in their rebellion, and live under the full dominion of sin, but when by covenant they return to their allegiance to their rightful Lord: Acts 26:18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God;' Isa. 45:7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;' Isa. 1:16, 17, 'Wash you, make you clean, and then your sins, though they were as scarlet, shall be as white as snow.' Till a resolution of new obedience, we have no interest in the grace of the new covenant, for the way of entrance into the new covenant is by faith and repentance. Now repentance is nothing else but a sincere purpose of new obedience, or living according to the will or law of God.

[4.] Christ merited regeneration, or the spirit of holiness, that all new creatures might voluntarily keep this law, though not in absolute perfection, yet in new sincere obedience: Titus 3:5, 6, 'He saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost,

which he hath shed on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' Christ came to bring us into the favour of God by pardon and adoption; so into a capacity of loving, pleasing, and obeying God by regeneration. Now the new creature is fitted to obey the law: Eph. 4:24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' Heb. 8:10, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them upon their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.' The great blessing of the gospel is grace to keep the law.

[5.] The more we keep this law, the more pleasing we are to God, and the more communion we have with Christ. As renewing grace fits us to enter into the evangelical state, so the more entirely and readily we give up ourselves to do the will of God, our interest is more clear, and our participation of the blessings of the gospel more full, and our comfort more strong: Ps. 119:165, 'Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them;' Rom. 8:1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;' Ps. 1:1, 2, 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of God, and in his law doth he meditate day and night;' Titus 2:11–13, 'The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ;' and 1 John 1:7, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, then have we fellowship one with another.' And it is said of our Lord Jesus, Luke 2:52, that 'he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.' If it be said of Christ, whose increase was only in the exercise, for at his first coming he had the Spirit without measure, much more of us, that, as we increase in

holiness, we increase in the favour of God. Surely the more God loveth us, the more we obey his law; for all religion is to love God, which is our work, and to be beloved of him, which is our reward and happiness.

[6.] That we cannot have full communion with God till we are perfectly conformed to his law; for we are not introduced into the heavenly glory till we are perfect and complete in holiness: Eph. 5:27, 'That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish;' Col. 1:22, 'To present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight;' Jude 24, 'To present you faultless before the presence of his glory.' During life our obedience is but imperfectly begun, but when it is completed and finished, we do not stay out of heaven one jot or moment. In heaven and the state of perfect glory, the law as purely moral is always in force; we are bound to love God and one another.

[7.] That the law is the rule of all God's judgments in the world, and his righteous process, whether against nations or persons: Rom. 1:18, 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;' Heb. 2:2, 'For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward,' &c.

[8.] That he will not spare his own children when they transgress it by heinous and scandalous sins; though they be the dearly beloved of his soul, and fall out but in rare instances and cases, yet they do not go away without remarks of God's displeasure: Prov. 11:31, 'The righteous shall be recompensed on earth, much more the wicked and the sinner.' To instance in Eli, his sons are slain in battle, the ark

taken, his daughter-in-law dieth, and at length the old man dieth. Witness David, after he had fallen foully; Tamar is defiled, Amnon slain, Absalom, in rebellion against him, rifleth his palace royal, defileth his concubines; he himself driven from his palace, fleeth for his life, and hath much ado to escape. All this is spoken to show that the law is still in force, that Christ came not to dissolve but to fulfil it.

[9.] That Christ came not to dissolve our obligation to God, or ever intended it, but to promote it rather. Not to dissolve it: if he came de jure to free us from obedience to the law, it is to make us gods; for no creature is sui juris, his own to dispose of; it is impossible any created thing can be without a law, for that were to make it God, to make the creature supreme and independent, that his own will should be his rule, without liableness to another. Nor de facto, to set us free while we are creatures; for that were to make us devils, to live in a direct opposition to God. But rather to promote holiness; partly as his design was to restore us to obedience: Luke 1:74, 75, 'That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.' And partly as Christ was a pattern, and came to do what he hath commanded: Mat. 3:15, 'For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;' Mat 5:17, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil;' Heb. 5:8, 9, 'Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.'

II. The nature and heinousness of sin is to be determined by a contrariety or want of conformity to this law; for sin presupposeth a law and lawgiver, and a debt of subjection lying upon us. We are subject to God by virtue of our dependence, but the course of this subjection and dependence is determined by the law of God, or the

act of his legislative will, in what way we shall express our obedience to him; so that all sin presupposeth a law, and the power of the lawgiver. The apostle telleth us, Rom. 4:15, 'Where there is no law, there is no transgression;' and Rom. 5:13, 'Sin is not imputed where there is no law.' Well, then, by the law we know what is sin, the nature of it, and how great an evil it is, and the heinousness of it.

But if we would know what sin is, or what is sin, let us see how many ways this law may be transgressed: two ways especially; either by omitting what is commanded as a duty to God, or by committing what is forbidden.

1. By omitting what is commanded as a duty to God or man; as suppose invocation of God: Jer. 10:25, 'Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name;' Ps. 14:3, 'There is none that doeth good, no not one;' Mat. 25:42, 'I was an hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink;' non qui rapit aliena, sed qui non dat sua; Mat. 25:30, 'And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Unprofitableness, if there be no more, is a damning sin. When we directly transgress an affirmative precept, that is a sin of omission; or when we do anything against a negative precept, that is a sin of commission. There is in these sins the general nature of all sin, a transgression of the law, or a disobedience and breach of a precept, and so by consequence a contempt of God's authority. When Saul had not done what God bid him to do, he telleth him, 1 Sam. 15:23, 'That rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry;' implying that sins of omission are rebellion and stubbornness, for which God threateneth to rend the kingdom from him. So for a sin of omission he puts by Eli's family from the priesthood: 1 Sam. 3:13, 'I will judge his house for ever, because his sons made themselves vile, and he

restrained them not.' Now the more necessary the duties omitted are, the greater the sin is: Heb. 2:3, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' 1 Cor. 16:22, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.' Especially if the omission be total: Ps. 14:2, 'There is none seeketh after God;' Jer. 2:32, 'My people have forgotten me days without number.' When duties are seasonable: Prov. 17:16, 'Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, and he hath no heart to it?' When the performance of a duty is easy, to stand with God for a trifle: Luke 16:24, he that would not give a crumb shall not have a drop. So when fully convinced of our duty: James 4:17, 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' These sins are the ruin of most people in the world. They forget God; they do not seek after him. Yea, the children of God oftener offend in these kind of sins than the other kind; not so much in foul excesses, as in the omission of good duties.

2. By committing what God hath forbidden, or breaking through the restraints God hath laid upon us, in worshipping idols, or satisfying our revenge, or fulfilling our lusts. The first sin was eating the forbidden fruit; and the decalogue consists rather of prohibitions than precepts, to meet with the corrupt nature of man. God doth as it were in his law cry to us, 'Oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate!' Jer. 44:4. He hath hedged up our way, and yet we break through. If you ask which is the worst of these two, sins of omission against the affirmative, or commission against the negative commandments? I answer—In some cases the one, in some the other. Sins of commission are usually more foul and scandalous, but sins of omission, especially total neglects of necessary duties, are more dangerous. Sins of commission, when they break out into shameful acts, scourge the conscience with remorse and horror; but sins of omission bring an insensible slightness, carelessness, and

hardness of heart. Our mischief cometh by neglecting what should keep religion alive in our souls. But now sins of commission may be acted in thought, word, and deed; for the whole man falleth under the law of God. These three ways of sinning are implied in Prov. 8:13, 'Pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth.'

[1.] Thoughts are not free; the workings of the heart fall under a law: 'The thought of foolishness is sin;' Ps. 119:113, 'I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.' Mark, he inferreth his hatred of vain thoughts out of his love to the law. Thoughts and desires are condemned by the law of God, as well as more perfect operations.

[2.] Words also fall under the law, and we are to give an account thereof in the judgment: Mat. 12:36, 'Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment;' James 2:12, 'So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' Then the judgment is carried on according to law.

[3.] Evil actions, that break out into the conversation, are consummate sins: James 1:15, 'Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth, sin.' These being more deliberate, argue greater boldness and contempt of God, bring scandal and dishonour to his name, and convey the taint and contagion of an evil example to others. It is ill to have a fire kindled in our bosoms, but it is worse when the sparks of sin fly abroad. These acts of sin are either secret, done between God and us, without the privity of any others than the sinning parties; these are an affront to God's omnipotency, because they put more respect upon men than God, which is palliated atheism: Jer. 2:26, 'A thief is ashamed when he is found;' Job 24:15, 'The adulterer waiteth for the twilight; no eye shall see me; and disguiseth his face.' To be unjust in secret, unclean in secret, malicious, sensual, voluptuous; art thou afraid men should know it,

and not afraid God should know it? Open sin, when in defiance of all that is good and holy, men will commit, and are not ashamed of it; as Absalom lay with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel: Isa. 3:9, 'They declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not.' This is to enter into an open war and defiance against God.

III. That those that live in sin, or any allowed breach of this law, are still under the curse of it, and cannot look upon themselves as God's adopted children; for he that breaketh the law is opposed to those whom the Father hath loved with so great love, as to take them into his family, and to acknowledge them for his children.

To clear this to you—

1. It is certain that when we come to take the law out of the hand of a redeemer, we are all sinners and transgressors before God. When we first received the law out of the hand of a creator, we were pure and upright, had no former faults to be pardoned, but were as the creation had left us; but now we have a mountain of guilt upon our backs when we are called upon to submit to the kingdom of the Mediator; therefore we come to him as one that will pay our debts, and discharge us of this heavy load, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear: Ps. 130:4, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;' Mat. 11:28, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' Pardon, rest, and ease for your burdened souls, is our first invitation; for alas! we are all sinners and transgressors.

2. Though God findeth us sinners, and we apprehend ourselves to be so, yet when he taketh us into his family, he doth not leave us so; but on God's part regeneration maketh way for adoption: John 1:12, 13, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born,

not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' And regeneration doth fit us for obedience to the law, as was said before; for it is a writing his law on our minds, and a putting it into our hearts. And on our part there is repentance, or a bitter dislike of sin, with which is a purpose of new obedience, or of forbearing the evil which the law forbiddeth, and doing the good which the law requireth; a returning to the allegiance we owe our sovereign Lord: Acts 17:30, 31, 'He hath commanded all men to repent, because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.' Surely they that enter into the Mediator's kingdom, and do seriously and solemnly engage to be faithful to him, are strongly bound to be exceeding tender of doing anything against the law and will of God; partly because they now owe obedience not only to God as creator, but Christ as redeemer, who is their new lord by a beneficial right and title: Rom. 14:9, 'To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord of dead and living.' And their disobedience is a double transgression, and so a double displeasing of God; for bonds are multiplied by benefits. Partly because in their repentance, if it were serious, sin was complained of as the greatest burden that lay upon their consciences, the grievance from whence they sought ease, the wound which pained them at the heart, the disease their souls were sick of; and their purpose seemed firmly set to please God in all things. Now, if men cast off all care of righteousness and holiness, and take occasion from the grace of Christ to live in sin, and to build again what they have destroyed, they cast off their claim, and so make themselves transgressors of the law before God: Gal. 2:17, 'If I build again the things which I have destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.' It is a kind of outlawing ourselves from the law of grace.

3. None are so exact with God in the obedience of his law, but that still they need the same grace that brought them into the family to keep them in the family, and to pardon their daily failings. Not to sin is the fixed purpose of christians; but who can watch so severely, and keep such a strict guard over his own heart, but that he doth often sin and fall? But God will not deal in anger with us, and cast us out of his favour and family for every sin, through the weakness and frailty of our natures; but though we often forget the duty of children, he doth not forget the mercy of a father: Ps. 103:13, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;' Mal. 3:17, 'I will spare them as a father spareth his only son that serveth him.' He hath mercy in Christ for all such as do sincerely endeavour to please God, and serve him, and do not indulge themselves in deliberate sin.

4. Though God's adopted children may through infirmity break his law, yet there is a manifest difference between them and others that live in a state of sin, either in enmity to godliness, or in a course of vanity, sensuality, or any kind of rebellion against God, rejecting his counsels, calls, and mercies, which should reclaim them. There are some who sin with fulness of deliberation: Micah 2:1, 'Woe to them that devise iniquity, that work evil upon their beds: when the morning is light they practise it, because it is in the power of their hands.' With freeness of consent: Prov. 7:22, 'He goeth after her straightway.' With strength of resolution: Eccles. 8:11, 'Their heart is fully set in them to do evil;' Jer. 44:17, 'But we will certainly do whatsoever goeth out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the city of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.' Frequency of action: 2 Peter 3:3, 'Walking after their own lusts.' Accustomed to do evil: Jer. 13:23. Skill and dexterity in sinning: Jer. 4:22, 'They are wise to do evil, but

to do good they have no knowledge.' Now these are not as God's children, who have a few failings.

Use 1. To show the dangerous condition of those who live in a course of sin; the Holy Ghost pronounceth them breakers of the law. But now the children of God, those that are taken into God's family, have sin dwelling in them, but not reigning; remaining, but not reserved; they are often foiled, but it is besides their purpose, which is the difference between them and others, the habitual bent of their hearts being against sin. The prevailing and overpoising heart is for God; their wills are fixed, and set to please him: Heb. 13:18, 'We trust we have a good conscience.' But with the carnal it is not so; sin is more loved than hated. A man is not determined good from his conscience, but from the prevalent bent of his will. It is not enough to have a conscience rightly informed from the word of God concerning any duty, but there must be a bent, a fixed purpose to obey God in all things; which doth still put us on to do good and to avoid evil. The will is the imperial power in the soul, and the first mover and principle of all moral actions; and as it standeth disposed and constantly bent, so is the life good or evil; and where the heart is predominantly bent on righteousness, we may take comfort in our condition, though forced to grapple with remaining weaknesses. But if bare conscience calleth for that we have no mind to, though some dislikes, some feeble resistance be made, and soon suppressed, it will not excuse us from being transgressors of the law. The conscience of a convinced man is for God, but the heart and will of a renewed man is for God. A convinced man may have an imperfect will to be better, a velleity, but not a perfect volition; but in a converted man there is a will and a delight in God: 'To will is present with me, and I delight in the law of God in the inner man,' Rom. 7:22.

2. The tenor of his life is for God; his course is a course of godliness; but in a natural man, his course is a course of sin, and he doth not avoid those failings which he might avoid if he were sincerely willing. Men are determined by their walk, whether it be after the flesh or after the Spirit, Rom. 7:1. Their sins are not of settled interest and choice, but sudden passion.

3. To the godly sin is a great burden: Rom. 7:24, 'O wretched man that I am I who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' They are unwearied and instant in the use of means whereby they may get rid of it; they do not only dislike sin, but overcome it in some measure; they are always cleansing their minds from vanity and sin, and 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' 2 Cor. 7:1; 'As ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so you would abound therein yet more and more,' 1 Thes. 4:1.

4. By their falls they are much better strengthened, and cautioned against sin for time to come: Ps. 51:6, 'In the hidden parts thou hast made me to know wisdom.' The others, if sin be complained of, it is not reformed nor mortified: they are sorry for their sins for a fit, but it is not a sorrow that wounds sin to the heart, that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation 'not to be repented of;' but the others do recover themselves in such a kindly manner that their health is bettered by their disease.

Use 2. Since it is hard to state how far a child of God may go in sinning, or what are mere infirmities consistent with grace, the best way will be to stand at a distance universally from all sin, hating all sin, and keeping a constant care and solicitude to please God in all things, and to pray with David, Ps. 119:133, 'Order my steps in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.' It is enough to breed caution in us that a sin of infirmity in its own nature is a

transgression of the law, whether it be imputed to us, yea or no; and a man that doth not make conscience of infirmities will in time not make conscience of iniquities; but that man that persists in a sinful course, certainly doth not, cannot walk uprightly with God: 1 John 5:18, 'We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not.' When the rest of the world lieth in wickedness, the grace of God in his heart ordinarily is prevailing in him.

SERMON VII

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is a transgression of the law.—1 JOHN 3:4.

FROM this scripture I have observed this doctrine—

That he that liveth in a course of sin forfeiteth the privileges of adoption offered to him, and maketh himself guilty before God as a breaker of the law.

I have showed you—

1. That all mankind is under the law of God, which still remaineth in force as an inviolable rule of righteousness.
2. That the nature and heinousness of sin is to be determined by a contrariety unto or want of conformity to this law.
3. That those that live in sin or the allowed breach of the law cannot look upon themselves as God's adopted children, but are still under the curse of it.
4. I now come to show you the heinous nature of sin. Here—

I shall first show what heinousness, venom, and malignity there is in sin, to induce the children of God to a horror and hatred of it; Secondly, Give you the practical corollaries thence ensuing, that sin should be an odious thing to christians, because it is a transgression of the law of God.

First, Let me speak of the evil of sin, as it is a transgression of the law. It may be represented—

1. From the consideration of the lawgiver, to whom belongeth goodness, wisdom, and power.
2. From the law itself, which may be considered either as to the precept or the sanction, by penalties and rewards.
3. The adjuncts of the law, which are—(1.) The providences whereby God confirmeth it; (2.) The means whereby he doth enforce it; (3.) The slenderness of the temptations that tempt and provoke us to break it.

If I should exactly follow this method, it would wonderfully show the malignity and evil nature of sin; as if we consider the wisdom, power, and goodness of the lawgiver. His wisdom, as the law is given by a wise God, so sin is extreme folly. His goodness, and that is twofold—either moral or beneficial. His moral goodness is his holiness and purity; so sin is an express contrariety to it. His beneficial goodness, which showeth his readiness to do good to the creature; sin is a plain denial of it: or his actual beneficence, so sin is ingratitude. His power signifieth his authority, or might and strength. To break it, as it signifieth his authority, so sin is disobedience; as his authority is grounded on his propriety, so it is robbery, or converting that which is another's to our own will. Or our covenant or consent by way of consecration, so it is sacrilege. By way of marriage union, so it is not

single fornication, but adultery. As it signifieth his might, strength, or omnipotency, so it is a depreciation or contempt of his glorious majesty, or a slighting of his frowns, or a playing with the vengeance of the almighty and great God. I might go on, but because keeping to this method might be too perplexing to a popular auditory, I shall not exactly observe it, nor yet wholly deviate from it. Now I shall show you the heinousness, venom, and malignity there is in sin, the more to induce the children of God to a horror and hatred of it, in fourteen particulars.

1. There is folly in it, as it is a deviation from the best rule which the divine wisdom hath given unto us. If we should only look upon the law as a bare direction or counsel given us by one that is wiser than we, to slight it is a contempt of the wisdom of God, as if he knew not how to govern the world, and what is meet and good for man; and so a poor worm is exalted above God: Micah 6:8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.' Now, shall we slight his direction, and in effect say, Our own way is better? Reason requireth that they that are not able to choose for themselves should obey their guides, and content themselves with the wisdom of others, who see farther than they do; as Elymas, when struck blind, sought somebody to lead him by the hand, Acts 13:11. Can a blind man feel out his way better than another who hath eyes to choose it for him? God is wiser than we; and all that would not spit in the face of their creator should think so. Now he hath reduced all moral duties to a few heads, and disposed them into an accurate method, speaking to us with particular application, 'Thou shalt not have any other gods;' and, 'Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not commit adultery.' Now for us, after all this, to run of our own heads, and consult with our own foolish lusts, and the suggestions of the devil, who is our worst enemy, is desperate madness and folly; and yet so doth every one that breaketh the law in thought, word, and deed: Deut. 4:6, 'Keep these statutes, and do

them, for this is your wisdom.' The most holy are the wisest: Jer. 8:9, 'They have rejected the word of the Lord, and then what wisdom is there in them?' They who reject that which is able to make them wise to salvation, that in which all true wisdom consisteth, that which cometh from the fountain of all wisdom, how can they be wise men, who, though wicked, would not be accounted weak and foolish? yet sin maketh us so while we refuse God's counsel, who knoweth our frame, and what is best for us. Every soul in hell is brought there by sinful folly.

2. Laws are not only rules to direct, but have a binding force from the authority of the lawgiver. God doth not only give us counsel as a friend, but commands as a sovereign. Therefore the second notion whereby the evil of sin is set forth is that of disobedience and rebellion; and so it is a great injury done to God, because it is a depreciation or a contempt of God's authority. It is finis operis, though not operantis; though not in the intention of the man that sinneth, yet in the nature of the action. You count it great pride in Pharaoh to say, Exod. 5:2, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?' or in those rebels, Ps. 12:4, 'Our tongues are our own; who is lord over us?' We will think, and speak, and do what we please, and own no law but our lusts. Now though you do not say thus in so many direct and formal words, yet this is the interpretation of your actions. Whenever you sin, you despise the law that forbiddeth that sin, and by consequence the authority of him that made it: 2 Sam. 2:9, 'Wherefore hast thou sinned in despising the commandment?' Tush! I will do it; it is no matter for the law of God which standeth in the way. It may be David had no such actual thought, but yet the action itself speaketh it; for an act of irreverence and contempt of God's authority is as if it were not to be stood upon when our lusts urge us to the contrary. And certainly no man can endure to be crossed in his will by an inferior; and will God take it well at your

hands? Oh, that we could make our hearts sensible of this! It would make us cautious, and more humble when we have sinned. I am about to do that, or have done that which is a contempt of God; and is it nothing to us to slight God? Other creatures, that are under a law as well as we, dare not do so. The angels have a deep awe and reverence of God: Jude 9, 'Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, disputing about the body of Moses, durst not bring a railing accusation, but said, the Lord rebuke thee.' What was the matter? An archangel durst not venture on a passionate word. Certainly a man is never good, never walketh answerably to his creation, till he hath a great reverence and dread of God's authority impressed upon his heart: Prov. 13:13, 'Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed, but whoso feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.' Not he that feareth a judgment, but he that feareth a commandment, durst not venture, needeth no more to move him and stop him, but to know what God will have him to do or not do; these shall be rewarded, not others; as he that breaketh the law of any king cannot expect a reward from him. Alas! there is nothing more common than for men to make little reckoning of a commandment. But in good earnest, is it nothing to cross the will of God? You might reason as the centurion, Mat. 8:9, 'I am a man under authority, and I have others under me.' Take either part, and consider yourselves in your subjection to men that are above you, or in your carriage to those under you, and you may shame yourselves in the manifold breaches of the law of God. You have an awe of men's laws, why not of God's? His authority is greater, and power to punish greater; you may get out of their sight while you sin, and escape out of their reach after you have offended them; 'but whither will you go from God's presence?' Ps. 139:7. Set the Rechabites before you when their father was dead: Jer. 35:6, 7, 'We dare not drink wine, because our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine.' But we need not go so far back; poor men and servants dare not displease

them that have power over them by whom they live. If a master, or a father, or a landlord, or a magistrate be but displeased with them, how do they tremble and shake? If they know anything against their mind, they dare not do it, and shun it; they shake at the word of a man of power, or one a little above them, but make bold with God, and sin freely without check or remorse. What do we think of God, what do we make of him?

3. It is shameful ingratitude. Man is God's beneficiary, from whom he hath received life and being, and all things, and is therefore bound to love and serve him according to his declared will. We have our being from him: Ps. 100:3, 'He made us, and not we ourselves.' And we continually depend upon him: Acts 17:28, 'In him we live, and move, and have our being.' And surely dependence should beget observance. Men are loath to break with, or are careful to reconcile themselves to, those upon whom they depend. As when the men of Tyre had offended Herod, they sought terms of reconciliation: Acts 12:20, 'Making Blastus their friend, because their country was nourished by the king's country.' Now it is extreme unthankfulness, stupidity, and brutishness for us to carry ourselves undutifully towards God, who gave us our beings. Our parents, who next, under God, gave us our beings, knew not when the child was in the womb whether it would be male or female; they rocked our cradles for us, and provided for us in our frail and infant state. When we were not capable to express one act of thankfulness, God protected us, supplied us with all necessaries, had a tender care of us, as parents are wont to have of their children: all that we have and are, we have from him; he hath preferred, honoured, and advanced us. Now should we break his laws who hath dealt so graciously and bountifully with us? Deut. 32:5, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?' Surely such ungrateful people show themselves much depraved, and more brutish than the beasts

themselves, who have no capacity to know God as the first cause of all beings, yet take notice of the next hand from whom they receive their supplies, and in their kind express their gratitude to such as feed them and make much of them: Isa. 1:3, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib.' But we take no notice and regard of God, who hath made us, and kept us, and hath been beneficial to us all our days. Surely this should shame us out of sin; for shall we offend our great benefactor? If gratitude for benefits past doth not prevail with us, yet interest should; for all our benefits plainly must come from God. You have more to do with God than men; you are to ask your comforts daily from him, and therefore should study to please him. You are nothing but what he hath made you, and what he must continue every moment to you. Now you that are to go a begging to him daily, and receive all your comforts from his hands, should you break his laws and cross his will? For if you will not hear God, how should he hear you? Prov. 28:9, 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination.' Men observe those most with whom they have most to do. Love is not to be requited with unkindness and ingratitude. If our lawgiver be also our benefactor, men should shame themselves out of sin. Even our common mercies point to heaven, and tell us whence they come, and for what.

4. It is a disowning of God's propriety in us, as if we were not his own, and God had not power to do with his own as he pleaseth. The creature is absolutely at God's dispose, not only as he hath a jurisdiction over us as his subjects, but a propriety in us as his goods. A prince hath a more absolute power over his lands and his own goods than he hath over his subjects; over his subjects he hath a dominion of jurisdiction, but over his goods a dominion of propriety. God is not only a ruler, but an owner, as he made us out of nothing, and bought us when we were worse than nothing, and still keepeth

us from returning into our original nothing again. Now, shall those that are absolutely his own withdraw themselves from him, and live according to their own will, and think and speak and do what they list? Surely it is a plain denial of God's propriety in us and lordship over us: Ps. 12:4, 'Our tongues are our own, who is lord over us?' Alas! we have no will of our own, nor mind of our own, nor tongue of our own; no wealth nor strength, nor interests of our own; all these are God's, and must be improved for him. If we speak, it must be for God, or as God hath directed; if we think, we should think for God: everything is his, and must be used not negatively only, not against him, but positively for him. It robbeth God of his propriety. If we consider his natural right, so sin is such an injury and wrong to God as theft and robbery. If we consider our own covenant, by which we voluntarily own God's right and property in us, so it is adultery and breach of marriage vows. If we consider this covenant as being made in a way of devoting and consecrating of ourselves from a common to a holy use, so it is sacrilege; all which aggravate sin, and should make it more odious to our thoughts.

5. It is a contempt of God's holiness and purity, as if he were indifferent to good and evil, and stood not upon his law, whether men broke it or kept it, and would not call them to an account, and judge them for it. Whereas God standeth punctually and precisely upon his law; the least point is dearer unto him than all the world in some sense: Mat. 5:18, 'But not one jot or tittle of the law shall pass away.' God maketh great reckoning of it, but we make little reckoning of it when we do so freely break it. He hath given a law to be kept to a tittle, and we break it in every tittle. God hath been peremptory and precise, and showed himself a holy and jealous God when it hath been broken in a small and inconsiderable circumstance, as we would think. Witness the breach made upon Uzzah, and upon the men of Bethshemesh, 1 Sam. 6:19; a poor man that gathered sticks

on the sabbath-day was struck dead; the turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt; the striking of Zacharias, John's father, dumb; the hindering Moses from entering into Canaan, for smiting the rock twice. And after all this, we think we may venture, and no harm will come of it. Surely we cannot be too tender of the law. We are bidden to keep it as the apple of the eye, Prov. 7:2. The eye is a tender place, and is offended with the least dust; now as we would be chary of the eye, so should we be of the law of God.

6. It is a denial of the goodness of God, as if he were envious of the happiness and welfare of mankind, as if he had planted in us desires which he would not have satisfied, only to vex and torment us, and had fettered us and restrained us unreasonably, and his commands were grievous, and his yoke intolerable; yea, ensnared us by keeping us from that which is good and comfortable for us. The devil inspired this thought into our first parents, in the first sin that ever was committed. And the first in every kind is the measure of all the rest, Gen. 3:4, 5. Is God so kind, and yet deals unkindly with man, to put him into a garden, and plant trees on purpose to anger, him; that he might have that continually in his eye which he might not enjoy; to deny him the use of that fruit which only had the virtue to make him truly happy? These were the insinuations of Satan, by which he undermineth their obedience. You see his battery is against God's goodness and kindness to man, which he endeavoureth to discredit, and make man doubt of, by all the ways he can; so still the same thing is implied in every sin, that God is envious, and therefore we are impatient of his restraints. Though but one tree reserved, Satan thinketh this a fit occasion of raising a jealousy, as if that which he had withheld from man had been far better than that which he granted to him. If he prevailed so much upon our first parents in their estate of innocency, no marvel if he prevails so easily upon their posterity in this state of corruption. We are too impatient of his yoke:

Ps. 2:4, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us;' 'And the carnal mind is enmity to the law,' Rom. 8:7. They cannot endure to have their liberty infringed, and to resign up their wills to the will of God, though he requireth nothing but for our good, Deut. 6:24. And therefore his sovereignty should not be disclaimed by man, nor the exercise of it be grievous to him. Men would fain cast away bonds and cords, as if the crossing of their humours were an infringing of their happiness.

7. It is a depreciation and contempt of God's glorious majesty. What else shall we make of a plain contest with him, and a flat contradiction to his holy will? for while we make our carnal and depraved will the rule and guide of our actions against God's holy will, we plainly contend with him, whose will shall stand, his or ours, and so cast off God's authority, and seek to jostle him out of his throne; we pluck the crown off his head, and the sceptre out of his hands, usurping his authority, and so slight the eternal power of this glorious king, as if he were not able to avenge the wrongs done to his majesty, but that we could make our part good against him: 1 Cor. 10:22, 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?' Isa. 45:9, 'Woe unto him that striveth with his maker.' Such a perfect disagreement with the almighty and holy God argueth an entering into the lists with him, as if we could carry our cause, or endure his greatest terrors. And will God be despised by man who is a worm, who is nothing but what God maketh him to be? Shall a silly worm dare enter into a contest with the almighty God, who can chastise him, and do justice upon him in a moment? For still the world is upheld by his providential influence and sustentation. We may escape men, either get out of their reach, or else outlive their wrath; but who can fly from God? Ps. 139., and 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' Heb. 10:31. We should think of these things. We carry it so as if we had courage and strength enough

to withstand God's judgments: Ezek. 22:14, 'Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee?'

8. It is a questioning, if not a flat denial of God's omniscience and omnipresence, as if he did not see or regard the actions of men, since we dare do that in the presence of God which we would scarce do before a little child. Ahasuerus said, Esther 7:8, 'Will he force the queen also before me in the house?' Shall we break his laws before his face? Who would void his excrements before his prince? It is a homely similitude, but such as is warranted by the types of the law: Deut. 23:12–14, 'Thou shalt cover that which cometh from thee, that thy camp may be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee.' It is not natural filthiness which God abhorreth, but moral sin is most loathsome to him; and yet we commit it before his face, and are not ashamed, which showeth that either we have contemptible thoughts of God, or that he doth not see or regard us. The prophet telleth us, Jer. 2:28, 'The thief is ashamed when he is found;' that is, taken in the fact. did we believe God's omnipresence and all-seeing eye, we would always be careful of our actions; but we do that before the face of God which he infinitely hateth. Whatever your underlings do behind your backs, you would not bear it if they did it before your face. All the sins thou committest, thou dost them in the very face of God, who beholdest the evil and the good.

9. It is the violation of a law which is holy, just, and good. Hitherto we have brought considerations that concern the lawgiver; now I speak of the very law itself. The matter of it recommendeth itself to our consciences, as tending to the glory of God, and conducing to preserve the rectitude of our natures. Whatever God hath required ought to be done upon God's authority, though the thing itself (setting God's injunction aside) did not deserve our respect and regard; as Naaman's servant told him, 2 Kings 5:13, 'If the prophet

had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?' So whatever God commandeth, the stamp of his authority puts a respect upon it; how much more when his laws are so equal, that, if a man were well in his wits, he would prefer them before liberty itself? Rom. 7:12, 'Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just and good;' the law in general, and every command in particular, even that commandment which had wrought such tragical effects in his own heart. Thus men that understand themselves speak well of the law, even when it is contrary to their corrupt natures and humours. It is a law fit for God to give and us to receive. You say we must obey, but you think his commands are grievous; and so you obey him out of necessity, not out of delight. Oh, no; for though God may command what he will, yet he hath commanded nothing but what is good and holy. All his laws suit and agree well with his holiness, wisdom, and goodness, and also with the excellency and rectitude of our nature; and so setting aside God's authority, they commend themselves to us by their own evidence: Phil. 4:8, 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things.' There are certain things that are immutably good, and by their own proper worth command our love, because of their exact suitableness to the divine nature, which is the eternal rule and reason of all that is good, as also because of their agreeableness to the reasonable nature, so far as there is anything good and divine in it; and such are most, if not all, the laws which God hath required of us. He hath not required us to lance or gash ourselves, to offer our children in sacrifice, nor to observe any of those barbarous customs which any of the gentiles took up and adapted to their wild superstition: 'What hath the Lord required of thee, but to love and fear him, and serve him all your days?' Deut. 10:12. He doth not

require that we should run to the ends of the earth, or pierce the clouds, but 'to love mercy, do justice, and to walk, humbly with thy God;' to live in purity, chastity, sobriety, temperance. Now first good men, whose eyes are open, who are not grown brutish by indulging their lusts and sensual appetites, they judge these to be holy and good laws: Ps. 119:173, 'I esteem thy precepts concerning all things to be right;' and ver. 138, 'Thy testimonies are righteous, and very faithful.' They have such a naturalness to the law, that they are very tender of breaking it. Secondly, I propound it to ordinary men. If conscience be suffered to speak, it would plead the equity of God's laws; even carnal men like this obedience in others, though, being overcome by their own lusts, they cannot bring their hearts to it. They are counted excellent: Prov. 12:26, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.' There is a secret sentiment of the holiness of these precepts; a reverence is darted into their consciences. The wicked, that hate the saints, count them excellent. They fear them, and therefore hate them; for all fear in wicked men is slavish, both the fear of God, and the fear of the saints. Many could wish themselves better, though they have not a serious purpose and resolution, as the incontinent and voluptuous. Thirdly, The general sense of mankind, who all consent to the things contained in this law, as holy, pure, true, and just. For the second table there is no doubt. Conscience, without the help of any other teacher, will sufficiently convince any reasonable man that this law is agreeable to the nature of man. And much of the first table will be seen also; so that natural light will incline men to these things: Rom. 2:14, 'For the gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law.' There are some things in nature which always observe their course, as that light things should move upwards, and heavy bodies downward; but there are other things that happen for the most part, though not always, as for men to use the right hand and not the left; so there are some things which have such an eminent holiness and

righteousness in them, that by the universal consent of mankind they are approved; as that God should be loved above all, that children should honour their parents, that I should do as I would be done by; for these things are agreeable with the divine nature, and also with the reasonable nature, so far as it is a copy of it; other things may be variable, which are not clearly reconcilable with our notions of God. Fourthly, By the sentiments which men have of a holy, sober, godly life when they come to die, and the disallowance of a dissolute carnal life: Job 27:8, 'What hope hath the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God shall take away his soul?' Jer. 17:11, 'At his latter end he shall be a fool.' Then men's mistakes do usually appear, and their carnal confidences vanish: 'Whereas the just man's end is peace,' Isa. 38:3, and Ps. 37:37. When men are entering upon the confines of eternity, they are wiser; the fumes of lust are then blown over. Now I look upon these as testimonies to God's law. The apostle saith, 1 Cor. 15:56, 'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.' It is not from the fancy or melancholy of the dying person, nor from his distemper, but from his reason and the law of God. If it did only proceed from the distemper, or the sharp vapours of a disease, it were another matter. This anguish of spirit which death occasioneth by reason of sin is from a higher cause, the dread of God's justice, who will proceed according to his law, which the guilty person hath so often and so much violated and broken; they are not the ravings of a fever, nor the fruits of natural timorousness and credulity. No; it is a more serious business than so. This trouble is justified by the law of God and the highest reason. Fifthly, By reason; thus: That among beings some are better, others are worse, is out of all doubt; that the best beings should be most prized and esteemed is as clear as the former; therefore if I prize a mean thing equally with the best, or above the best, I unquestionably err against the law of nature. There are two objects propounded to our esteem—God and man, Mat. 22:37–40. There is an infinite distance between the things

themselves, so should there be in our respect to them. We owe more duty, honour, and service to God than to men. What more rational than to love God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves? Among men, some are superiors, some inferiors, some equals. As to common nature, all are equal, therefore an equal respect is due to them; we must do to them as we would be done by; for as there is a difference of persons, as parents, husbands, masters, so there are different laws. God hath considered not only what may conduce most to his own glory, but what is fit for men: 'These things are good and profitable unto men,' Titus 2:8. All are content others should be just and merciful, whatever they be themselves: it is for the good of human society, for all the uses and turns of mankind, without which the world would be but a den of thieves, or public stage whereon to act all manner of villany. Sixthly, By supposing the contrary. Do but for argument's sake suppose the contrary of all that God hath said concerning the embracing of virtue and the shunning of vice. If God should free us from these laws, and leave us to our own choice, that whatever our naughty hearts desire we should follow after it without any let and restraint on our part, you would see the world were not to be lived in; yea, not only free us from it, but command the contrary. Suppose he had forbidden us all respect to himself, commanded us to worship false gods, to transform or misrepresent his glory by images, to fall down before stocks and stones, that we should blaspheme his name continually, and despise all those glorious attributes which clearly shine forth in the creation, if he had commanded us to be impious to our parents, to fill the world with murders, adulteries, robberies, and thefts, to pursue others with slanders and false-witnessings, and that all this would be acceptable to him. Doth not the heart of man abhor such a conceit? Yea, the fiercest beasts would abhor it, if they were capable of having such an idea and speculation represented unto them. Now should we break such a law as this, so reasonable and evident, so conducive to the honouring of God, and

the governing of ourselves, and commerce with others? Surely the ways of God are equal.

10. It is a disorder in nature, or a breach in the moral order and harmony of the world, whilst man, the most excellent of all visible creatures, is so perverted and depraved, like the chief string to an instrument broken and out of tune. God hath appointed all creatures their work and service, and the chiefest part of his workmanship is spoiled and disordered. He was certainly the chief wheel in this curious artifice. God hath made all things by number, weight, and measure; no creature so depraved and unfitted for his use as man; the rest of the creatures continue according to his ordinance, Ps. 119:91. They are all subject to him according to the rule and law of their creation, the proud waves of the sea not excepted: Jer. 5:22, 'I have placed the sand for a bound to the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it.' That vast collection of waters, which no might or sleight of man is able to master, yet it cannot stir an inch further than the Lord pleaseth. Now what an aggravation is this of man's sin, who will not be ruled by God, who is able to rule and overrule the sea, the most unruly creature of all others! The sea itself observeth God's law; but he complaineth there that his people had revolted from it, ver. 23. Man alone of all creatures transgresseth the law which God hath prescribed, and goeth beyond the assigned bounds. The inanimate creatures, that have no sense and reason and choice, do not pass the line of their decree; so that sin is a greater disorder than for the sea to break its bounds: Ps. 146:6, 'Which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that therein is; which keepeth truth for ever.' Sun, moon, and stars keep their orb and course, and observe the just points of their compass; man only is eccentric and exorbitant.

11. It is a disbelief of the promises and threatenings wherewith the law is enforced; for in the law, besides the precept, there is a sanction by penalties and rewards. In the two former considerations, we considered sin as it transgresseth the precept of the law; now we come to consider the sanction of the law, as it offereth death or life to the transgressors and observers of it: Deut. 30:15, 'I have set before thee life and death, good and evil.' Now this is as little believed as the precept is obeyed; and thence cometh all our boldness in sinning, and coldness in duty. First, If we believed his promises, by which he doth allure us to obedience, we would be more forward and ready to comply with his precepts. Surely God meaneth as he speaketh; he will make good his word to the obedient; but the sinner thinketh not so, and therefore is loath to undergo the difficulties of obedience, because he hath so little sense and certainty of the fulfilling of the promise. The apostle telleth us, Heb. 11:6, 'That without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all that diligently seek him;' implying that if the fundamental truths of God's being and bounty were well rooted in our hearts, we could not be so careless as we are, nor so barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; our unbelief lieth at the bottom of all our carelessness, 1 Cor. 15:58. Secondly, Threatenings; if these were more believed, we would not venture as we do; for you cannot drive a dull ass into the fire which is kindled before him: Prov. 1:17, 'In vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird.' And would a reasonable creature wilfully run into so great a danger if he were sensible of it? and if he did believe these fearful threatenings, would he venture upon them? We think God doth not intend any execution of them, but only frightens us with a deceitful terror and a cry of false fire. Unbelief had a great predominancy in the first sin: 'Ye shall not surely die,' Gen. 3:4; and still it is a main ingredient. Men embolden themselves to rebellion, because they look upon God's wrath as a vain scarecrow.

12. It is a slighting of all those providences by which he would confirm and back his law. The Lord knoweth how apt we are to be guided by present sense. Things future, and that lie in another world, leave little impression upon our hearts; and therefore the terror of wrath to come cannot prevail against strong and violent affections to things that are present. The pleasures of sin being apprehended by sense, work more strongly upon the affections than things absent can do, which want that help of sense to convey them to our minds which the affections are much moved by; therefore God by some sensible dispensations will wean us from evil, and draw us to good, as by the mercies of this life, by public judgments, by chastenings. Even carnal nature is apt to be pleased with these kind of mercies, protection, provisions, and many worldly comforts: Ps. 119:56, 'This I had because I kept thy precepts;' Mat. 6:33, 'First seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' But alas! a naughty heart slighteth these expressions of God's common goodness: Rom. 2:4, 'Despisest thou the riches of his goodness?' So all those chastisings by which God will show us the bitter fruit of sin: Jer. 2:19, 'Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing, and a bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God;' Jer. 4:18, 'Thy way and thy doings have procured these things to thee: this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter.' All the hurt that cometh to us in this world is the fruit of sin; this is little taken notice of.

13. It is a contempt of all those means by which God useth to enforce his laws, and quicken the sense of our duty upon our hearts; such are the strivings and pressing motions of his Spirit, Gen. 6:3. The Spirit warneth us of our danger when we are running into sin, and when we are slack and negligent mindeth us of our duty; the good Spirit doth not cease his importunities towards the wicked till they banish him from themselves. Such are also the checks of conscience, which taketh God's part in the soul, and beareth witness against our sins

when other faculties conspire against him, Rom. 2:15. So the instructions of our friends and teachers: Prov. 4:12, 13, 'How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof! nor have I obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instruct me.' Instructions and warnings to the contrary do much aggravate and represent the evil nature and wilfulness of sinners, that nothing will stop them, and they are angry with those that would hinder them from going to hell. Of the same nature is the holy conversation of the godly: Heb. 11:7, 'By faith Noah condemned the world by preparing an ark;' and John 7:7, 'The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.' Not only by doctrine, but conversation, a living reproof; the godly are hated as objects reviving guilt.

14. The slenderness of the temptation that irritates us to break the laws of God doth also show the malignity of sin; for what is it but the pleasing of the carnal faculty? James 1:14, 'Every man is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.' He is enticed and drawn away by the love of some sensitive pleasure; this is all the recompense, all that is put in balance against the offending of God and the dreadful consequences of it; and then you will see what sin is. It is a light esteem of the favour of God, whilst a little base and brutish pleasure is preferred before it. When therefore a little sensitive delight, a little defiling transitory pleasure, is chosen before God, he is despised, and pleasure is loved before him: 2 Tim. 3:4, 'Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. The fountain of living waters is forsaken for a broken cistern,' Jer. 2:13; the creature for the creator, as if our souls found more delight and content in it than God. All the happiness in heaven is laid by for a little pomp and pleasure here on earth. In short, sense and appetite is preferred before reason and conscience, and so we make the beast to ride the man, things temporal before eternal, 2 Cor. 4:16, and the present world before the world to come,

2 Tim. 4:10, a preferring the body before the soul, the frail flesh before the immortal substance, and its pleasure before the concernments of the life to come; and so a parting with, or selling of all manner of happiness for a thing of nought.

Secondly, I come to give you the corollaries, or practical inferences thence deduced.

1. We see hence the folly of them who make a mock and sport of sin: Prov. 14:9, 'Fools make a mock of sin;' and Prov. 26:18, 19, 'As a madman casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?' Many when they have committed sin themselves, or enticed others to sin, laugh at it as if they were in jest. As when they have sworn an oath or told a lie, or cozened or cheated their neighbours, or fallen into adultery or intemperance; nay, when they see others troubled about sin, they mock and laugh at it. That which I shall say to these men shall be in two things. First, However they make light of sin now, yet when they come to die, it will sting them to the quick: 1 Cor. 15:56, 'The sting of death is sin.' They will see it is no jesting matter to affront a God of infinite wisdom, majesty, and power, that it is no matter of sport whether a man shall be saved or damned, be eternally happy or eternally miserable. Secondly, The next thing I shall say to them is, that to make a sport of sin showeth great obduracy and hardness of heart, and searedness of conscience. Men do not easily get into this frame of spirit, but it is after long sinning. It is custom brings dedolency, and it is somewhat before men get the mastery of conscience, and are past feeling, Eph. 4:19. The seat of scorers is the highest degree of sin, Ps. 1:1.

2. It showeth the folly of those that do not only make a light reckoning of sin themselves, but think also that God makes little

account of it. But if God makes little account of sin, why doth he so strictly forbid it? Why doth he punish it so grievously and terribly? First, In his internal government, with horrors of conscience, which are more grievous than death itself: Prov. 18:14, 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' and Job saith, chap. 7:15, 'My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life.' This vexation is so grievous, that death is preferred before it. For Judas to speak thus and act thus, being overcome, of despair, is no marvel; but for Job thus to express himself is worthy our notice. Secondly, If God makes no reckoning of sin, why do little children die, and that sometimes with racking and grievous pain? Rom. 5:14, 'Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.' It is not a mere chance. Thirdly, If God makes little account of sin, why did the Lord Jesus endure those grievous agonies, so that his soul was heavy to death, Mat. 26:38, and he sweated drops of blood? Was this a fable, or was this in vain? Or else sin is another thing than we usually take it to be. If God make so little reckoning of sin, then, in the fourth place, what is the reason that small sins have met with so great a judgment; angels made devils for an aspiring thought; Adam for eating an apple; Uzzah for touching the ark; Ananias and Sapphira for one lie both struck dead; Lot's wife for looking back turned into a pillar of salt? No sin is little that is committed against the great God.

3. How just is God in appointing eternal punishment as the fruit and reward of sin! Consider, first, it is an eternal God and an eternal happiness that is despised by the sinner; and for what base things, and for what a vile price do men hazard the favour of God, and forfeit the hopes of the life to come? Heb. 12:16, 'Not a profane person, as Esau, who sold his birthright for a morsel of meat.' And they that despise eternal blessedness, can you blame God if they suffer eternal misery? Secondly, So great is the force of sensual allurements, that

nothing is fit to break our inclination to them but eternal punishment. The flesh is importunate, the satisfaction present and at hand; but the pleasure is but for a season, and the torment is eternal, that is the great check given to the lusts of the flesh. Chrysostom represents the case by the instance of a soldier upon his watch, very inclinable to sleep, but threatened with a lingering and slow torture if he gave way to it. Now be the man never so much inclinable to sleep, yet the fear of the torture keepeth him waking. So doth God deal with us, he counterbalanceth present delights with eternal torments. Thirdly, It is a man's own choice; it is offered to us, whether upon this condition we will venture to sin: Prov. 8:36, 'He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all that hate me love death.' Simply no man loveth death or chooseth evil; not directly, but interpretatively and consequentially; but they swallow the hook that will swallow the bait, especially after due warning to the contrary. God sets both before us, life and death, eternal life and eternal death; and none can blame God for giving us our choice.

4. If all sin be so odious, how much more a life of sin! Every sin is an act of rebellion against God, but the state of sin is a state of rebellion against God; therefore they that live in a course of worldliness, or sensuality, or enmity to godliness, and will not be reclaimed, are not only bare sinners, but impenitent sinners; there is obstinacy and hardness of heart added to their obliquity and defection from the rule of righteousness. Now to wander, and love to wander, and keep out of the way, must needs render us more culpable. Every act of sin hath so much sinfulness in it that it is an amazing thing to consider it; but when this is our course and trade of life, there are not only many multiplied acts, but the person is involved and entangled in the curse of the law, and all this sin shall at last be charged upon him to his just condemnation.

5. The necessity of entering into the gospel-covenant. Now this is done by repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1.] Repentance towards God. Now repentance is a breaking off from the former course of sin: Isa. 1:16, 'Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well.' The law leaveth a man sinful, guilty, disobedient, both by nature and by practice obnoxious to the wrath and curse of God. This course must be broken off if we will be saved. By the law is the knowledge of sin, both quoad naturam peccati, and inhærentiam subjecti, Rom. 3:20, both what is sin, and who is the sinner. It worketh wrath, Rom. 4:15; since the fall it doth condemn us; it can never acquit us; it doth convince of sin, and bind us over to death. Now out of this wretched estate we should come betimes: Dan. 4:27, 'Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee; break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor.' He was a great oppressor, therefore Daniel preacheth righteousness and mercy to him. The true penitent sets himself against his former reigning sins, and alters the course of his former life. Sins of youth are dangerous, and may stick by us long after they are committed: Job 13:7, 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me possess the sins of my youth;' and Ps. 25:7, 'Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.' An old bruise may be felt a long time afterwards.

[2.] Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to take away sin. We need both his renewing and reconciling grace to procure our pardon and heal our natures. To procure our pardon; for sin is a greater evil than we can easily imagine, and therefore we should be more affected with the pardon which Christ purchased for us, and in the covenant doth apply to us, Ps. 32:1, 2. The necessity also of his renewing grace, or the gift of the sanctifying Spirit merited by Christ,

Titus 3:5, 6, that we may be prepared to obey God for the future, and to avoid so great an evil as sin is.

6. The necessity of persevering in the gospel-estate by new obedience, and a continual dependence on the grace of the Redeemer. First, New obedience: God's people cannot be too watchful against sin, against the least sin; for it is a breach of our Father's commandments, which the world maketh little reckoning of; yet if it be a sin, abhor it as an offence to God, a breach of his law. You must not consider how the world will look upon it, but how God will look upon it. Yet take heed of being scrupulous in small sins while you offend in greater, straining at a gnat when you swallow a camel. You must hate all sins, even the least; and let it not be a small thing to you to transgress the law of God. Secondly, Dependence upon the grace and mercy of our Redeemer; for we need it to the very last. The obedience of the best man upon earth is imperfect and defective: Ps. 143:2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' So Ps. 19:12, 'Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret offences.' As God for Christ's sake took us at first with all our faults, so this gracious covenant and the mercy of our Redeemer is our best plea at last.

7. What reason we have to submit to the sharpest providences which God in his corrective discipline puts us under: Isa. 27:9, 'By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.' No evil can be as bad as sin; the least sin is worse than the greatest suffering. In suffering, the offence is done to us; in sin, to God. The evil of suffering is but for a moment, the evil of sin for ever. In suffering we lose some worldly comfort and happiness; but in sinning we lose or hazard the favour of God. Suffering pincheth the flesh, but sin staineth the soul; therefore the sinful estate is far worse than the afflicted. Now if by the one we can get rid of the other, we should not murmur, but be thankful rather;

though the mortifying of sin cost us dear, yet the cost is well recompensed if sin thereby be subdued.

8. That a renewed heart should be affected, not only with the evil after sin, but with the evil in sin; for, to persuade God's children to a conformity to their Father, he urgeth this argument, that it is a breach of the law. The law hath penalties annexed, but he speaketh of it rather as a violation and breach. As we love the law because it is pure, so we should hate sin as it is contrary to this pure law. The heart is never thoroughly converted to God till holiness hath our love, and sin as sin our hatred. We are to regard the sanction, but first the precept, and have an awe of God's authority upon our hearts before we fear his vengeance; to hate it as it is an affront to God, and a contradiction to his holy will.

SERMON VIII

And ye know that he was manifested to take away sin, and in him was no sin.—1 JOHN 3:5.

THE apostle still pursueth his scope and purpose, which is to persuade christians to take heed of sin, and living in sin. He argueth —

1. From our adoption, and how much that inferreth a likeness to God whose children we are.
2. With respect to the law, or the orders of God's family, not to forfeit the offered privilege.
3. With respect to Christ, he urgeth two things—(1.) The holiness of his design; (2.) The innocency of his person. Both which dissuade us

from living in sin. That which Christ came to destroy, and that which maketh us so unlike Christ, should not be allowed by christians: 'And ye know that he was manifested to take away sin.'

1. In the first argument redemption by Christ is propounded—

[1.] As an evident truth. The sin and misery of the whole world was such that it groaned for a saviour. Sin was the mortal disease that we were all sick of; then came the spiritual physician to take it away. The common necessity of mankind showed the misery, and the common light of christianity showed the remedy.

[2.] It is propounded as his great end and scope why he was manifested. Christ is manifested two ways—in the gospel and in the flesh. In the gospel: Titus 2:11, 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men;' 1 Peter 1:20, 'But was manifest in these last times for you.' Now the gospel showeth he came to take away sin: 1 Tim. 1:15, 'This is a true and faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came to take away sin.' But here manifested in the flesh: 1 Tim. 3:16, 'Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh;' and 1 John 1:2, 'The life was manifested, and we have seen it.' Christ, who heretofore lay hid in the bosom of God, now appeared, and was discovered to the world as his only-begotten Son.

2. In the second argument the innocency of Christ is propounded: 'In him was no sin.' This clause may be added—

[1.] To show the value of his sacrifice, having no sin of his own to expiate: 'For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;' who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for their own sins, and then for the people's.

[2.] To show the greatness of his love: 'He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

[3.] To show that while we live in sin we can have no commerce and communion with him, his nature being so opposite to sin; for what communion is there between light and darkness, Christ and Belial?

[4.] To set him forth for an example and pattern to us, which is chiefly to be regarded. To imitate Christ we must abstain from sin, be holy as he is holy, and pure as he is pure.

Doct. That those who are partakers of Christ should by no means allow themselves in a life or course of sin.

I shall prove it by the two arguments of the text: that we must not continue in sin, because Christ came to take away sin, and had no sin in himself. Christ is here propounded, first, as our ransom; secondly, as our pattern. In each I shall open the expressions used, and then consider the force of the argument.

I. As a ransom, 'Ye know that he was manifested to take away sin.' There are three things must be opened—(1.) In what sense Christ is said to take away sin; (2.) By what means he doth accomplish it; (3.) How is this a binding argument.

First, In what sense Christ is said to take away sin. Sin is considerable either as to the guilt of it, or the power, life, and reign of it.

1. The guilt is taken away when the obligation to punishment is dissolved, and we are freed from wrath to come; which is one great benefit we have by our Lord Jesus: 1 Thes. 1:10, 'Which delivered us

from the wrath to come.' This is done by a pardon, which relateth to sin: Eph. 1:7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin.' And by justification, which relateth to the person: Rom. 5:1, 2, 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' By sanctification, when the power and reign of it is broken: 1 Cor. 6:11, 'But ye are justified, but ye are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' So that as Christ came to take away the guilt of sin, so also the stain of it. He was manifested to subdue our love and delight in sin, and to turn our hearts towards God. We need a saviour to help us to repentance as well as to pardon. The loss of God's image was a part of our punishment; and the renovation of our natures is a sure, yea, a principal part of our deliverance by Christ. Now if you ask me, Which of these benefits goeth first? I answer—He regenerateth us that he may pardon us; for justified we are not till we believe, and pardoned we are not till we repent, which are acts of the new nature. And the scripture in many places setteth forth this order; I shall only allege one now: Titus 3:5–7, 'Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.'

Secondly, By what means he doth accomplish it. This must be considered both as to impetration and application. As to purchase and impetration, so it relateth to his own merit. As to application to us, and our reception of this double benefit, so it is done by convenient means.

1. As to the impetration, and meritorious purchase, that is done: Christ takes away sin by bearing it in his own person. The word in the text, and those which are commonly used in this matter, signify both to take away and carry away sin: John 1:29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away,' or beareth away, 'the sins of the world;' and Isa. 53:6, 'The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all.' I know there is some difficulty in explaining how sin was laid upon Christ, or what of sin it was that he took upon himself, that he might take it off from us. There are in sin four things—culpa macula, reatus, and poena. Not the fault, or criminal action, for that is committed by us, and cannot be transferred upon another. Not the stain; for Christ was holy and undefiled, and that implieth sin inherent. Not the guilt; for that is such an obligation to punishment as doth arise from the merit of some criminal action done by the party himself. It is true there was an obligation on Christ to suffer, and make satisfaction to his Father's justice; but this was by a voluntary susception, or an act of gracious condescension, not imposed upon him by constraint, without his consent, or against his will; none of this was due to him upon his own account. Punishment is a debt which lieth upon us, and is imposed upon us against our will; but Christ voluntarily submitted to bear the sins of many, Isa. 53:12; and therefore he is said 'to be made sin for us,' 2 Cor. 5:21. Sin there signifieth a punishment of sin, and also a sacrifice for sin, a sin-offering. Sometimes it signifieth a punishment: 'My sin is greater than can be borne;' that is, the punishment of my sin, Gen. 4:13; and ver. 7, 'Sin lieth at the door;' that is, punishment is at hand, or a sin-offering, or a sacrifice for sin. So the priests are said to eat the sins of the people, Hosea 4:8; they took care of nothing but to glut themselves with the portion of the sacrifices. So Rom. 8:3, 'By sin he condemned sin in the flesh;' and he is said to have 'borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;' that is, to bear the punishment. And he is said 'to bear our sins in his own body upon the tree,' 1 Peter 2:24, that is, to die and suffer for them.

This is the way and means by which Christ taketh away sin; and this is done so effectually once for all, that there needeth no repeating of it: Heb. 10:14, 'By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' As to the merit, there is nothing wanting; no other merit and sacrifice needeth to be offered to God.

2. As to the application, it is usually said that he taketh away the guilt of sin by his blood, and the filth of sin by his Spirit. But this is not so truly and accurately said; for his blood cleanseth us both from the guilt and stain of sin: 1 John 1:7, 'And the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin; and Rev. 1:5 'Who hath loved us, and washed us in his blood;' which relateth to the double washing mentioned, 1 Cor. 6:11. Both are the fruit of his death, by which he merited both remission and sanctification for us; and in the phrase of the text, 'he beareth it away.' This double benefit is made the fruit of both. Justification is a fruit of his bearing sin: Isa. 53:11, 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.' To bear the sin is to bear the punishment, the curse or wrath due to it. Now Christ beareth it so that it is taken from us. So sanctification is a fruit also of his bearing our iniquities: 1 Peter 1:24, 'He bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead unto sin, may be alive unto righteousness.' Christ came to heal our souls, to kill this love unto sin and delight in it. Therefore sanctification is the fruit of his cross as well as justification, and we must not so sever these benefits as that one should be given us by Christ, and the other by the Spirit. No; both are given us by Christ, but differently applied; first the pardon of sins by his word and new covenant, which is an act of oblivion, charter, or grant, whereby, upon certain terms, he maketh over this benefit to those who accept of it, 'even to as many as repent and believe in his name.' They are constituted just by the new covenant, which Christ will ratify and confirm by his own sentence at the day of judgment: Acts 3:19,

'Repent and be baptized, that your sins may be blotted out, when the days of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord.' When our pardon shall be pronounced by the judge's own mouth, then is the solemn condemning and justifying time. But for the present, by the gospel charter, sin is taken away as to the guilt as soon as we repent and believe: Acts 10:43, 'Through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins;' and Acts 19:39, 'By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.' Secondly, sanctification is wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ more and more, taking away sin, and weakening the love of it in our hearts; for the inner man is renewed day by day, and the cleansing and sanctifying work is perfected by degrees: 2 Cor. 7:1, 'Having therefore these precious promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;' even until sin be wholly gone; and this the Spirit effecteth by the duties and ordinances appointed to this very end. But the deadly blow is already given: Rom. 6:6, 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.'

Thirdly, Now I must come to the force of the argument. If Christ came to take away sin, then we should take care we do not live in sin.

1. This is expressly to contradict and frustrate the designed end of our Redeemer, and so to put him to shame, and to make his coming into the world in vain; for you seek to cherish that which he came to destroy. He would dissolve, untie, and loose those cords, and you knit them the faster, and so make void his undertaking. That this was the great end and scope of Christ's coming into the world, or being manifested in the flesh, is evident everywhere in scripture: John 1:29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the

world.' All the lambs which were offered to God in sacrifice were to take away sin; and this is the Lamb of God, that is, the true and real substance of all these figures. Now whether the allusion is to the lamb of the daily sacrifice, or the passover lamb, it is all one; the use for which he serveth is to expiate sin and abolish sin, and to bind men to God in a firmer tie of obedience. So Mat. 1:21, 'His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.' Not to ease them of their troubles only, but chiefly to destroy sin, with the mischievous effects of it. Not to save them in their sins, but to save them from their sins: Titus 2:14, 'He hath redeemed us from all iniquity.' Not only from the curse of the law, but from iniquity: Acts 3:26, 'God hath raised up his Son Jesus, and sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities.' Not from the Roman yoke, but from sin, which was a worse thralldom and captivity: Rom. 11:26, 'There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' Well, then, this being Christ's end, to sanctify us and free us from sin, we should not go about to disappoint him, for this is to set ourselves directly against him.

2. This is to slight the price of our redemption; for since with so much cost this work of taking away sin is carried on, for you to be indifferent whether sin be taken away or no is to disvalue and put a slight on the wisdom of God, and the wonderful condescension of his love in Christ, as if so much ado were made about a matter of nothing. This argument is urged by the apostle: 1 Peter 1:18, 19, 'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish.' To enhance the benefit, the greatness of the price is mentioned. Spiritual privileges, such as freedom from sin, should be more regarded by us, because they are so dearly bought. We many times neglect them for trifles, forfeit

them for trifles, lose that for gold and silver which cannot be bought for gold and silver. They that slight anything bought by Christ's blood are accounted in scripture to slight the blood of Christ itself; as the apostate who revolteth from Christ for the honours, pleasures, and profits of the world is said to 'trample his blood under foot, and to account it a common thing;' as suppose of a malefactor, or any common sufferer. Our respect to Christ's blood is judged according to the respect we have to the benefits purchased thereby. As, to instance in these two great benefits, the favour of God and the image of God. He that despiseth the favour of God, and doth not make it his business to get it and keep it, but preferreth corruptible things before it, hath no esteem of Christ's merit, and the great cost God hath been at in sending his own Son to take away sin, and recover a lost world into his grace and favour. So whosoever doth not esteem the image of God, which standeth in righteousness and true holiness, doth not esteem the blood of Christ, but hath lessening thoughts of the mystery of his incarnation and passion, as if his blood were shed for trifles.

3. It is in effect to renounce all benefit by Christ; for this way he saveth us, by taking away sin. The scripture everywhere insists upon redemption from sin as the only way to redemption from the curse. Sin brought in the curse, therefore Christ would go to the bottom and fountain-head, and cure us of sin, that he might take off the curse, and cure us: he doth it not only by the remission of sin, but by sanctifying and healing our natures. You seek but a half cure if you seek pardon only. You neglect and despise the chiefest part of his work; yea, you cannot have pardon unless you be sanctified; and so in effect you have no benefit by Christ at all. For this let me give you these reasons—

[1.] Sin is the great makebate between God and his creatures. The first breach was by sin, and still it continueth the distance: Isa. 59:2, 'Your iniquities have separated between me and you.' Therefore, till that be taken out of the way, there can be no perfect reconciliation, no communion between God and the creatures; though the sinner may be pardoned on God's terms, yet the purity of God is irreconcilable to sins; and therefore, if you live in sin and continue in sin, there can be no commerce between God and you.

[2.] Sin is the great disease of mankind, which disableth us for the service of our Creator. Therefore the Redeemer came to take away sin, for he considered God's interest as well as ours: Heb. 9:14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?' Christ's end was to fit us for God's use, and therefore to sanctify and free us from sin, that we might be in a capacity to love and please God again. This is the great work of the physician of souls.

[3.] The taking away of sin is a greater benefit than impunity, or the taking away of punishment, as sin in some sense is worse than damnation. Those means which have a more immediate connection with the last end are more noble than those which are more remote. The last end in respect to us is the vision and fruition of God, or to see him and be like him. Now the taking away of sin hath a nearer connection than pardon and impunity; they both concur. The sentence of death must be taken off, which maketh us incapable; but holiness is a part and an introduction into the blessed estate; it doth dispositively prepare us for it. On God's part the pleasing and glorifying of God is the last end. Now he is more pleased with us as holy than as pardoned, for his complacency and delight is in the reflection of his image on us; and he is more glorified in our passive

reception of his grace, but objectively more glorified in us in our being sanctified and purified, and made like him. Now this is to be minded, partly because men seek to get rid of trouble and temporal affliction, but not of sin. Pharaoh could say, 'Take away this plague;' but the church saith, 'Take away all iniquity,' Hosea 14:2. Those who are sensible of the true evil do mainly desire the taking away of sin; that is their chief care and solicitude how to get rid of it; that is it they complain of in the first place as their chief burden. This is necessary to be showed, partly because some, if they mind spiritual things, they mind only pardon of sin and ease of conscience, not to be freed from the power of sin; as if a man that had broken his leg should only desire to be eased of his smart, but not to have it set again. No; the true penitent is troubled with the stain as well as the guilt. Therefore the promise is suited: 1 John 1:9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This is a thorough cure.

[4.] There is no taking away guilt and punishment till we be sanctified, till sin itself be taken away. The one part of the cure maketh way for the other. First he doth regenerate that he may pardon. As we were first sinners and then obnoxious to punishment, so first holy and then pardoned, first brought into the kingdom of Christ and made subjects, then enjoy the privileges as subjects: Col. 1:13, 14, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' We are first turned to God: Acts 26:20, 'That they should repent, and turn to God.' We cannot have the one without the other. So you stick at the order, though you know no cause; so that you despise all benefit by Christ if you do not look after the taking away of sin.

[5.] It is a manifest contradiction to our faith to live in sin and to believe that Christ came to take away sin. I gather that from the words 'ye know.' Christians are supposed to know and believe the end of their redemption. If we know it, why do not we deal with him about it? Speculative knowledge and practical are frequently contradictory in the same man. We speak from our convictions, but we live from the innate dispositions and inclinations of our own hearts. Religion doth far more easily tip men's tongues, and run into their heads, than change their hearts. But though their knowledge and practice be contrary, yet thus far we have gained an argument, that their faith condemns their practice; and however we make a shift to match them, the faith of christians and the life of sin are in themselves incompatible. And they that know Christ came to take away sin, and yet live in sin, though they do not show the falsehood of their religion, yet they show their own insincerity in it; though they speak honourably of their Redeemer in words, yet in deeds they dislike him, and deny him, which is not to be charged upon the religion, but themselves, as an art is not disparaged because one that professeth it is a bungler.

[6.] The manner of Christ's taking away sin doth represent the heinousness of it, and is a sufficient warning to the world not to continue in it: 'For if these things were done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?' When we look upon sin through Satan's spectacles, and the cloud of our own passions and carnal affections, we make nothing of it; but in the agonies of Christ, and the sorrows and sufferings of his cross, we see the odiousness of it, that it may become more hateful to us. No less remedy would serve the turn than the agonies, bloodshed, and accursed death of the Son of God, to procure the pardon and destruction of sin. By this sin-offering and ransom for souls we may see what sin is. I showed you before the odiousness of sin, as it is a transgression of the law; that should

render it odious to you; but now I bring you to another argument. In Golgotha is the truest spectacle of sin, and how much God hateth it and loveth purity, that it may be seen in its proper colours. We make light of sin, but Christ found it not so light a matter to expiate it. Do but consider his fears and tears and strong cries when he stood in the place of sinners before God's tribunal, when God 'laid upon him the iniquities of us all.'

[7.] The acceptableness of his sacrifice still further helpeth us against sin: 'He came to take away sin,' and was accepted in what he did. Why? Christ's suffering death for the sin of man was the noblest piece of service, and the highest degree of obedience that ever could be performed to God by man or angels, there being in it so much love to God, pity to man, so much self-denial, so much humility and patience, and such a resignation of himself to God, who appointed him to be the Redeemer of the world. That which was eminent and upmost in it was obedience: Rom. 5:19, 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous;' Phil. 2:7, 8, 'He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' God doth not delight in the shedding of blood; you must not draw an ill picture of God in your minds. That which God looked after, and accepted was the eminent obedience of Christ in our nature; so his holy and righteous life, his painful and cursed death, make but one entire piece of obedience. The value of his merit was from the Godhead, but the formal reason of his merit was that Christ came to fulfil the will of God, 'by which will we are sanctified,' Heb. 10:9, 10. Now what a notable check is this to sin, and living impenitently in a course of disobedience unto God!

II. As Christ is propounded by way of pattern and example, 'In him was no sin.' I shall first speak a little of the innocency of Christ; secondly, show how he is set forth as a pattern and example of holiness unto us.

1. The scripture sets forth the Lord Jesus as an eminently holy and innocent person, that he had no sin, and did no sin. He had no sin, being by his miraculous conception exempted from the contagion of original sin: Luke 1:35, 'The Holy Ghost shall overshadow thee, and that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' Thus was our Redeemer fitted to be completely lovely in the eyes of God, and to be a pattern of holiness to all his followers. Not only free from actual sin, but as having a perfect holy nature in him; to show that we should not only prevent the outward act, but be free from the lust; and not only lop the branches of sin, but destroy the root by a thorough change of heart. Evil practices in us do not flow from a present temptation, but an evil nature; therefore we should get the divine nature. It is true it cannot be said of us that we have no sin, but yet the carnal nature should not be predominant in us; we should have another spirit. Secondly, He did no sin: 2 Peter 2:22, 'He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.' Christ did not in the least offend either God or man; as guilty of no transgression, so of no defect in his obedience or conformity to the law of God. It is true he was accused of sin, but who could convince him of sin? John 8:46, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' Though his name was buried under many calumnies and reproaches, yet none of his malicious adversaries could ever make it good that he was guilty of one sin. It is true he was tempted to sin, and the most venomous of Satan's fiery darts were shot at him, as you may see, Mat. 4; but though he was tempted in all other points like us, yet sin is excepted, Heb. 4:15. He was spotless and free from sin, there was nothing in him to befriend a temptation, John 14:30. This, Christians, is our

glorious Lord and chief; he had no sin, nor did no sin. When shall it be said so of us? We wait the time, but it will be so at length; ere Christ hath done with us it must be so.

2. That he is set forth as a pattern and example of holiness in our nature. Christ, that did open heaven by his merit, would also teach us the way thither, and teach us as a good teacher should, not only by his doctrine, but by his example. In moral things his example is to be imitated by us; these reasons enforce it—

[1.] The scriptures do everywhere call for this imitation and suitable walking: Phil. 2:5, 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Jesus;' Mat. 11:29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.' So 1 Peter 2:21, 'He hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps;' 1 John 2:6, 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought also himself to walk even as he walked.' I have brought these places to show how binding the example of Christ is.

[2.] That the Spirit is sent and given us to change us into his likeness: 2 Cor. 3:18, 'But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even by the same Spirit of the Lord.' We can no more follow his example than obey his doctrine without the same spirit. Here one part helpeth another; in living as he did, we come to be like him.

[3.] What advantage we have by this example. First, all example hath an alluring power and great force in moving; but this is an example of examples, not of equals or ordinary superiors, but of our glorious head and chief. Now this example should be more cogent. First, Because it is a perfect and unerring pattern. Christ's life is religion exemplified, a visible commentary on God's will and word: 2 Cor. 11:1, 'Be ye followers of me, as I am also of Christ.' Here you cannot err if you follow Christ's submission in his imitable examples and

actions. Secondly, It is an engaging pattern. Submission to any duty should make it lovely unto us: 'The disciple is not above his lord, nor the servant above his master;' John 13:14, 'If I then, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet.' Shall we decline to follow such a leader? Thirdly, It is an effectual pattern. Christ's steps drop sweetness; he hath left a blessing behind in all the way that he hath trodden before us, and sanctified it to us that we may follow it with comfort. Fourthly, It is a very encouraging pattern, for he sympathiseth with us in all our difficulties, having entended his own heart by experience: Heb. 2:18, 'For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted;' Heb. 4:15, 'For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' He knoweth the weaknesses and reluctances of nature in our hardest duties, and will surely pity and pardon our infirmities, and cover them with his own perfect righteousness.

[4.] Christ's example, and unsinning obedience to God, is a notable check to sin, and all the temptations, occasions, and inducements which lead to it. Nothing should be of such value with a christian as to hire him to commit wilful sin. Christ obeyed at the dearest rates and terms, and repented not of his engagement: John 13:1, 'Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.' A christian should have the same mind, and then it will be armour of proof against all temptations: 1 Peter 4:1, 'Arm yourselves with the same mind, for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.' In one place it is said, 'Let the same mind be in you;' in another, 'Arm yourselves with the same mind.' Temptations will have little force upon you when you resolve to obey God whatever it cost you. The frowns of the world, yea, life itself, will be as nothing. Secondly, Is it the pomp and pleasure and honour of the world wherewith the

flesh is gratified? Christ hath put a disgrace upon these things by his own choice. He was mean, poor, a man of sorrows; and shall we look to be maintained in pomp and pleasure? We cannot be poorer than Christ, and taste less of the world than he did. Thirdly, A love to our private interests hinders us from seeking the glory of God: Rom. 15:3, 'For even Christ pleased not himself;' John 12:27, 28, 'For this cause came I to this hour: Father, glorify thy name.' Every christian should be thus affected; let Christ dispose of him and his interests as it seemeth good to him.

SERMON IX

And ye know that he was manifested to take away sin, and in him was no sin.—1 JOHN 3:5.

FROM these words I have observed this doctrine, that those who are partakers of Christ should by no means allow themselves in a life or course of sin.

The uses now follow.

First, It bindeth our duty upon us.

Secondly, It assureth and sealeth our comfort when we are afflicted either with the guilt of sin or the power of sin.

First, It bindeth our duty upon us. They that do not break off a life of sin make Christ's coming in vain. But because men's interest will quicken them, therefore consider, Christ must take away sin, or else you must at last bear your own sin. But alas! that is a burden too heavy for us to bear; and miserable are they that have it lying upon their backs. It will not be light when we reckon with God. Sin to a

waking conscience is one of the heaviest burdens that ever was felt: Ps. 38:4, 'Mine iniquities are gone over my head, they are a burden too heavy for me.' You will find the little finger of sin heavier than the loins of any other sorrow. What a weight and pressure will it be to the soul! If you do but taste of this cup, it filleth you with trembling. If a spark of God's wrath light on the conscience, how terribly doth it scorch? You may know it in part by what Christ suffered. His soul was heavy unto death. If his soul were heavy to death, if he felt such strange agonies, sweat drops of blood, lost the actual sensible comforts of his Godhead, when he bore the burden of sin, oh, what shall every one of us do if we were to bear our own burden? You may also know it by the complaints of the saints, when the finger of God hath but touched them: Ps. 40:12, 'Mine iniquities take hold on me, therefore mine heart fainteth.' So Job complaineth, chap. 6:4, 'For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit;' the arrows of the Almighty, though shot out of Satan's bow; he permitted those venomous arrows to be shot at him. Yea, if ye will know what it is to bear sin, ask not only a tender conscience, but a troubled conscience. What disquiets of soul do wicked men feel when God sets sin home upon the conscience, and they are awakened! How uneasy have their hearts sat within them! Cain crieth out, 'My sin is greater than can be borne,' Gen. 4:13; 'And a wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. 28:13. What large offers do men make to get rid of their burden! 'Thousands of rams, rivers of oil, their first-born for the sin of their souls,' Micah 6:7, 8. Lastly, what it is to live and die in sin, the other world will show us. Christ useth no other expression to set forth the misery of the unbelieving Jews but this, that 'ye shall die in your sins,' John 8:21, 24. The threatenings of the word show their case is miserable enough. They fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. 10:31; and the worm that feedeth on them shall never die, and the fire wherein they are scorched is never quenched, Mark 9:44. Miserable, questionless, is

the state of them who bear their own burden and transgression. Now is it not better we should yield up ourselves to Christ, that he should take it away, and do the work of a Redeemer; and that we should not by our carelessness, negligence, and other sins, provoke the Lord to withhold his healing grace? Oh, let us be sensible of our burden. Will Christ ease a man of his burden which he feeleth not? A senseless sleepy soul hath no work for him to do. He inviteth the weary and heavy-laden, Mat. 11:28. Being sensible of our burden, let us implore his favour; he is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him than a father is to give a hungry child bread, Luke 11:13. Let us wait for his approaches in the diligent use of the means. Our duty is to lie at the pool for cure till the waters be stirred, John 5. His Spirit bloweth when and where he listeth, John 3:8; let us attend and obey his sanctifying motions, for we make ourselves incapable of this help by grieving the Spirit, Eph. 4:30. When we become so easy to the requests of sin and so deaf to his motions, he ceaseth to give us warning.

Again, let us consider his example. Will you be so unlike Christ? 'In him was no sin,' and you are all overspread with sin. He learned obedience by the things he suffered, Heb. 5:8, 9. He came to be the leader to everlasting happiness of an obeying people; his stamp and character should be upon all his followers. He is Christ, you are christians; and you should not be polluted members of his body. How will you look him in the face at the last day if you are so unlike him? 1 John 4:17, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is so are we in the world;' if we be holy as he, spotless as he. Of polluted sinners he will say, Are these my people? How will you then be ashamed? But it will give us a bold confidence when we have written after his copy. We shall never be like him in glory unless we be first like him in holiness. Christ will own his image. Boldness is opposite to fear and shame; we

shall neither be afraid nor ashamed at the day of judgment, if we bear his image upon us.

Secondly, It assureth and sealetth our comfort when we are afflicted either with the guilt or power of sin. To this end I shall discuss this argument more at large, and show you—

1. How sin is taken away—(1.) By justification; (2.) By sanctification.
2. What grounds we have to expect that Christ will do this for us.
3. What we must do that this effect may be accomplished in us.

First, How sin is taken away; but first we must determine what sin is. It is usually said there are in sin four things—culpa, reatus, pœna, macula, the blot or stain. The three first belong to sin as it respects the law; the last, as it respects the rectitude of human nature in innocency. The three first do more concern justification, the last sanctification.

[1.] Sin may be considered with respect to the law; for so the nature of it will best be found out; for we are told in the verse before the text, that 'sin is a transgression of the law.' In the law there is the precept and the sanction. The precept showeth what obedience is due from us to God; the sanction or threatening what punishment is due to us in a state of disobedience. Accordingly, in sin, with respect to the precept, there is culpa, the fault, or criminal action; with respect to the sanction or threatening, there are two things considerable—sentence and execution. As the commination importeth a sentence and respecteth a sentence, so there is guilt: 'Because sentence is not speedily executed,' Eccles. 8:11. The sentence is passed in the threatenings of the law, but execution is deferred. But with respect to execution it is called pœna, punishment.

[2.] Sin may be considered with respect to that rectitude of our heart and mind which God gave us at first to enable and incline us to keep his law; and so cometh in macula, the stain or blot, as it defaced God's image in our hearts: Rom 3:23, 'We have all sinned, and are come short of the glory of God;' meaning thereby his glorious image, which was lost and forfeited by the fall of Adam; and actually, because in the day of God's patience, as he continueth other forfeited mercies to us, so some relics of his image in that knowledge and conscience that is left. Therefore when we rebel against the light, and live in a course of heinous sin, we lose more and more of that goodness of human nature that is yet left, and bear the character of such as are given up to vile affections, Rom. 1:26; and Eph. 4:19, 'And being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work uncleanness with greediness.' God leaveth them to their own lusts without restraint, withholdeth the good Spirit that was wont to counsel and warn them. Macula, then, the blot or stain, is the inclination to sin again; as a brand that hath been once in the fire, is more apt to take fire again. This is the fruit of sin, and we pray God to free us from it yet more and more, by giving us more of his Spirit. It is the heaviest judgment that can befall us, to be given over to our own heart's counsels, Ps. 51:11; and David prayeth, after heinous sin, that God would not take his Holy Spirit from him.

But let us now consider how sin is taken away: therein what is to be done by Christ, and what is to be done by us, that this effect may be accomplished in us.

And first, as to what is to be done by Christ, and there how sin is taken away, both as to justification and sanctification.

1. With respect to justification; so that culpa, reatus, poena, the fault or criminal action, cannot be said to be taken away, but only it is

passed by as it is the foundation of our guilt, as it is a natural action; such a fact we did, or such a duty we omitted to do. As it is a faulty action, contrary to the law of God, Christ taketh it not away, for that were to disannul the law, or the obliging force and authority of it, as it is a rule of perpetual equity. The sins we have committed are sins still; therefore Christ came not to make the law less holy, or a fault to be no fault.

Let us come to the second thing, reatus, the guilt of sin. There is reatus culpæ, the guilt of sin; and reatus pœnæ, the guilt of punishment. Reatus culpæ, is the applying the law to the fact, and both to the person that hath committed it. Suppose that such a fact is a sin, because such a law forbiddeth it, and that I am guilty of such a transgression against the law of God; sure it is that this is not taken away; my faulty act is an offence, and I am an offender. We cannot be reputed never culpable, to have omitted any duty, or committed any sin; for the new covenant is not set up to make us innocent, but pardonable upon certain terms; and we come to God as to our offended governor, pleading not as innocent, but as sinners, desiring that, in the behalf of Christ, our sins may be forgiven to us. Then there is reatus pœnæ, which resulteth from the sanction of the law, binding us over to suffer such penalties as the law hath determined. Now this may be understood, quoad meritum, vel quoad eventum; according to the merit of the action, what the action in itself deserveth, which is condemnation to punishment. This Christ hath not taken away, and never intended to take away; for every sinful action is in se et merito operis damnabilis in itself, and by the desert of the work damnable; it doth deserve damnation; but quoad eventum, as to the event and effect: 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ,' Rom. 8:1. By the law of grace there is a discharge from the sentence of the law, and so from an obligation to punishment. This will be made clear and plain to you by considering

what is required of us in suing out our pardon. We must confess the sin: 1 John 1:9, 'If we confess and forsake our sins, he is just and righteous to forgive us our sins.' We must confess the guilt and desert of sin by God's righteous law: 1 Cor. 11:31, 'For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.' There must be a self-accusing and self-judging. In self-accusing we confess *reatum culpæ*; in self-judging we confess *reatum pœnæ*; without either of which there would not be that humiliation and brokenness of heart which the scripture calleth for, and is necessary for us in our entrance into the gospel covenant, and in our whole dealing with God about pardon. Or else these acts must be performed very perfunctorily, and not in reality and truth, if there be not a ground in the nature of the thing; for if the guilt of the fault were utterly dissolved, how can I heartily accuse myself of such and such sins before the Lord? or if the guilt of punishment were so far dissolved that my actions did not in their own nature, and by the righteous law of the Lord, deserve such condemnation and punishment, how could I broken-heartedly confess myself as deserving the greatest evil which his law hath threatened? Well, then, pardon is not a vacating the action, or making a thing not done which is done, or a denial of the fault as if it were no fault, nor an annulling of the desert of punishment, but a remission of the punishment itself due to us by the law of nature. This is that, then, which the law of grace or new covenant doth; every penitent believer is actually and really pardoned and discharged from the penalty, which the law of nature maketh his due debt: Mat. 6:12, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' Our debt is the obligation actually to suffer the full punishment of the law.

Now we will consider the third thing in sin, that is *pœna*, the punishment, and that is either temporal or eternal.

[1.] To begin with the last, eternal punishment. We are discharged from that as soon as we have an interest in Christ; for then our state is altered, and God doth pardon all our past sins, and make us heirs of eternal life: Gal. 3:13, 'Christ hath delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' The curse of the law may be taken actively or passively. Actively, it is nothing else but the sentence of the law, or of God the judge, condemning the transgressors of the law, and pronouncing them accursed: 'For cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. 3:10; which curse must not fall to the ground, but be taken off by some valuable compensation, that the honour of God's government may be secured, and that is done by Christ in being made a curse for us. Passively, it signifieth all those punishments which are, or have been, or shall be, or may be inflicted on the transgressors of the law; but chiefly the final curse, which is called 'Wrath to come,' from which Christ hath delivered us, 2 Thes. 1:10; which consists in two things, *pœna damni* and *pœna sensus*; the loss of God's eternal and blessed presence, and of the vision and fruition of him in glory: Mat. 25:41, 'Depart from me, ye cursed.' They are banished from the presence of the Lord, and cast into utter torment. The pain, when we fall immediately into the hands of an angry offended God: Heb. 10:31, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' Now sin is remitted to all them that take sanctuary at the Lord's grace. We deserve it, but he hath actually discharged us from it by his new covenant; such is his mercy and grace to us in Christ.

[2.] For the temporal punishment: while we have sin in us, and are making out our claim, and our sanctification is imperfect, God hath reserved a liberty for his corrective discipline, and to punish and chastise his children as it shall seem meet to his wisdom and justice: Ps. 89:32, 33, 'Then will I visit their transgression with a rod, and

their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' Now the temporal punishments are of two sorts—

(1.) Such afflictive evils as belong to his external government. It is hard to reckon up all of them to you, but the consummate evil is death, and the intermediate evils are of different kinds. It is said in one place, Deut. 29:20, 'All the curses, which are written in this book shall light upon him;' but in another, Deut. 28:61, 'Every curse which is not written in this book will the Lord bring upon thee,' whether written or not written, committed to record in the word, or dispensed in his providence. God hath reserved this liberty to himself, to correct his sinning children in what way he pleaseth. To reduce it in short; all good is from God, and all evil is from sin; and in pursuance of his eternal love, and to keep them from damnation, he will sometimes chastise them sorely: 1 Cor. 11:32, 'For when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world;' and Jer. 5:25, 'Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you;' Micah 1:5, 'For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel.' So Amos 3:2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.' A rod dipped in guilt may smart sorely upon the backs of God's people. God's displeasure is felt in their chastisements and judgments. Surely their author is God, their cause is sin, their end is repentance. We are in danger to despise the calamities which befall us and our families if we do not own this truth. It is true it turneth to good, but still it is a natural evil. If we were without sin, he would give us the good without the evil; you greatly mistake if you think there is no displeasure of God in all this.

(2.) There are certain afflictions which belong to his internal government, as when God manifesteth his displeasure to the party sinning by withdrawing his Spirit, the evil which David was so much afraid of: Ps. 51:10–12, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.' He desireth that God would not withdraw his grace, and the influence and comfort of his Holy Spirit, which he had so justly forfeited by his heinous sin. This is the sorest judgment on this side hell, to be deprived of inward communion with God. It is not a total separation from his favour and presence, but yet it is a degree of it; when God is strange to us, and suspendeth all the acts of his complacential love, leaving us dull and senseless, having no heart or life to anything that is spiritually good. And if we repent not, God may go further, and deliver us up to brutish lusts. The evils are greater or less, according to the rate of our sins or neglects of grace. These penal withdrawals of the Spirit should therefore be observed; for God showeth much of his pleasure or displeasure by giving or withholding the Spirit. His blessing and favour is showed this way: Prov. 1:23, 'Turn at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit to you.' But when God is refused, or neglected, or highly provoked, he then departs: Ps. 81:11, 12, 'Israel would none of me; so I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts.' This is more than all the calamities in the world.

2. In a way of sanctification. So Christ taketh away sin by giving us his Spirit, whereby the stains of our nature are cleansed. We are renewed in righteousness and holiness, according to his image: Eph. 4:24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' 2 Cor. 3:18, 'We beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into his image and likeness.'

Now concerning this way of taking away sin, let me observe four things—

[1.] That the Spirit is given us as the fruit of Christ's merit and sacrifice: Titus 3:5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;' Gal. 3:14, 'That the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles, through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.' He was the rock that was smitten by the rod of Moses: 1 Cor. 10:4, 'And they did all drink of the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.' If Christ were the rock, the water that flowed from the rock was the Spirit: John 4:14, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life;' John 7:38, 39, 'He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.' Well, then, upon the account of Christ's merit and sacrifice, God doth by the Spirit create a clean heart within us, and a right spirit, that we may live in obedience to his holy will.

[2.] That the gift of the Spirit is a kind of executive pardon, or a receiving the atonement; for this grace was forfeited by sin, as man brought death spiritual upon himself, as well as temporal and eternal, and we made the stain of sin to consist in the loss of the Spirit, or an inclination to sin again; therefore by sanctification, or the gift of the Spirit, is our pardon executed upon us or applied to us. As the withdrawing or withholding the Spirit is a great part of our punishment, so the gift of the Spirit is the great and first act of God's pardoning mercy, and a means to qualify us for the other parts of

God's pardon; for before men are converted, they are unpardoned: 'Turn you from all your transgressions, and iniquity shall not be your ruin,' Ezek. 18:30; and Isa. 55:7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Therefore till there be a turning from the life of sin to God by faith in Christ, there is no actual justification nor forgiveness.

[3.] That when repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is begun in us by the Spirit, there is promised a further degree of the Spirit to be given to us to dwell in us: Acts 2:38, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;' Prov. 1:23, 'Turn ye at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you:' Eph. 1:13, 'After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise;' and that for a durable use, to be in us a Spirit of sanctification and adoption. First, To be a Spirit of sanctification: 2 Thes. 2:13, 'God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification and belief of the truth.' As he converted us to God, so he is a 'Spirit of regeneration;' but as he doth further sanctify and cleanse us, and fit us for God, and make us amiable in his sight, so he is called a 'Spirit of sanctification,' properly so taken. It is by the Spirit dwelling in us that we mortify and subdue sin, Rom. 8:13. It is by the Spirit we exert and put forth all acts of holiness: Gal. 5:25, 'If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit;' and perform all duties to God in the Spirit. In short, the grace of the Spirit is given us to subdue the power of sin, and strengthen us against temptations, and that we may perfect holiness in the fear of God. Secondly, A Spirit of adoption: Gal. 4:6, 'Because ye are sons, he hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.' The same Spirit that maketh us holy possesseth us with a filial love of God, and a dependence on him; so

that childlike love, with a pleasing obedience and dependence, are the great effects and tokens of his dwelling in us as a Spirit of adoption.

[4.] This Spirit doth by degrees fit us for our everlasting estate: 2 Cor. 5:5, 'He that formeth us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit;' and therefore he must not be obstructed in his work, while he is preparing the heirs of promise aforehand unto glory, lest we lose not only the comfort of our future hopes, but be set back in the spiritual life, and so grieve the Holy Spirit of promise, who is both our sanctifier and comforter. Thus we have seen what Christ doth to take away sin; he freeth us from the everlasting miseries of the damned in hell, and will surely free us from the miseries of this life, if we be obedient, and hearken to his counsel. But in the midst of weaknesses our title to impunity and life eternal remaineth unreversed, though it be often obscured by our sin and folly.

Secondly, What must we do that sin may be thus taken away? For I observe, first, that those things which God worketh in us, and bestoweth upon us by his grace, he also requireth of us by his command: Ezek. 36:26, 'A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit I will put into you.' Yet Ezek. 18:31, 'Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit;' and in many other places. Sometimes he promiseth to turn us, sometimes he commandeth us to turn to him; sometimes he biddeth us to put away sin, sometimes he promiseth to take it away from us; in the one showing what is our duty, in the other where is our help; the one inferreth regeneration, which is the work of the Spirit, the other, repentance, which is our duty. Again, the death of Christ must be considered either as it respecteth God or us. As it respecteth God, it is a price paid to provoked justice to

purchase grace for us: Isa. 53:5, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.' As it respects us, it layeth an obligation upon us to do what is proper to us: 1 Peter 1:22, 'Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.'

What then are we to do?—(1.) As to our entrance into christianity; (2.) As to our recovery out of our falls.

1. As to our entrance into the grace of the gospel, there is required repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, Acts 20:21.

[1.] Repentance towards God, which consists in a serious purpose and willingness to let sin go, and a fixed resolution to love, serve, and please God, bewailing and bemoaning ourselves to God with grief and shame: Jer. 31:18, 'I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.'

[2.] Faith, or an acceptance of Christ as the only physician of our souls, who alone can cure and change our hearts; therefore, depending upon the universal offer of his grace, we are resolved to use the means which he hath appointed, that this cure may be wrought in us, Rom. 7:24, 25.

2. For our recovery out of particular falls, something is to be done with respect to those four things which are in sin.

[1.] As to the fault; be sure the fault be not continued, which is when the criminal acts are repeated. Relapses are very dangerous. A bone often broken in the same place is with the more difficulty set again. God's children are in danger of this before the breach be well made up, or the orifice of the wound well closed; as Lot doubleth his incest,

and Sampson goeth again and again to Delilah, Judges 16:2, 4. But wicked men sin frequently, as that king who would venture fifty after fifty; nothing will stop them in the way of their sins.

[2.] The guilt continueth till serious and solemn repentance, and suing out our pardon in the name of Christ: 1 John 1:9, 'If we confess and forsake our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Though a man should forbear the act, and never commit it more, yet unless retracted by serious remorse, and humbling ourselves before God, it avails not. This self-accusing is necessary, that we may know how much we are indebted to grace. Look into thy bill, what owest thou? Luke 7:47, 'She wept much, because she loved much; and she loved much, because much was forgiven her.' She had a greater measure of love to God and Christ. This self-judging is that which makes us the more earnest for pardon, Luke 18:13, and grief and shame in both, to strengthen us against relapses, that we may forsake the sins we confess: Prov. 28:13, 'He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy.' Slight acknowledgments do not mortify sin.

[3.] The blot or evil inclination to sin again. The evil influence of sin continueth till we mortify the root of it; it is not enough to mortify the sin, but we must pull out the core of the distemper before all will be well. Jonah repented of forsaking his call; yet, not mortifying the root, it brake forth again. He stood upon his credit, Jonah 4:1, 2. Christ trieth Peter: John 21:15, 'Lovest thou me more than these?' He had boasted before, 'Though all men forsake thee, I will never forsake thee,' Mat. 26:33. Though Peter had wept bitterly for the fact, yet Christ would try if the cause were removed. Peter is grown more modest now than to make any comparisons. We must use means to get the sinning disposition checked.

[4.] As to pœna, we must deprecate the eternal punishment as deserved by us, through the merit of our actions, still 'looking to Jesus, who hath delivered us from wrath to come.' But as to temporal evils which God may inflict upon us partly for the increase of our repentance, when we smart under the fruits of sin; for the evil of punishment doth much help us to judge of the evil of sin: Jer. 2:19, 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, that his fear is not in thee.' Partly to make us a warning to others, that they do not displease God as we have done: 2 Sam. 12:14, 'Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme; the child also that is born unto thee, shall surely die.' For these reasons, I say, God may punish us in our persons, or in our families and relations; wherefore we should humbly deprecate the judgment: Ps. 6:1, 'Lord, correct me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure.' That we may stop the judgment, and get it mitigated; or, if it come, we may patiently bear it with humble submission to the will of God: Micah 7:9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.' Not mourning as without hope, yet humbling ourselves, and putting our mouths in the dust.

Secondly, Now what grounds have we that Christ will do this for us?

1. Christ's office and undertaking, which he cannot possibly neglect; for this end was he manifested, and sent by the Father, to take away sin: Acts 5:31, 'God hath exalted him to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance and remission of sin.' Will he come in vain, and miss of his ends, or fail a serious soul that expecteth and waiteth for the benefit of his office? The generality of the christian world prize his memory but neglect his offices; but now, those that depend on his

name, and seek the fruits of his office, will he frustrate their expectations?

2. Consider how able he is to make good his offices, the merit of his humiliation, and the power of his exaltation. First, The merit of his humiliation: 1 Peter 1:18, 19, 'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversations received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' What a price hath he given for sanctifying and healing grace! which should not only heighten our esteem of the privilege, but increase our confidence. So Isa. 53:5, 'But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.' Such is the perfection and merit of his sacrifice, that we may depend upon it; he will not lose the fruit of his obedience and suffering. Secondly, The power of his exaltation: Acts 3:26, 'God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' Christ having paid our ransom, is gone to heaven, and hath full power to free us from sin, even all those that heartily consent to his terms.

3. He is willing to do this for you. Why else did he purchase it at so dear a rate? Why doth he offer it so freely in the promises of the gospel, and in that covenant which was made, stated, and sworn unto? Heb. 6:17, 18. Why else has he been so kind to all that are now in glory? There is none in heaven by the first covenant; all that are there come thither as justified and sanctified by Jesus Christ, and in the way of his pardoning grace. Surely he will not be strange to them that bemoan themselves. Consider his merciful nature, his appearing in our flesh, that we might have this confidence: Heb. 2:17, 'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren,

that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.' Well, then, Christ is willing if we are willing; there you will find it sticketh. He came to take away sin, but we will not give way to his Spirit; we are neither sensible of our burden, nor earnest for a cure, at least a sound cure. We seek ease and comfort more than the removing of the distemper.

SERMON X

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.—1 JOHN 3:6.

HERE is a double argument against an evil and sinful life, which is drawn from our union and communion with Christ by faith, or our knowledge of him. It is delivered in a copulate axiom, where there is a comparison of contraries. These two contrary parties are set forth in two propositions, the one asserting the property and disposition of the true believer, the other refuting the claim of the pretender. In the one an argument from union with Christ, the other from the knowledge of him.

1st Proposition, 'Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not;' where we have the subject and the predicate.

1. The subject, 'Abideth in him;' that is, he who is united to Christ by a true and lively faith, and perseveres in this union, abideth in him. In effect, whosoever is a true christian, for they are often expressed by this character: 1 John 2:6, 'He that abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.' This is the great duty pressed upon us: 1 John 2:27, 28, 'But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the

same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie; and even as he hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and may not be ashamed before him at his coming;' and John 15:4–7, 'Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, and ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' The phrase implieth intimacy and constancy.

[1.] Intimacy, or the near and close conjunction between Christ and a believer by faith.

[2.] Constancy, or an adherence to him, and dependence upon him on our part; for the union is not like to break on Christ's side; it is we that are pressed to abide in him, and that first because some are in Christ only by visible profession, and Christ will not cast them off if they do not fall off. Secondly, Because the elect must consider the danger of apostasy: 'Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.'

2. The predicate, 'sinneth not;' that is, according to the sense of our apostle, liveth not in a course of known sin, for otherwise there is no man that sinneth not, 1 Kings 8:46; and again, Eccles. 7:20, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.' Therefore the meaning of the apostle is, that for the main he endeavoureth after purity and holiness, and alloweth himself in no sin.

2d Proposition. There the order is inverted; for the predicate in the former proposition is the subject here: 'Whosoever sinneth,' that is, in the sense aforesaid, whosoever doth so give himself over to sin as not to endeavour purity and holiness, either deliberately and designedly doeth evil, or doth negligently oppose evil, leaveth the boat to the stream.

Then the predicate, 'Hath not seen him, nor known him;' that is, was never acquainted with Christ.

But yet, because the expressions are emphatical, I shall sift them a little more narrowly.

1. These expressions are used because all that are Christ's are bound to know him, and to be acquainted with him: John 10:11, 'I know my sheep, and am known of mine.' The knowledge is mutual; as he knoweth us, and taketh care of us, so we know him, and take care of his precepts.

2. That where sight and knowledge are effectual, it is a mighty check to sin: 3 John 11, 'He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.' Seeing and knowing are put for a lively faith: John 17:3, 'And this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;' John 6:40, 'He that seeth the Son and believeth on him bath eternal life.' So that the meaning is, he hath not a true and lively faith.

3. The expressions are fitly used to disprove the Gnostics, a sort of knowing people, who falsely did pretend a higher knowledge of Christ without newness of life; yea, though they wallowed in all manner of filthiness; therefore called Borborites; and one of their dogmas or opinions was, that a jewel in the dirt is a jewel still. Therefore their knowledge or science, falsely so called, is often

disproved in the writings of this apostle: 1 John 2:4, 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.'

4. The case in hand or under debate was about seeing Christ and being like him; but none shall see him hereafter but those that now in some sort see him and know him; for faith is the introduction to the beatifical vision. If we do not see him now, and know him now, we shall neither see him nor know him hereafter; but he that liveth an evil and sinful life hath not seen him, neither known him; and therefore such cannot expect to see him as he is, and be like him.

5. There is plainly in the words a negative gradation, where the greatest is denied first, as is frequent in scripture; as Ps. 121:4, 'Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep;' and Heb. 13:5, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' A man may leave the company of another whom he doth not forsake. So here, he hath neither seen Christ nor known him. Sight implieth clearness and certainty; and so the meaning is, that he is so far from seeing Christ, that he hath not known him. The points observable are two—

First, That whosoever is ingrafted into Christ by a true and lively faith, and hath union and communion with him, ought not nor cannot allow himself in any known sin.

Secondly, That no sight and knowledge of Christ is saving and effectual but what checketh sin and prevents living in a course of sin.

For the first point, that whosoever is ingrafted into Christ by a true and lively faith, and hath union and communion with him, ought not nor cannot allow himself in any known sin.

Here I shall examine—(1.) What is union and communion with Christ; (2.) This is to be considered as begun and as continued; (3.) Why this union with Christ is inconsistent with a sinful life.

I. For the first, certainly there is a near and close union between Christ and christians. To be in a thing is more than to be with it, by it, or about it, or to belong to it. Now we do not only belong to Christ, but are in him, John 17:26, and 2 Cor. 5:17, 'Whosoever is in Christ is a new creature.' What this union is, is a mystery, and hard to explain. When the apostle had told us that 'we are members of his body,' he addeth, Eph. 5:32, 'But this is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and his church.' The near conjunction between Christ and his people is one of the secrets in religion not slightly to be passed over, nor yet very curiously to be pryed into. The conjunction is real, but the way of it is spiritual and heavenly. Many things in religion are known by their effects rather than their nature. The thing is plain, but the manner hidden; and it is our business to seek after the blessed effects of it rather than accurately to study the nature of it. Yet it is profitable to see how it is brought about. Take it thus, confederation maketh way for union, union for fruition, and fruition for communion, and communion for familiarity between Christ and us or God and us by Christ.

1. Confederation is the foundation of all on our part; for entering into covenant with God is the ground of our union with him, or by Christ with him; for then God is our God, and we are his people, Jer. 24:7. Abraham is called the friend of God with respect to the covenant, James 2:23; and we have the right of sons by receiving Christ: John 1:12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God;' or accepting him as their Lord and Saviour. When the self-condemning sinner doth consent to the terms of the gospel, and heartily accept Christ to be to him what God hath appointed him

to be and do for poor sinners, he hath full allowance to call God Father, and is possessed of all the privileges which belong to his children.

2. Upon this followeth union with Christ, which, what it is, cometh now to be discussed. This certainly is not a mere relation to Christ. Union indeed giveth us a title to Christ and Christ a title to us: Cant. 2:16, 'I am my beloved's, and he is mine.' But yet there is somewhat more than a relation; for Christ is not only ours and we his, but he is in us and we in him. God is ours, and we are his, and God is in us, and we in God. It is represented not only by relative unions, but such as are real. Relative, as marriage; where man and wife by the marriage covenant are one flesh, Eph. 5:31, 32. But by the head and members, who make one body, not with respect to a political, but natural body: 1 Cor. 12:12, 'For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.' By vine and branches, who make but one tree: John 15:5, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' Again, it is compared to the food and substance that is nourished by it: John 6:56, 'He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.' As the meat is turned into the eater's substance, so they and Christ become one; and on feeding on Christ by faith, there followeth a mutual inhabitation. We dwell in him by constant dependence, and he abideth in us by constant influence and the quickening virtue of his Spirit. Nay, once more, it is compared with the mystery of the Trinity, and the union that is between the divine persons: 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, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one: I in them, and thou in me; that they may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as

thou hast loved me.' Which, though it cannot be understood to the full, yet at least it is more than a bare relation. The mystical union implieth somewhat more than a bare title. Yea, it is not only a notion of scripture, but a thing effected and wrought in us by the Spirit: 'By one Spirit we are baptized into one body,' 1 Cor. 12:13. Now the Spirit's works are real. What he doth, doth not infer a bare title and relation only; there is a presence of Christ in our hearts, and a vivifical influence caused by it.

3. Union maketh way for fruition and communion; for we being in Christ, receive all manner of blessings through him and from him: 1 Cor. 1:30, 'But of him ye are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;' that is, we receive all manner of benefits by virtue of our union with him. Certainly this union is not a dry notion; the comfort flowing thence is very real. More especially these benefits may be reduced to two—the favour of God, and the life of God. First, The favour of God; being reconciled to him by Christ, all our sins are pardoned: Eph. 1:14, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins.' So far that we are exempted from condemnation: Rom. 8:1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' And our persons are accepted: Eph. 1:6, 'He hath accepted us in the Beloved.' And we are put under the hopes of eternal life: Col. 1:27, 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' Oh, what a mercy is this, that we that could not think of God without horror, nor hear him named without trembling, nor pray to him with any comfort and confidence, have now by Christ pardon and absolution, and free access with assurance of welcome and audience, whenever we stand in need of him; and not only so, but may hopefully expect a child's portion in heaven, 'To be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Secondly, The life of God, which is begun in regeneration, and continued by the influence of his Spirit dwelling and working in our hearts, till it be

perfected in the life of glory: 1 John 5:12, 'He that hath the Son hath life.' Another kind of life than he had before; a living in God and to God, which is the noblest kind of living and being under the sun: Gal. 2:20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God;' and Christ is called our life, Col. 3:4. Christ is the root and fountain of it, the living head in whom all the members live, and from whom they receive strength and influence: John 14:19, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' We live by virtue of his life.

4. Communion and fruition maketh way for familiarity, for real intercourses of love between Christ and the soul. He dwelleth and walketh with us, and we with him; he directeth, counselleth, and quickeneth us, and we live in a holy subjection and obedience to the motions and inspirations of his grace: Ps. 27:8, 'Thou saidst, Seek ye my face: my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' He speaketh to believers by the excitations of his grace, and the infusion of spiritual comforts; and they to him in holy thoughts, prayers, and addresses unto his majesty. There is a constant interchange of donatives and duties, graces and services, prayers and blessings. More especially this familiarity and converse is either in solemn ordinances and duties of religion, or in a constant course of holiness. First, In solemn duties of religion. Prayer is called an access to God, Eph. 3:12; a spiritual acquaintance with him, Job 22:21. By constant commerce men settle into an acquaintance with one another. Secondly, In a constant course of holiness: 1 John 1:7, 'If we walk in the light as he is in the light, then have we fellowship one with another.' Conformity is the ground of communion. When we love what God loveth, and hate what he hateth, then he is with us, maintaining, directing, supporting us in all our ways; and we are with him, fearing, loving, pleasing, and serving him, and glorifying his name.

II. This union and communion is not only as it is begun, but continued. All union must have some bonds and ties by which it is effected; so this mystical spiritual union. The primary bands are those which begin the union, the secondary bands are those which continue it. The primary bands are the Spirit and faith, the secondary are the constant inhabitation and influence of the same Spirit with faith and other graces.

1. Primary. God maketh his first entry into us by his Spirit, for it is the Spirit which planteth us into the mystical body of Christ: 1 Cor. 12:13, 'For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.' For by the quickening virtue of this Spirit is faith wrought in us, and then the soul embraceth and receiveth Christ, and the nuptial knot is tied. Christ, as the most worthy, and as having the quickening and life-making power, beginneth with and taketh hold of us, that we may take hold of him: Phil. 3:12, 'That I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ.' The Spirit is the bond on Christ's part, and faith the principal bond on ours. And if you ask me what act it is? I answer—A broken-hearted and thankful acceptance of Christ, as God offereth him to us; that is the closing act on our part; then Christ and we join hands, when we resolve to cleave to him, and receive him as our Lord and Saviour, John 1:12.

2. For the continuance of this union, or our abiding in him, the Spirit is still necessary: 1 John 4:13, 'Hereby we know that God dwelleth in us, and we dwell in God, by the Spirit that he hath given us.' So is faith: Eph. 3:17, 'That he may dwell in your hearts by faith.' Faith is the means whereby Christ dwelleth in us by the Spirit, and it is also the means of our dwelling in him, and our adherence to him, and dependence upon him. We do not use Christ at a pinch, or as a pen to write with, and lay it down when we have done, but as the branches use the vine, and the members the head which they live by, and from

which when they are separated, they dry and wither. The heart must be habituated to a constant dependence on Christ. Well, then, the communion between Christ and his members is mutual, they being in him by faith and a steady dependence, and he in them by his Spirit as the root of their spiritual being; but then all other graces concur, and have their use and influence, as chiefly love, which causeth a delightful adhesion to him: Deut. 10:20, 'Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God, and to him shalt thou cleave.' We cleave to him by love, as we live in him by faith. As Jonathan's soul clave to David, or was knit to the soul of David, 1 Sam. 18:3, or Jacob's life was said to be bound up with the lad's life, because of his tender love to him, Gen. 44:30, so a believer's soul cleaveth to Christ; love cannot endure a separation: Rom. 8:35, 'What shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?' When we will not suffer ourselves, either by the allurements or terrors of the world, or solicitations of the flesh, or temptations of the devil, to be withdrawn from the profession of his name, or zeal for his truth, or the observance of his precepts, then are we said to abide in him. Well, then, love is necessary, only there is a difference between faith and love. Faith is the primary bond, and love the secondary; for the union is begun by faith, but continued by love. The first thing that tieth the nuptial knot is faith, or choosing and receiving Christ, and that which continueth it is conjugal loyalty and fidelity, or cleaving to Christ by love. Once more, the moral union of hearts is by love, the mystical by faith. Christ must dwell in us as the head and fountain of our life, but by love we embrace him as our friend whom we most dearly love and esteem. Lastly, by faith he dwelleth in us effectively, by his influence maintaining our life, and supplying us with all things necessary to godliness. By love he dwelleth in us objectively, by such a union as is between the object and the faculty. A star is in the eye that seeth it though it be ten thousands of miles distant; and what you think of is

in your minds, and what you desire is in your hearts. A scholar's mind is in his books when he is absent from them, and a wicked man's mind is in his sin when he is not practising it, Col. 1:21; and we usually say, the mind is not where it liveth, but where it loveth. When you fear God, your mind is with him; when you love God, your heart is with him. This is an objective union, but by faith there is a union of concretion and coalition. Christ is the stock, we the graft; we are said to be planted into him, Rom. 6:5, he being to us the fountain and principle of a spiritual life, or the root of vivifical influence.

III. Why they ought not nor cannot allow themselves in known sins.

1. They ought not, because a great obligation lieth upon them above others. The apostle telleth us: 1 John 2:6, 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought to walk as he walked.' Zanchy observeth it is not only utile, profitable to walk as he walked, but debitum, a necessary and express duty; they ought to walk. Why is it their duty more than others? First, Lest they displease Christ, and forfeit the sense of his love, who hath done so much for them as to reconcile them unto God, and hath taken them into his mystical body that he may give them his Holy Spirit. And after all this, shall we break his laws and grieve his Spirit? This is to abide in Christ against Christ, with Judas to kiss him and betray him. He is best pleased when we obey his laws rather than fondly esteem his name and memory: 1 John 5:3, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments;' John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;' John 15:10, 'If you keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love.' His is a love of bounty, ours a love of duty. This is the course that is best pleasing to him, and the ready way to continue the sense of his love to you. Secondly, Lest they dishonour Christ. What! when you are taken into the cabinet of Christ's mystical body, will you yet sin when you are one with God and Christ? 'Let them be

one with us,' John 17:21. You sin in God; and though you are planted into the good vine, yet bring forth the clusters of Sodom and grapes of Gomorrah. What! sin in Christ? He was holy and you profane, he was humble and you proud, he was meek and you contentious, charitable and you malicious; he did ever please God, and you do nothing but displease him. Christ came to make you saints, and you live like beasts for sensuality, yea, like devils for envy and hatred. Is this the fruit of your being in Christ and living in Christ? You entitle him to your disorders, and pollute his name thereby.

2. They cannot; union with Christ is inconsistent with a life of sin. The apostle saith, 'he sinneth not,' making it not only the duty, but the property of those that abide in Christ. It must needs be so, because otherwise the communion is but pretended. And it is on our parts interrupted and broken off.

[1.] It is but pretended: 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought to walk as he walked.' Otherwise you do but say it, it is not a reality. I prove it thus: Because where there is union and communion with Christ, there his Spirit is given to us, and they that have the Spirit of Christ will be like him; the Spirit worketh uniformly in head and members. Therefore if the same Spirit and life be in us that was in Christ, there must needs be a suitableness. If the spirit of the living creature be in the wheels, the wheels must move as the living creature moveth. Surely if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are not united to him, Rom. 8:9. If we have, we shall be such in the world as he was, have the same mind that he had, and walk as he walked. It was an old cheat of the heathens to pretend to secrecy with their gods when they would promote any design they had in hand. Many talk much of communion with God and Christ, but where are the fruits? So that unless we will delude ourselves with a bare notion and empty pretence, we must endeavour to find that it is in sincerity.

[2.] It is on our part interrupted and broken off; we do what in us lieth to provoke Christ to withdraw, for the condition of this communion is holiness: 1 John 1:6, 7, 'If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another;' John 14:23, 'If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' Conformity maketh way for communion, and likeness is the ground of love. Therefore, if we sin, if we walk contrary to God, we do not abide in him; for there is a contradiction, that we should abide in him, and yet break off from him as we do by wilful sin.

Use 1. Information; to teach us how to check sin by the remembrance of union and communion with Christ: 1 Cor. 6:15, 'Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.' The apostle is reasoning against fornication, and one main argument is taken from our union with Christ. The bodies of the faithful are a part of his mystical body, and therefore must be used with reverence, and possessed in sanctification and honour; not given to a harlot, but reserved for Christ. He proveth the argument on both parts, that he that is joined to a harlot maketh himself one with a harlot, and he that is joined to Christ becometh one with Christ. 'He that is joined to a harlot is one body;' i.e., that conjunction is carnal and bodily: 'But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;' i.e., this conjunction is holy and spiritual. And does not the argument hold good in other cases? Thus in gluttony and intemperance, they join us to something that is different from Christ, and debase the body which Christ hath made the temple of his Spirit. Nay, though the sin be not so gross, the argument is good still. Do we dwell in Christ, and make Christ's mystical body a shelter and sanctuary for sinners, and this great mystery of union with Christ

only a cover for a carnal heart and life? Surely every one that is in Christ hath greater obligations than others, being taken into such a nearness to God; and has greater helps, having received of his fulness, John 1:16. They have grace from him, as the branches have sap from the root.

Use 2. Are we true members of Christ's mystical body? 'Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.' Let us pause on this a little. Do not we sin daily? But unavoidable failings do not forfeit or break off our union and communion with him. What then?

1. There are many sins which are utterly inconsistent with true godliness; and if a child of God should fall into them in some rare, unusual case, he cannot know himself a child of God. Surely to live in them doth clearly decide the matter. As, for instance, consider these scriptures: 1 Cor. 6:9, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God;' Gal. 5:19–21, 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of these things I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God;' Eph. 5:6, 'Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.' These acts are so contrary to grace, that no debate needeth be about them; either they are not consistent with sincerity, or the knowledge of it.

2. They live not in any sin against knowledge and conscience; for indulgently and deliberately to run into any sin cloudeth the knowledge of our sincerity, for that argueth the reign of sin, and that is dangerous, Rom. 6:14; and therefore we need watchfulness, Eph. 5:15, and much prayer, Ps. 119:133.

3. When a child of God falleth through infirmity, he presently rallieth, and recovereth himself again: Jer. 8:4, 'Shall they fall, and not arise?' Surely to lie in the dirt argueth obstinacy.

4. They do not make a trade or course of sinning and repenting; for relapses against conscience are so grievous to a sincere heart, and repentance, if it be serious, doth so wound sin, that it cannot easily recover life and strength: Ps. 51:6, 'In the hidden part shalt thou make me to know wisdom.'

5. It neither concerneth the duty nor peace of the children of God to omit the due care of their hearts and lives when they come near a state of death, and thereby render their condition questionable, lest they seem to come short, Heb. 4:1; and Heb. 12:13, 'Make straight steps to your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.' Anything that would turn us out of the course of our obedience to God should be striven against and watched against till we prevail. It will be a doubt, if not a wound and maim, to our sincerity: therefore, if we be not known by avoiding sin, let us be known by striving against it, and prevailing in some measure.

Use 3. Is direction. If he that abideth in Christ sinneth not, then let us abide in Christ, seek after union and communion with him, because there is our security. First, If we abide with Christ, he will abide with us. There is no danger of breaking on his part, therefore we are so often called upon to abide in him, John 17. Secondly, Apart from him we can do nothing, John 15:5. Thirdly, In him you may

bring forth fruit, John 15:8. Fourthly, In abiding in him we have much joy and comfort: John 15:10, 11, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abode in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and your joy might be full.' The Lord's supper was appointed to represent and seal this union: 1 Cor. 10:16, it is called, 'The cup of blessing,' &c. There we come to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and to be joined to the Lord so as to become one spirit. Since Christ calleth the bread his body and the wine his blood, these outward things are signs to put you in remembrance, and seals to put you in possession of Christ, whose flesh you eat and blood you drink, that you may live by him; not with your mouth, that were to think carnally of heavenly mysteries; as Nicodemus, when told of being born again, thought that a man must enter the second time into his mother's womb; or as the Capernaïtes said, John 6:59. 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' No; the eating and drinking must be answerable to the hungering and thirsting; now that is not carnal, but spiritual. We must solemnly receive Christ into our heart, that he may dwell there. Oh, then, own Christ as your Lord, devote yourselves to him: 2 Chron. 30:8, 'Yield yourselves to the Lord.' Heartily, sincerely resolve to be Christ's, and he will be yours.

2d Point. That no sight and knowledge of Christ is saving and effectual but what checketh sin and hindereth the life of it.

There is a twofold knowledge—speculative and practical.

1. Knowledge speculative, which is nothing else but a naked map and model of divine truths. The Jew had his form of knowledge in the law, Rom. 2:20. So the speculative christian has a form of godliness,

2 Tim. 3:5, a scheme and delineation of gospel truths. There are different degrees of this.

[1.] A memorative knowledge, such as children have when the field of memory is planted with the seed of christian doctrine. Children are taught to speak of divine mysteries by rote, such as God, Christ, heaven, hell, sin, righteousness; as the philosopher observed of young men, that they learned the mathematics with all their hearts and minds, but moral things they only said them over, rather rehearsed and said after another, than believed them. Children answer you the words of the catechism, but they heed not what they say, nor understand not whereof they affirm; but it is good that children should learn divine things, and after be further instructed in the nature and certainty of them, Luke 1:5.

[2.] Another degree above this is opinionative knowledge, when they do not only charge their memories, but exercise a kind of conscience and judgment about these things, so as to be orthodox and right in opinion, and to bustle and contend about that way of religion wherein they have been educated, or that which suiteth best with their fancies and interests; yet wisdom entereth not upon the heart, Prov. 2:10. This maketh men hot disputers, but cold practisers of godliness; they have a religion to talk of, but not to live by; they may know much of religion in the notion, and it may be more accurately than the serious christian. As a vintner's cellar may be better stored with wines than a nobleman's, but he hath them for sale and not for use, so these may form their notions into better order than the serious godly man. These are useful in the church, as a dead post may support a living tree, or as negroes and slaves dig in the mines to bring up gold to others. But alas! with all their learning they may be thrust into hell: 'They received not the love of the truth, whereby they might be saved.'

[3.] There is a higher degree of speculative knowledge beyond this, and that is, when men have some kind of touch upon their hearts, but it is too slender and insufficient to break their lusts or to stand out against temptations.

Use. Well, then, let us seek after this saving knowledge, to see and know Christ as we ought to know and see him, with a renewing, transforming knowledge: Eph. 3:10, 'And that ye put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.' It is but hearsay knowledge. Think every notion lost that doth not invite your minds to the saving knowledge of Christ, and secure your practice against error and temptations; therefore beg the Spirit; he teacheth us to know things so as to have them impressed upon our hearts: Eph. 4:21, 22, 'If so be ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.'

SERMON XI

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.—1 JOHN 3:7.

THE apostle had hitherto reasoned against the committing of sin; he now persuadeth them to the contrary, the practice of holiness. As there is a positive part in religion as well as a privative, so a bare abstinence from sin is not enough, but we must also exercise ourselves unto godliness, or walk in newness of life: 'Little children, let no man deceive you,' &c.

In the whole verse observe these things—

1. A caution against error.

2. A description of a righteous man. First, He is described by his own practice; secondly, By his conformity to Christ: 'Even as he is righteous.'

Let me open these branches.

1. The caution against error, 'Little children, let no man deceive you;' this is premised, because such mistakes are suited to the corrupt heart of man: we may be deceived ourselves, or suffer ourselves to be deceived by others.

[1.] That we may not deceive ourselves; frequent warnings are given against this deceit: 1 Cor. 6:9, 'Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God;' 1 Cor. 15:33, 'Be not deceived; evil communication corrupts good manners: awake to righteousness and sin not.' So Gal. 6:7, 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for what a man soweth, that shall he reap.' Once more, Eph. 5:6, 'Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.'

[2.] Not deceived by others. There were false teachers in the apostle's days, that said a man might be righteous and yet live in sin. Simon Magus taught that bare profession of faith, without a strict life, was enough to salvation, which poison was also sucked up by others, the Basilides and the Gnostics.

2. The description of a righteous man; he is described—(1.) By his ordinary practice; (2.) By his conformity to Christ.

First, By his ordinary practice: 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous.' In which proposition there is—

1. The subject, 'He that doeth righteousness.' This needeth to be explained, because many boasted that they were righteous who yet did not live righteously.

Here I shall inquire—(1.) What is righteousness; (2.) What it is to do righteousness.

[1.] What is righteousness? Righteousness is sometimes taken strictly for that grace which inclineth us to perform our duty to man, with all the acts and duties thereunto belonging. So Eph. 4:24, 'The new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness;' where righteousness referreth to man, holiness to God: Luke 1:75, 'In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life;' where there is the same reference. So 1 Tim. 6:11, 'Follow after righteousness, godliness.' Which words comprise the duties of the first and second table. Sometimes more largely for all newness of life, or all those holy actions which are required of a christian. So Mat. 3:15, 'It behoveth me to fulfil all righteousness;' that is, whatsoever is required by the law or commanded by God. In this large sense it is taken here.

[2.] What it is to do righteousness. It is to love righteousness, or to carry on a constant tenor of all holy and righteous actions; for to do righteousness is opposed to committing sin; therefore it supposeth us to lead a godly and righteous life, or that we exercise ourselves unto and be fruitful in all good works.

2. For the predicate, 'Is righteous.' Here we must inquire in what notion the term 'righteousness' is used; for a man may be said to be righteous in a twofold respect—either with respect to sanctification

or justification. In the first sense it is taken morally for an upright disposition of heart and mind; in the second sense, legally and judicially, for a state of acceptation, or the ground of a plea before the tribunal of God.

[1.] The righteousness of sanctification, 'He is righteous;' that is, a holy and upright man: 1 Peter 3:12, 'The eyes of the Lord are towards the righteous;' 1 Peter 4:18, 'If the righteous be scarcely saved;' 2 Peter 2:7, 8, 'He delivered righteous Lot;' and again, 'that righteous man vexed his righteous soul.'

[2.] Righteousness is taken for a forensical or court righteousness, as it belongeth to justification: Rom. 5:19, 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous;' that is, deemed as such, counted as such, rewarded as such. Now the question is, which of these senses is to be chosen here. For the first, the case is clear, that a holy and upright man is known by his holy and righteous ways and actions, or he showeth the truth of his regeneration by his godly life, 1 John 2:29. In the close of the former chapter, which is the beginning of this whole discourse, the apostle said, 'If ye know that he is righteous; every man that doeth righteousness is born of him.' But for the second sense, as the term 'righteous' respecteth justification, I cannot see why it should be excluded; for the sanctified are also justified; and what a respect and subordination there is of the moral righteousness to the judicial, we shall see by and by. Certainly these are deemed by God, accepted by God, rewarded by God as righteous. Mark but these two scriptures, Luke 1:6, where it is said of Zachary and Elizabeth, that 'they were both righteous before God, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless.' Mark, that they having their conversations without blame, they were righteous, and righteous before God. So Acts 10:35, 'He that feareth

God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.' There the righteousness is one ground of acceptation with God.

Secondly, By his conformity to Christ, 'As he was righteous.' He was righteous in his nature and practice, for he obeyed God perfectly, and ever did the things that pleased God: Heb. 1:9, 'Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; and therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' Christ's doing righteousness is said to be righteous. Now when christians do so, they resemble Christ, and are like him, though, not equal with him; so are the children of God, who are adopted into his family, which is the thing the context laboureth to prove.

Doct. That he, and he only, who doeth righteousness, is the christian righteous man, and as such is accepted by God.

I shall prove it by the two former acceptations of righteousness.

I. In the way of sanctification, he, and he only, is the upright gospel christian that doeth righteousness.

1. Because this is the great end wherefore God changeth his heart, and infuseth grace into him; not barely that he may have it, but use it, and live by it; it is a talent, the choicest talent wherewith the sons of men are intrusted: Gal. 5:25, 'If ye live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit.' Surely where there is life there must be actions suitable; and if there be a spiritual life, there must be a spiritual walking: this gift is not given in vain. When Christ speaketh of giving the Spirit, John 4:14, he saith, that 'the water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up into everlasting life;' and John 7:38, 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' The Spirit is given in order to action. A christian is not to keep his graces to himself, to fold up his talent in a napkin; this water is a living spring, always springing up;

this conduit is so filled that it must burst or flow forth; and the grace that is in his heart is always to be in act and exercise. The apostle telleth us, Rom. 4:4, that we are raised up with Christ by the mighty power of God, that we should walk in newness of life; not to lie idle and still, but to walk, and to walk as becometh those who have a new and holy nature.

2. Grace is of such an operative and vigorous nature, that where it is really planted and rooted, it cannot be idle in the soul, but will be breaking out into action; as sin is not a sluggish idle quality, but always working and warring: 'sin wrought in me all manner of concupiscence,' saith the apostle; 'And I see a law in my members, warring against a law in my mind,' Rom. 7:23. The habit of sin, though it be not peccatum actuale, yet it is actuosum. So grace puts forth suitable operations: 2 Peter 1:8, 'If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall not be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Where graces are in any good degree of life and strength, there a christian cannot be lazy, but his conversation will be fruitful. Grace will not let a man alone; he shall have no rest and quiet within himself unless he both busy and employ himself for God. Faith will show itself in an open and free profession of Christ, both in word and deed: 2 Cor. 4:12, 'We having the same spirit of faith, believe, and therefore speak.' A spirit of faith cannot be suppressed, neither can the work of faith, 1 Thes. 1:3. Hope is a lively hope, 1 Peter 1:3; and love hath a constraining force and efficacy, 2 Cor. 5:14. Men cannot hide their love, no more than fire can be hidden. Graces suffer a kind of imperfection till they produce their consummate act: 1 John 2:5, 'But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.' Well, then, a christian is not to be valued by dead and useless habits, but operative graces. In vain do men persuade themselves that they have righteousness buried and sown in their hearts, when

unrighteousness wholly possesseth their hands, minds, eyes, and floweth forth into their actions.

3. We have no way to distinguish ourselves from hypocrites but by performing actions which become real converts. When John suspected the scribes and pharisees, on their submitting to his baptism, he presseth them to evidence their sincerity by a suitable conversation: Mat. 3:8, 'Bring forth fruits meet for repentance;' and the apostle persuadeth the gentiles to repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance, Acts 26:20. Call them works, or call them fruits, they must be such acts as become the change wrought in us. The new heart is known by newness of conversation, and a change of heart by a change of life. Repentance is an inward thing, but the fruits appear outwardly in our actions; the sap is not seen, but the apples appear. Our dedication is known by our use, our choice by our course, and our resolution by our practice. Acts discover the habits, and what we do constantly, frequently, easily, showeth the temper of the heart. It is true God chiefly requireth truth in the inward parts, without which all external holiness is but a mere show, and loathsome to him; yet none should flatter themselves with that holiness which they imagine to have within, unless the fruits of it appear without, and they labour to manifest it in their daily carriage and course of life. If a candle in a lanthorn be lighted, it will not be confined there, but shine forth; so if there be grace in the heart, it must show itself by all holy conversation and godliness. We judge of others by their external works, for the tree is known by its fruits, and we judge of ourselves by internal and external works together. If there be a principle of grace within, there will be a love of God, and a hatred of evil, and a delight in holiness, and a deep sense of the world to come; and all this be discovered in a holy and heavenly conversation without. Then this completeth the evidence, and breedeth in us the testimony of a good conscience: 2 Cor. 1:12, 'For

our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world;' Heb. 13:18, 'For we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.' If a man would make a judgment of his own estate, he must take a view of his obedience and daily carriage towards God. If there be a course of close walking, and the main endeavour be to please him, we may take comfort in it, and it will make up an evidence in the court of conscience.

4. It is for the honour of God that those which live by him should live to him, and, when he hath formed a holy and righteous people for himself, they should glorify him by doing righteousness. We are as new creatures, to bring forth fruit unto God: John 15:8, 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;' Ps. 11:7, 'For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright;' 2 Thes. 1:11, 12, 'Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.' By internal grace we approve ourselves unto God, by external holiness we glorify him in the world. With respect to God's approbation we must be righteous; with respect to God's honour we must do righteousness, that so we may bring him into request in the world. He is concerned much in our answerable or unanswerable walking.

II. He that doeth righteousness is righteous with the righteousness of justification. This seemeth the harder and more difficult task, but to a considering and unbiassed mind all is easy, and to him that will be determined in his opinions by the word of God or the gospel of our Lord. Therefore, for more distinctness' sake, I shall show you—(1.) What is the righteousness of justification; (2.) What respect the holy life hath to it.

First, What is the righteousness of justification? It may be interpreted either with respect to the precept or sanction of the law.

1. With respect to the precept of the law, and so the legal righteousness is opposite to *realus culpæ*, to the fault; and so, if it were possible, we may say that he that fulfilleth the law is righteous; that is, he is not faulty; but alas! we are all sinners. But, however, suppose it for method's sake, as the apostle doth; so it is said, Rom. 2:13, 'Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.' That is a truth if it is rightly understood; but then the law may be fulfilled either in the sense of the covenant of works or in the sense of the covenant of grace.

[1.] In the sense of the covenant of works. A man that exactly fulfilleth the law in every point and tittle, without the least alteration and swerving, is righteous; but this is impossible to the fallen creature: 'Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight,' Rom. 3:20; and Gal. 3:21, 22, 'If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.' But—

[2.] With respect to the law of grace. May not the precept be said to be obeyed, not perfectly, but sincerely? And if so, what hindereth but he that doeth righteousness is righteous? that is, evangelically justified and accepted by God, as one that hath kept the law of grace. I know no incongruity in this; yea, I see an absolute scriptural certainty in this doctrine, if the world would receive it, and determine their opinions by the simplicity of the gospel, rather than by the dictates of any faction which the late janglings of too many in Christendom have produced. Indeed, I know no other way how to

reconcile the two apostles Paul and James. Paul saith, 'We are justified by faith, without the works of the law;' and James, that 'we are justified by works, and not by faith only.' Justification hath respect to some accusation. Now, as there is a twofold law, there is a twofold accusation, and so by consequence a twofold justification—by the law of works and the law of grace. As we are accused as breakers of the law of works, that is, as sinners, obnoxious to the wrath of God, they plead Christ's satisfaction as our righteousness apprehended and applied by faith, not by works of our own; but as we are accused as breakers of the law of grace, that is, as rejecters or neglecters at least of Christ and his renewing and reconciling grace, we are approved, accepted as righteous, by producing our faith and new obedience, for thereby we prove it to be a false charge; and though we cannot plead as innocent, yet we may plead as sincere; and so it is said, Mat. 12:37, 'By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned;' and James 2:12, 'So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' But I have interposed my judgment too soon, before I have further cleared up matters: all that I desire now is this, that this notion may be marked. Righteousness consists in keeping the law, for the law of grace may be kept, and some plea must be made thence, or we are undone for ever.

2. Righteousness may be interpreted with respect to the sanction, which is twofold—the threatening and the promise.

[1.] With respect to the threatening, and so righteousness is opposite to the *realus pœnæ*, the guilt or obligation to punishment; and so a man is said to be righteous when he is freed from the external punishment threatened by God, and due to him as a breaker of the law. To this end observe that place, Rom. 1:16–18, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for therein is the righteousness of God

revealed from faith to faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' Mark, there are two revelations which are opposed to each other; there is the law covenant, in which the wrath of God is revealed, and the gospel covenant, in which the righteousness of God is revealed, or the way to escape that wrath. In the law, the wrath of God is revealed and denounced against those that have broken it; and broken it we have in every table by our ungodliness and unrighteousness, yea, in every point and tittle; yet the law of grace or of faith hath appointed us a remedy in Christ how we may be righteous, and freed from this wrath and vengeance by him, by the righteousness of God, or of Christ revealed by faith. And more particularly in the commination and threatening two things are considerable—the sentence and execution.

(1.) As the commination importeth a sentence or respects a sentence, so we are justified or made righteous when we are not liable to condemnation: Rom. 5:18, 'As by the offence of one judgment came upon all to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all to the justification of life.' Now who are made partakers of this privilege? Surely the penitent believer; that is his first qualification: John 5:24, 'He that believeth in Christ shall not come into condemnation.' And new obedience is also considered: Rom. 8:1, 'There is no condemnation to them' who live a holy and godly life, 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' so that it may be said, he that doeth righteousness is righteous, hath an interest in Christ, is not subject to condemnation.

(2.) As the commination respects execution, so to be justified or made righteous is not to be liable to punishment, or not to be punished; so the apostle saith, Rom. 5:9, 'Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.' The penalty is

remitted and taken off. Thus is the godly upright man justified also, for in the last judgment it is said, Mat. 25:46, 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.' And the righteous there are such as do righteousness, or are fruitful in good works; these are not punished, but rewarded.

[2.] We come now to the other part of the sanction or the promise; and so our judicial and legal righteousness, with respect to it, is nothing but our right to the reward, gift, or benefit, founded not in any merit of our own, but only in the free gift of Christ; partly in the merit of another, the free gift of God, and the merit of Jesus Christ. So they are said to be justified and made righteous who have a title to eternal life: Rom. 5:18, 'By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all to the justification of life;' Titus 3:7, 'Being justified by his grace, we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' Now who have a right but they that do righteousness, and therefore are righteous in the justifying sense? Rev. 22:14, 'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.' The same right that believers have to their adoption, John 1:12. Well, then, the privilege of them that do righteousness is not inconsiderable, or a matter of small moment; our whole welfare and happiness dependeth on it, our freedom from the curse and title to glory. It is such a righteousness as exempts them from the present condemnation; and at length, when others are doomed to everlasting destruction, they shall be accepted to eternal life.

Secondly, What respect hath holiness to this being righteous?

1. All will grant it to be a predication of the adjunct concerning the subject, or a sign concerning the signation of the thing signed. It is if any man work righteousness, it is a sign and evidence that he is righteous, that he is one of those who are justified and accepted of

God; and so they think the justified man is described by his inseparable property, the practice of holiness, or doing righteousness. I refuse not this, for this includeth all the justified, and excludeth all the workers of iniquity; and this well followed will engage us more to the fear of God and working of righteousness than we usually mind and regard; for would you know that you are exempted from condemnation, and appointed unto life by Christ? You can never be clear in it till your faith be warranted by your holiness. It is said in one place, that 'God hath no pleasure in the workers of iniquity,' Ps. 55:5, and in another, Ps. 11:7, 'The righteous Lord loveth the righteous.' These are those he approveth, accepteth, delighteth in, and, finally, whom he will take home to himself.

2. But there is more than a sign; it is a condition of our right and interest in Christ's righteousness, and the consequent benefits thereof. Our qualification is a part of our plea that we are sound believers. To understand this, let me tell you that the righteousness of the new covenant is either supreme and chief, and that is the righteousness of Christ, or secondary and subordinate, the righteousness of faith and obedience. As to the first, a right faith; as to the second, a continued obedience is required.

[1.] The supreme principal righteousness, by virtue of which we are reconciled to God, is Christ's obedience unto death: Rom. 5:19, 'By the obedience of one many shall be made righteous.' This is our great righteousness, by which the wrath of God is appeased, his justice satisfied, by the merit of which all the blessings of the new covenant are secured to us.

[2.] The subordinate righteousness, or the condition by which we get an interest in and right to this supreme righteousness, is faith and new obedience; but for a distinct use, as to our first entrance into the

covenant of God, faith is required: Rom. 4:3, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.' As to our continuance in this blessed privilege, new obedience is required; for it is said, 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous.' Thereby his interest in Christ is confirmed and continued. Our first and supreme righteousness consisteth in the pardon of all our sins for Christ's sake: Rom. 3:23, 'Justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ;' and we are 'accepted in the Beloved,' Eph. 1:6, and by him have a right to impunity and glory, 1 Thes. 1:9, 10. Our second and subordinate righteousness is in having the true conditions of pardon and life. In the first sense, Christ's righteousness is the only ground of our acceptance with God. Faith, repentance, and new obedience is not the least part of it. But in the second, believing, repenting, obeying, is our righteousness in their several respective ways, namely, that the righteousness of Christ may be ours, and continue ours.

Use 1. Is the caution of the text, 'Let no man deceive you;' nor do you deceive yourselves in point of sin or righteousness.

First, Sin. As we are pronely bent to commit sin, so we are apt to seduce our hearts by many pretences to continue in sin. The usual deceits are these three: that sin is no sin; that they shall escape well enough though they sin; or that their sins are but petty slips or human infirmities.

1. Though they live vainly and loosely, yet they think they do not sin. To convince these, we must bring them to consider their rule, their end, their pattern. Their rule is the law or word of God. What! live in a state of vanity under this strict rule? and have you no sins to repent of and reform? Surely men are strangers to the law of God, otherwise they would have more knowledge of sin. David having admired first

the beauty of the sun, the light of the visible world, then the purity and perfection of the law, which is the light of the intellectual world, concludeth all with this prayer or meditation, Ps. 19:12, 'Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret sins.' But slight and careless people, that the ell may be no longer than the cloth, make a short exposition of the law, that they may have a large opinion of their own righteousness, and so live a carnal life, without check or restraint. So to consider their great end, as a christian should do nothing inconsistent with it, so not impertinent to it; for so far we are out of the way. Consider your words and actions, what do they? Alas! we fill up our lives with actions that are a mere diversion from our great end; this will make them serious, for a man's end should be known all the way. Then for his pattern, 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.' Is this life you lead like the life of Christ? If we do not consider our pattern, no wonder we are vain and light. The efficacy cometh from beholding, 2 Cor. 3:18, or 'looking unto Jesus,' Heb. 12:2.

2. That they shall escape the judgment though they live in sin. Though it be as plain as the sunshine at noon-day, that they that live in gross sins are in a state of damnation, yet men are apt to delude their own souls, thinking they may be saved, notwithstanding their profane life, with a little general profession of Christ, and a formal invocation of his name, though their lives tend to hell. Oh, no! 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity,' 2 Tim. 2:19. The causes of this presumption are non-attendance to or non-application of scripture threatenings: 'No man saith, What have I done?' Jer. 8:6. Their abuse of God's patience, and transforming him into an idol of their own fancy: Ps. 50:21, 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.' No; he is a holy and jealous God. Do not say he will not be so strict and severe. It is an abuse of God's mercy to say his patience suffereth all things, and his mercy

will be no let to his judgment: Ps. 68:19–21, 'But our God is a God of salvation, yea, our God is a God of salvation. But he will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of all them that go on in their iniquities.' Christ came to save sinners from their sins, but not in their sins, Mat. 1:21. So they abuse the doctrine of justification. Oh, Christ is their justification. Ay! but you must mind the subordinate righteousness by which the supreme righteousness is imputed to you; and where Christ is made unto us righteousness, he is also made to you sanctification, 1 Cor. 1:30. They believe in him, but true faith is not consistent with an evil and sinful life, for it purifieth the heart, Acts 15:9. These are some of the spiders' webs whereby they trust, those sorry fig-leaves wherewith they hope to cover themselves, that their nakedness do not appear, those sandy foundations which they build upon, the untempered mortar which they daub with.

3. That their sins are but petty slips, and small sins, mere human infirmities; that no man can be perfect; that the purest saints have fallen into as great faults. But those are not infirmities which you indulge and allow, and study not to prevent and mortify, or retract not with grief and shame; besides, infirmities continued in prove iniquities, which by their frequent lapses are rather strengthened than weakened in you.

Secondly, Let no man deceive you in point of righteousness, 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous.'

1. Not he that heareth and talketh of it only doth show himself righteous; not strict opinions with licentious practices; not a bare approbation, not approving without doing: Luke 11:27, 28, 'Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and do it.'

2. It is not only an intention of mind and purpose. No; we must actually perform the will of God: 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous;' Acts 26:20, 'That they should repent and turn to God, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.' Repentance is a change of mind, but there must be works meet.

3. Not barely good desires. Many please themselves with this, that a desire of living holily sufficeth. No; the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing. It is not he that desireth to be righteous, but doeth righteousness; sluggish desires are easily controlled. Where is the effect, the pressing towards the mark? Phil. 3:14. If it were strongly, seriously desired, we would address ourselves to this work, and in some good measure prevail. The building went on when the people had a mind to the work, Neh. 4:6.

4. It is not doing a good action now and then, but throughout our whole course; we must fear God, and work righteousness: Ps. 106:3, 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times;' and if he falleth, he returneth by a speedy repentance.

Use 2. Is to persuade us to look after this righteousness, which is the drift of the text. To this end consider—

1. We shall shortly appear before the tribunal of God, where every man's qualification shall be judged, whether he be righteous or unrighteous. How soon it may come about we cannot tell; this day surpriseth the most part of the world, and taketh them unprovided. The word found is often used with respect to this day: 2 Cor. 5:3, 'If so be we shall not be found naked.' 2 Peter 3:14, 'And found of him in peace;' Phil. 3:9, 'And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness.'

2. For God's judgment; nothing but God's righteousness will serve the turn. The law which condemneth us is the law of God; the wrath and punishment which we fear is the wrath of God; the glory which we expect is the glory of God; the presence into which we come is the presence of God; and therefore the righteousness upon which our confidence standeth must be the righteousness of God. Rom. 3:22, 'Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe.' That which God hath appointed, and God will accept.

3. The righteousness of God is principally the death, merit, and satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ; for it is said, 2 Cor. 5:21, 'He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

4. None have the benefit of this righteousness of Christ but those that believe in him; for the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, Rom. 1:17. Now this faith is nothing else but a broken-hearted and thankful acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

5. None have this faith but those that depend upon him as a Saviour, and give up themselves with a hearty consent of subjection to be guided, ruled, and ordered by him as their Lord. For dependence: Eph. 1:13, 'In whom ye trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' Subjection: Col. 2:6, 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.'

6. None give up themselves to him as their Lord but those who make it their scope and work to please, glorify and enjoy him: 2 Cor. 5:9, 'Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' None but those that purify themselves as he is pure, and are righteous as he is righteous.

SERMON XII

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.—1 JOHN 3:8.

HERE is a new argument against living in sin, backed and confirmed with two reasons. The argument is, that they who live in sin are of the devil; it is confirmed with two reasons, the one taken from the disposition of Satan, the other from the design of Christ. The one proveth the thing asserted, the other showeth the detestableness of it. The thing is proved, that he that liveth in sin belongeth to the devil, 'For the devil sinneth from the beginning.' The other showeth how unbecoming it is for them that profess themselves christians to have the gospel in their mouths and the devil in their hearts. In short, the one reason showeth our danger, the other our remedy and help; our danger, 'The devil sinneth from the beginning.' It is his work to promote sin; he doth not only sin himself, but instigateth others to sin. Our remedy for this purpose, 'The Son of God was manifested,' &c.

There is a double argument couched in it. You make yourselves an opposite party to Christ, and so build again what he came to destroy; or at least you do not improve the help and remedy offered. Let me open these things more particularly.

1. The argument itself, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' The argument is, that they who live in sin are so far from being the children of God, that they are the children of the devil; for so must that 'of the devil' be interpreted; for it is presently added in the 10th

verse, 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil;' and John 8:44, 'Ye are of your father the devil.' Likeness inferreth relation; as he that first inventeth, teacheth, or perfecteth any art, is called the father of it or them that use it. So Gen. 4:20, 21, 'Jabal was the father of them that dwell in tents, and Jubal the father of such as handle the harp and the organ.' So Satan was the inventor of sin, and the beginner of sin and rebellion against God, and therefore the father of sinners.

2. It is confirmed with reasons.

[1.] That sin entitleth us to Satan, and showeth our cognation and kindred to him, and confederacy with him: 'For the devil sinneth from the beginning.' The devil is the eldest and greatest sinner, who presently sinned upon the creation, and ever since is the grand architect of wickedness, the author and promoter of sin among men. 'He sinneth' noteth a continued act; he never ceaseth to sin. He was created good, but kept not his first estate, fell betimes; and having given himself over to sinning, abideth and proceedeth therein: John 8:44, 'He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth;' Jude 6, 'The angels kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.'

[2.] That to belong to the devil misbecometh christians, and should be a detestable thing among christians: 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' Where observe—

(1.) The way the Son of God took to obviate this mischief, 'For this cause the Son of God was manifested.'

(2.) His end and design therein, 'That he might destroy the works of the devil.'

(1.) The way the Son of God took; he was manifested in our flesh 1 Tim. 3:16, 'And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory;' which compriseth all the acts of his mediation performed in our nature. God had foretold in the first gospel that ever was preached that 'the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head,' Gen. 3:15; that in our nature, which was so soon foiled by Satan, one should come who would conquer and vanquish him, and introduce a love and care of holiness. The manifestation of the Son of God in the work of redemption doth apparently cross and counterwork Satan's design, which was first to dishonour God by a false representation, as if he were envious of man's happiness. Now in the mystery of our redemption God is wonderfully magnified, and represented as amiable to man: 'For herein God commendeth his love to us,' Rom. 5:8; that the Son of man appeared for our relief, and died for our sins; partly to advance the nature of man, which in innocency stood so near God. Now that the human nature, so depressed and abased by the malicious suggestions of the devil, should be elevated and advanced, and set so far above the angelical nature, and admitted to dwell with God in a personal union above all principalities and powers, Eph. 1:20, 21, surely this should be such an everlasting obligation upon us to adhere to God and renounce Satan, that his counsels and suggestions should no more have place with us. This is the way he took.

(2.) The end and design, for this purpose, 'That he might destroy the works of the devil.' Where we have an act and an object.

(1st.) The act, to destroy. The word signifieth also to dissolve and loosen. To dissolve; many things are destroyed when they are not dissolved; as suppose a building, when the parts are taken asunder or

severed one from another. So he came to dissolve that frame of wickedness and rebellion against God which Satan had introduced into the world. So it is said, 'Christ came to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin,' Dan. 9:24; and in time will do it. Or else to loosen or untie; to loosen a chain or untie a knot; and so it implieth that sins are so many chains, and cords, and snares, wherein we are bound and entangled: Lam. 1:14, 'The yoke of my transgression is bound by his hand; they are wreathed and come up upon my neck;' and the wicked are said to be held with the cords of their own sins, Prov. 5:22. Christ came to loosen this yoke, to untie these cords.

(2d.) The object, 'The works of the devil;' whereby is meant sins which are called his lusts. The devil is the author of sin, the promoter of sin, and hath a great power over us by reason of sin. Sin is his work; he doth not only sin himself, but instigates others to sin; and this Christ came to destroy by the merit of his purchase and the virtue of his Spirit. The points which I shall handle are two—

Doct. 1. That while men live in a sinful course, they are children of Satan, and not of God.

Doct. 2. The design of Christ's coming into the world was to destroy sin, which Satan had brought into the world.

The first point, that while men live in sin, or in a sinful course, they are children of Satan, and not of God. For this first point take these considerations—

1. That God and the devil are so opposite, that a man cannot be the child of God and of the devil too. Since the first breach made with God, by Adam's defection and apostasy, there are two parties and two seeds—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Gen. 3:15. God and Satan divide the world. There is no neutral and middle

estate; a man must be one of these, but he cannot be both at the same time. Those that continue in the apostasy from God are of Satan's party; and till their estate be altered and changed, they ought so to be reckoned. The great work of Christ, by the powerful means of grace he hath instituted and blessed, is 'to turn men from Satan to God,' Acts 26:18; to take them out of one kingdom to another, 'from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God;' Col. 1:13, 'Who hath rescued us out of the power of darkness, and put us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' We must quit the one before we can be received into the other; we cannot be of both at the same time. Now by nature the whole world of mankind lieth in wickedness, and the devils are said to be rulers of the darkness of this world, Eph. 6:12; that is, those that live in the darkness of sin, ignorance, and superstition, the devil exerciseth a tyranny over them, and so they continue till their estate and hearts be changed.

2. Our being children to either is not to be determined by profession only, but practice; for many who are by profession among God's people may yet be limbs of Satan and children of the devil; as Christ telleth the Jews, who were the only visible people God had for that time in the world, John 8:44, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and his lusts will ye do;' and again, speaking of the tares that grew among the wheat, Mat. 15:38, 'The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one.' Mark, the field is the world, that is, the state of the church in this world; the good seed signifies the good christians, but the tares the wicked that are remaining intermingled among them, and are only left to be distinguished by the reapers, who are the angels, at the last day; so that all that live in a state of sin, and are unrenewed by the Holy Ghost, and not converted to God, are the children of the devil, though they grow among the corn. Now what a detestable thing is it that any of us should be Christ's in profession and the devil's in

practice and conversation? For us to have any commerce with the devil, and belong to the devil, after we are visibly brought into the kingdom of God, should be abhorred by all good christians. We detest witches that come into an express and explicit covenant with Satan; but we are in an implicit covenant with him, of his league and confederacy, if we cherish his lusts, follow his counsels and suggestions. Others renounce their baptism, but you forget your baptism, which implieth a solemn vow against the devil, the world, and the flesh. And therefore carnal christians are said to 'forget that they were purged from their old sins,' 2 Peter 1:9; that is, washed in God's laver, wherein they were dedicated to God, and renounced the devil and his works and lusts.

3. They that do evil, or live in a course of evil doing, are Satan's children for two reasons—

[1.] Because they resemble and imitate him; for he is our father whom we imitate. Now they imitate Satan in his rebellion against God. A man is said to be of the devil, *non natura sed imitatione*. His substance is not by traduction from Satan, but he is said to be of the devil by his corruption. By nature he is of God, but by sin he is of Satan; not as a man, but as a wicked man, he imitateth the devil, and beareth his image, and is like Satan in malignity. So Elymas the sorcerer: Acts 13:10, 'O thou child of the devil, thou full of all craft and subtilty, thou enemy of all righteousness! wilt thou not cease to pervert the ways of the Lord?' Some are apparently so as he was, while they resemble him in a cruel destructive nature, and a special enmity to Christ, and his interest, and truth, and kingdom in the world, and seek to maintain the interest of sin and wickedness. This is one special sort of sin which is proper to Satan; but all that cherish sin in themselves and others are Satan's children, though they do not go to the height of enmity against Christ; because they take after the

devil as children do after their parents. Look, as we are denominated children of God by imitation and resemblance of him, Eph. 5:1, 'Be ye followers of God as dear children,' so *pari ratione*, by like reason, the devil's children, if we follow him in our obstinate rebellion against God.

[2.] Because all unregenerate men are governed by him, so that there is subjection as well as imitation; they are acted and guided by his suggestions; he hath a great hand and power over them; and therefore carnal men are said to walk after the prince of the power of the air, who worketh in the children of disobedience. He governeth and influenceth them, not every one in the same way, yet somewhat in a like manner. As the Holy Spirit governeth the faithful, their hearts are his shop and workhouse, so the hearts of the wicked are the devil's workhouse, where he frameth instruments of rebellion against God. The devil, who hath lost his seat, hath built himself a throne in the hearts of wicked men, and lords it over them as his slaves. He blindeth them, and they suffer themselves to be blinded: 2 Cor. 4:4, 'Whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded.' He enticeth them, and they consent, and therefore they are said to be taken captive by him at his will and pleasure, 2 Tim. 2:26. Surely then Satan hath great power over the unconverted, for, making use of the corruption which is in them by nature, he leadeth them up and down by his motions and suggestions, and they obey him without resistance; and if the Lord be not merciful to them, they live, and lie, and die in their sins, and are cast forth with the devil and his angels into everlasting torments, Mat. 25:41, that they may abide with him for ever.

Use 1. Exhortation to those that yet wallow in their sins. Oh, come out of this woful estate, if you would be accounted children of God, and not of the devil! But this exhortation is like to be lost, because

none will own their misery, and acknowledge that they do as yet remain in Satan's snares. Therefore let us convince men a little, and persuade them at the same time. I shall convince them by these questions, intermingled with the exhortation.

Quest. 1. Do not you please yourselves too much in an unholy course of life, and a sinful state? The sinful state is the state opposite to Christ; the devil's work is to cherish sin, and Christ's work is to destroy sin. Now judge under whose influence and government do you live? Under Satan's or Christ's? Are you cherishing or destroying sin? If you live under Christ's blessed government, you will use all his healing methods for the cure of your distempered souls, till you find a manifest abatement of corruption, or inclination to present things; for Satan is the god of this world, and you are never satisfied till the heavenly mind prevail in you. But if you be under Satan's government, you are wholly bent to the world and the things of the world, and are entangled in one of those usual snares of sensuality, worldliness, or pride: 1 John 2:16, 'For all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world.'

1. Sensuality. The carnal mind and life is flat enmity to God, and showeth that we are influenced by the evil spirit, as the heavenly mind and life is the property of those that are guided by the Spirit of God; therefore all those that live in 'gluttony, and excess of wine, revellings, banquetings,' 1 Peter 4:3, and spend their time in vanity, wantonness, and filthiness, and needless sports, are guided by the unclean spirit, not the Holy Spirit; they are 'sensual, not having the Spirit.' By these vanities the mind is debased and polluted, and made unfit for God and the work of holiness: 2 Tim. 2:22, 'Flee youthful lusts; follow after righteousness.' The devil is busy with young men, pressing them to inordinate sense-pleasing; then he knoweth that

holiness will be of little account with them: a gross carnal spirit gratifieth the devil's turn. Tertullian telleth us a story, how that the devil had possessed a christian, and being asked why, he pleads that he found him at a play, took him upon his own ground, and so possessed him.

2. Worldliness, or love of riches: 1 Tim. 6:9, 'They that will be rich fall into temptation and the snare of the devil.' The devil would draw us downward, as God upward. God propoundeth the rich hopes of the other world to deaden us to the riches and glory of this world; but Satan is the god of this world; here is his empire, and here are his baits and allurements. Now a drossy, unsanctified, miserable soul, that loveth the world, savoureth the world, wholly inclineth itself to the world, is held fast by Satan in the snare.

3. Pride. This is Satan's proper image: 1 Tim. 6:3, 'Lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' This pride lifts up the mind against God and above men; when men delight and place their happiness in greatness and worldly glory, have an envy to those above them, disdain those below them, contend with equals out of a lofty conceit of themselves, affect honour and reputation, rather than carry themselves humbly.

Quest. 2. How do you carry yourselves as to the change of masters? That we were all once under the power of Satan is evident by what is said before. But how did we get out of it, or how do we stand affected towards our recovery?

1. As to the offers of grace; if the god of this world do so blind our minds or harden our hearts that we despise the offered remedy: 2 Cor. 4:4, 'Lest the light should shine unto them.' Impenitency and contempt of the grace of the gospel is Satan's great chain; he is loath to let a soul go; and therefore, Mat. 13:19, 'The wicked one cometh

and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.' When they begin to be serious, he possesseth them with prejudices and false conceits against religion, and inveigleth and enticeth them by the pleasing baits of worldly glory and the delights of the flesh, and puts all anxious thoughts out of their minds about their everlasting condition, and discourageth them by the proposal of troubles, dislikes, and disgraces; and when he is foiled by one weapon, he betaketh himself to another, that he may hold the poor captive soul in fetters and bonds, and they may never think of leaving their sins, but these thoughts may die away in their hearts; and thus every soul that is recovered to Christ is fetched out of the very paw and month of the lion. The heart of a sinner is his garrison and castle, which is so blinded with prejudice and passion, and carnal interests and worldly allurements, that till Christ come and besiege it, partly with terrors and fears, and partly with the offers of mercy and ready help, yea, the powerful efficacy of his grace, the poor sinner will not yield. Now how is the strong man outed? Luke 11:21. Have you been sensible of your captivity, and have you yielded to the means of your recovery? Are you willing the cords of sin and vanity shall be loosened? and do you give up yourselves to be ruled by your Redeemer, and take upon you his blessed yoke? Mat. 11:29.

2. As to more close and pressing convictions, which is a nearer approach than the former. When Christ presseth hard upon men's hearts, and would have entrance, many find a plain conflict within themselves. Christ haleth the soul one way, and the devil another, so that a man is as it were torn to pieces. They would repent and reform, but then they are off again; the enemy of souls will not let them go; pleasures, profits, pleasant company, and carnal acquaintance, are all brought out to persuade him that he should sit down and be quiet in his sins. But Christ calleth again, Why wilt thou die, sinner? Now it is good to observe our carriage in these

convictions. While you keep thus, you are 'double-minded, and unstable in all your ways,' James 1:8. Oh, let not Christ be kept out of his right any longer; shall Satan be more powerful in drawing your hearts to vain delights than Christ is in working them to God and heaven? Can he maintain you, and make good your quarrel against the Almighty, and bear you out in rebellion against God? He is already fallen under his displeasure: will you believe a murderer and a liar from the beginning, rather than all the threatenings and promises of Christ? What is Satan's end but to destroy and devour, 1 Peter 5:8, and Christ's but to save? Luke 19:10, 'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' Are eternal life and death such trifles that they should move you no more? You are now but as the lamb caught by the wolf and lion; you are not yet killed by him. How much are you beholden to God for restraining the malicious so far; especially for the offer of help by Christ, and will you refuse it? I will add but this one motive, and that is the deference which Satan hath over the unconverted in common and the obdurate. All natural men that are under the reign of sin are under the power of the devil. But those that are judicially hardened, he hath a peculiar power over them; for these God hath forsaken, and delivered them up into Satan's hands; these are given over to believe a lie, 2 Thes. 2:9–12. Who are they but the contemners of the gospel, and wilful refusers of his grace?

Quest. 3. Do we behave ourselves as those that had a sense of their covenant vow and engagement when they entered into the service of Christ and have put on the armour of light? Are we in a continual war and fight with Satan? Certainly where there is a conscience of our baptismal vow, there sin cannot quietly reign. Now they that make conscience of their baptismal vow are such as do watch, and pray, and strive that they enter not into temptation: Mat. 26:41, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit is willing, but

the flesh is weak.' The godly are in a great part flesh, although renewed, and so easily ensnared. When the devil came to tempt Christ, he had nothing to work upon: John 14:30, 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.' But the best of God's children have too much of corruption in them, therefore they must watch, and pray, and strive, and use all Christ's means for their safety. You must not basely yield to temptations, nor lazily sit down, or foolishly imagine the field is won, or the fight is ended, as long as you are in the body. How far soever you have gone, how much soever you have done and suffered, yet there remaineth more danger; the devil is yet alive, and hath a spite at you, and would sift you as wheat, Luke 12:33. He knoweth that creatures are mutable, and those that miscarry not in one condition yet may in another: 'Ephraim is a cake not turned,' Hosea 7:8, and he himself is subtle and full of wiles and methods. Now shall we carelessly wink, or put our foot in the snare? Christ warneth us frequently to take heed. There is no sleeping in the midst of so great danger. There is a remnant of his seed within you, which will betray you to him if you be not wary. Many that have begun in the spirit have ended in the flesh. Perseverance only must put on the crown. Therefore beware of the wounds of wilful sins; these give Satan a great advantage against us: Ps. 19:13, 'Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.' By committing any deliberate act of known sin, you are in that so far an imitator of Satan. Well, then, since the renewed are yet but in the way, and not at the end of the journey, they are not wholly exempted from the power and malice of the tempter: 'Therefore be sober and watchful, for your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour,' 1 Peter 5:8. He speaketh to the converted. Though Satan prevaieth not over a renewed man so far as to rule in him, yet he leaveth not to assault him, if it were but to vex him. The capital enemy of man's salvation watcheth all advantages against them; though the door of a believer's heart be shut, yet he is searching and

trying if he can spy but the narrowest passage, or the least opportunity whereby he may again re-enter his old possession, or exercise his former tyranny, or recover his interest in the heart; therefore we are warned, Eph. 4:27, 'not to give place to the devil.' We do so by our pride, passion, vanity, or worldliness; but by hearkening to him we do but give up our throat to the murderer, who would fain draw us to some acts of gross sin, whereby to dishonour God: 2 Sam. 12:14, 'Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme.' And destroy our peace: Ps. 32:3, 4, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.' And fearful havoc is made in the soul: Ps. 51:10–12, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.'

SERMON XIII

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.—1 JOHN 3:8.

I HAVE often spoken of what Christ doth for the appeasing of God; I shall now speak of what he doth for the vanquishing of Satan.

In the words consider—(1.) The way the Son of God took to do us good; (2.) His end and design therein.

1. The way the Son of God took to do us good, 'He was manifested;' thereby is meant his coming in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3:16, together with all the acts of his mediation performed in our nature. God had

foretold that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. 3:15; in our nature would Christ foil and conquer Satan.

2. The end and the design; for this cause, 'That he might destroy the works of the devil.' Wherein observe—

[1.] An act; to destroy. The word signifieth also to dissolve or untie, to loosen a chain or untie a knot, and so implieth that sins are so many chains, cords, and snares, wherein we are bound. We are ensnared and entangled in a course of sin till Christ untied the knot: Hosea 4:17, 'Ephraim is joined to idols.' So joined that he cannot be divided from them; congregate with his idols. And we are bound over to punishment: Lam. 1:14, 'The yoke of transgressions is bound by his hands, they are wreathed and come upon my neck;' and the wicked are said to be holden with the cords of his sins, Prov. 5:22.

[2.] The object, 'The works of the devil,' whereby is meant sin. The former part of the verse cleareth that, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil;' and sins are called his lusts, John 8:44. The devil is the author of sin, and suggests sin, and hath a power over us by reason of sin. Sin is his work; he doth not only sin himself, but instigate others to sin.

Doct. The design of Christ's coming into the world was to unravel the devil's work, or to destroy the kingdom of sin and Satan.

I observe here—

1. Two opposite powers and agents—the devil and the Son of God. The devil sought the misery and destruction of mankind, but Christ sought our salvation. Satan is the great disturber of the creation, and Christ is the repairer of it. This malicious cruel spirit ruined mankind at first, and therefore he is called a liar and a murderer from the

beginning, John 8:44; and Christ, as early promised and prefigured, is said to be 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' Rev. 8:8. We were at first ruined by hearkening to his counsels and suggestions, as we are now saved by faith in Christ. By his lies he deceived our first parents, and induced them to sin, and so we are made liable to death; and so by Christ's truth we are led into the way of salvation. All persons were corrupted and out of frame by the fall of man, through the suggestion of Satan, and are set in joint again by Jesus Christ. The devil is still 'a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour,' 1 Peter 5:8; and Christ is the lion of the tribe of Judah, in whom is our safety and preservation, Rev. 5:5. The devil is wholly employed to oppose the work of man's salvation and to bring us into sin and misery, and Christ is employed to preserve the elect, and keep them in his own hand. The devil is an accuser of the brethren, Rev. 12:10, and Christ is an advocate: 1 John 2:1, 'We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' In short, we must set the one against the other, the captain of our salvation against the author of our destruction.

2. Let us consider the advantage that we have by the one above the other, and you will find that Christ is much more able to save than Satan to destroy.

[1.] The devil is a creature, but Christ the sovereign Lord, who hath power over him and all creatures. The devil's tempting is by leave. He was fain to beg leave to tempt Job, chap. 1:12; to winnow Peter, Luke 22:31, 'Satan hath desired to winnow and sift you as wheat.' Nay, he could not enter into the herd of swine without a new patent or pass from Christ, Mat. 8:31. This cruel spirit is held in the chains of an irresistible providence. When we are in Satan's hands, it is a great satisfaction to remember that Satan is in God's hands.

[2.] The devil is a rebel and a usurper for the most part, but Christ is our appointed remedy: John 3:16, 'He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;' Rom. 3:25, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.'

[3.] The devil hath no power upon the heart, cannot work any change upon the will, or create new principles and habits which before were not, as God doth, Jer. 31:33. God can put his law into our inward parts, and write it on our hearts. He can only propound alluring baits and objects to the outward senses or inward fancy, but God worketh immediately upon the heart; therefore by the power of Christ the godly may overcome the wicked one. The Lord puts an enmity in our hearts against Satan and his ways and counsels: Gen. 3:15, 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' It is put by way of efficacy on the one side, and allowed on the other by way of permissive intention. God maketh use of our will and affections in this opposition. Enmity is the voluntary and strong motion of the mind of man against that which he hateth.

[4.] The devil only maketh use of the root of sin which is in us by nature, and prevaieth by his assiduous diligence, multiplying temptations without intermission. But yet we have more for us than against us, if we consider that Christ hath power enough to deal with Satan; he is overmatched and overmastered by Christ, the stronger than he, Luke 11:22. Merit enough to counterbalance the evil of nature. There is much more in the grace of the Redeemer: Rom. 5:17, 'For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus.' Then for his assiduity, Christ hath love enough to attend and mind the affairs of his people. It is true Satan is always blowing the bellows, inflaming our corruptions,

suggesting wicked temptations; but doth not Christ still make intercession for us? Is not his Spirit as watchful in our hearts to maintain his interest there? So that if we believe that Christ hath power enough, merit enough, love enough, surely the case is clear; the Son of God will have the better in all in whom he is pleased to work.

3. That all mankind by nature lieth in wickedness, and sin and Satan worketh in them at his pleasure, and therefore Satan is called the prince and god of this world: Eph. 6:12, 'Rulers of the darkness of this world.' He is the prince and ruler of those that live in sin, darkness, ignorance of God, and superstition, and exerciseth a tyranny over them. So he is called the god of this world, 2 Cor. 4:4, because of his great prevalency here: 'The prince of the power of the air, that worketh in the children of disobedience,' Eph. 2:2. All men in their unrenewed estate are very slaves to Satan, to his motions and suggestions, whom they resemble in their sin and wickedness, he taking them captive at his will and pleasure, 2 Tim. 2:26. They are at war with God, from the covenant of whose friendship they are fallen, but at peace with Satan.

4. Satan hath a twofold power over the fallen creature—legal and usurped.

[1.] He hath a power over them by a kind of legal right, a power flowing from the sentence of condemnation pronounced by the law against sinners; therefore it is said he had the power of death: Heb. 2:14, 'That he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.' The devil by his temptations having drawn men to sin, and so made them liable to death, they fall into his hands and come into his power, so that he hath a dominion over them, reigneth in them, blindeth them, perverteth them, stingeth them to death, and so by

sin more and more they are made obnoxious to the curse and vengeance of God's broken law. As the jailor and executioner hath the power of the gallows, so hath the devil the power of death. The devil hath no right, as a lord, to judge and condemn us, but as an executioner of God's curse; so God may put the poor captive sinner into his hand, which is one reason why we should the more earnestly beg the pardon of sins, and be thankful for the mercy of a Redeemer. Now this power being by the appointment of God, it must some way or other be evacuated and disannulled: Isa. 49:24, 'Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered?' Sinners are Satan's lawful prize, but Christ came and turned the devil out of office: 'By death he hath destroyed him that had the power of death.' He made Satan's office idle and useless; when God was reconciled, his power was at an end. Therefore upon his blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, which was against us, we presently hear of the disannulling of Satan's power, Col. 1:14, 15. When the judge and the law are satisfied, the jailor and executioner hath no more to do.

[2.] He hath a power by tyrannical usurpation, in regard of which he is called the prince of this world: John 12:31, 'Now is the prince of this world condemned.' God made him an executioner, and we made him a prince and a god, obeying his sinful motions and counsels, and being led by him up and down, and driven on furiously in a way of sin. So Christ, as true king and head, both of men and angels, putteth down Satan as a usurper, and breaketh the yoke of his oppression, rescueth the elect by strong hand: Col. 1:13, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of Satan, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' Satan had housed and possessed souls as his lawful goods: Luke 11:21, 'When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace;' Mat. 12:29, 'How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and

then he will spoil his house?' Not part with the possession of one soul till he be mastered; therefore the usurper and disturber of mankind is destroyed.

5. There is a twofold work of the devil—one without us, and the other within us.

[1.] The work of the devil without us is a false religion, or those idolatrous and superstitious rites by which the world hath been deceived, and by which Satan's kingdom hath been upheld. Now Satan's kingdom is cast down by the doctrine of the gospel, accompanied by Christ's powerful Spirit: Luke 10:18, 'I beheld Satan fall from heaven like lightning.' When the gospel was first preached, the devil was dethroned, and fell from his great unlimited power in the world; as lightning flasheth and vanisheth, and cometh to nothing, and never recollects itself again: John 12:31, 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.' The apostles went abroad to bait the devil, and hunt him out of his territories, and they did it with great effect. And therefore it is made one argument by which the Spirit doth convince us of the truth of the gospel: John 16:11, 'He shall convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.' The casting out of Satan from the bodies of those who were possessed by him, the silencing his oracles, the suppressing his superstitions, and destroying the kingdom of wickedness and darkness, was an apparent evidence of the truth of the gospel, as was striking blind Elymas, a famous sorcerer, Acts 13. So the punishment of his servants and votaries, dissolving the force of his enchantments: 'They that used curious arts burnt their books,' Acts 19:15. The devil's kingdom went to wreck in all the parts of it; the old religion everywhere was overturned, no more the same rites, the same temples, the same gods that they and their predecessors had so long worshipped; and God, as worshipped in Christ, cometh up in

the room. Though the world were captivated, under Satan, rooted in former superstitions, yet Christ prevailed, and got ground by the rod of his strength, even the word of his kingdom. Before that, Satan everywhere had his temples wherein he was worshipped, his oracles resorted to with great reverence, till the Hebrew child silenced him. He ate of the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings, yea, often the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to him. Yet all his strongholds were now demolished, the idols broken whom they and their fathers had worshipped and prayed unto in their distresses and adversities, and blessed in their prosperities. Now all of a sudden are these temples thrown down, these images broken, these altars polluted and set at nought, and the people turned from these vanities unto the living God; and still he is undeceiving the world; he came to dissolve the works of the devil, and in every age something is done in that kind. The unwary and corrupt world doth put Christ upon acting mainly the demolishing and destructive part hitherto. When gentile worship was put down, then antichristianity got up in a mystery, and fortifieth itself by the numerous combined interests of the carnal: 'But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to pull down strongholds,' 2 Cor. 10:4. But in time, by the power of the word and the course of God's providence, and the patience of his servants and the efficacy of his Spirit, this whole mystery of iniquity will be finished and come to nothing.

[2.] There is the work of the devil within us; this is destroyed also. But here again we must distinguish between the purchase and the application.

(1.) The purchase was made when Christ died; for, Heb. 2:14, 'By death he destroyed him that had the power of death;' and Col. 2:15, 'He spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them on

his cross.' Christ's death is Satan's overthrow; then was the deadly blow given to his power and kingdom. When the Jews and Roman soldiers were spoiling him and parting his garments, then was he spoiling principalities and powers; in that very hour, which was the power of darkness, was Christ making a show of Satan openly, and leading captivity captive. When they were insulting over the Son of God, then was he triumphing over all the devils in hell, and overcame them by suffering himself visibly to be overcome by them. Well, then, here is the ground of our faith, the death of Christ, which we remember in the sacrament; this was the price given for our ransom, and the means of disannulling all the power which Satan had in us before.

(2.) The application is begun in our conversion, and afterwards carried on by degrees. All those who are converted and receive the gospel are said to be turned from Satan to God, Acts 26:18. Then are they, from the children of the devil, made the children of God, and adopted into his family, and delivered from the dominion of sin into the glorious liberties that belong to God's children. And therefore those to whom God giveth repentance are said, 2 Tim. 2:26, to be recovered out of the snare of the devil, by whom they were taken captive formerly at his will and pleasure. Before they were his slaves and drudges, drove on furiously, were at the beck of every lust; but then they recover themselves, as made free by Christ.

6. There is in sin, which is the work of the devil, three things—(1.) The guilt of it; (2.) The power of it; (3.) The being of it. All these Christ came to dissolve, but by several means and at several times.

[1.] The guilt of it; that is done away by justification. Guilt is an obligation to punishment. Now this is one effect of Satan's malice, to involve us in the same ruin and condemnation into which he hath

plunged himself; he is held in chains of darkness, 2 Peter 2:4; by which is meant, not only the powerful restraints of providence, but the horror of his own despairing fears. If the restraints of providence had only been intended, it had been enough to have said they are held in chains; but these are chains of darkness, and therefore it implieth not only God's irresistible power restraining them, but his terrible justice tormenting them; so that, go where they will, they carry their own hell about with them, in the constant feeling of the wrath of the Almighty, and the dreadful expectation of more wrath. This is the case of the devils; and do not they seek to bring us into the same condition? Yes, certainly they do; what mean else Satan's 'fiery darts?' Eph. 6:16, by which is meant, not only raging lusts, but tormenting fears. And certainly, as the devil hath the power of death, so he keepeth men under the fear of it and the consequents of it all their days, Heb. 2:14, 15. He bringeth his slaves and poor deluded souls into sin, that he may bring them into terror, and oppress them by their own guilty fears. He maketh use of conscience to stir them up, but he joineth with them horrors of conscience, and increaseth their violence. The devil is first a tempter, that he may be afterwards an accuser and a tormentor. He is called our 'adversary,' 1 Peter 5:8. The word signifieth an adversary or enemy at law. He pleadeth law and equity of his side, and by law would carry the cause against all that come of Adam, for they are all law-breakers; and if Christ had not freed us from the curse of the law, what would you answer? Again, when he is termed an accuser, Rev. 12, it doth not signify a whisperer or slanderer out of malice, but a pleader as an attorney or accuser by law. There is none upon earth but yieldeth matter enough to fill up his accusations; he needeth not come with slanders. Now wicked men, who are his slaves, are either stupified or terrified by him, or both. If they be stupified, they are more terrified afterwards; at best they are always at the beck and mercy of a cruel master, who can soon revive their hidden fears; and if they be not under actual

horrors, they dare not be serious, nor call themselves to an account, nor entertain any sober thoughts of death, and judgment, and wrath to come. Yea, Satan hath a great hand in the troubles of conscience which befall God's children; they have many a sad hour of darkness when God lets loose the tempter upon them, and many heavy damps of spirit doth the accuser bring upon them now. Well, then, this is a part of the works of the devil, those fears of death and damnation which dog sin at the heels. These Christ came to dissolve, and by death to deliver us from the fear of death: 'He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. 5:21. A believer may triumph over his accuser, and draw water out of the wells of salvation with joy: Rom. 8:33, 34, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us.' By his death he hath satisfied God's justice, and at his resurrection he had his discharge. By his intercession he pleadeth it in court. Who shall condemn? Our advocate is more powerful in court than our accuser; he doth not only sue out our pardon by entreaty, but by merit: Dan. 9:24, 'He shall make an end of sins, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness.' This is to destroy the works of the devil indeed. He shall stay the imputation of sin, working the reconciliation of sinful man to God, establishing an unchangeable rule of our justification by the Lord our righteousness. Surely all accusation is fruitless when we have such an advocate as he is. We are sinners; but if he will spread the skirt of his righteousness over us, 'and appear before God for us' Heb. 9:24, why should we fear?

[2.] The dominion and power of sin. The devil keepeth peaceable possession in the soul as long as sin reigneth: Eph. 2:2, 'He worketh in the children of disobedience.' Their hearts are his shop and

workhouse, where he formeth weapons and instruments of rebellion against God. The devil, who hath lost his seat in heaven, hath built himself a throne in the heart of every wicked man, and lords it over them as over his slaves; and if they had eyes to see, this is a heavier bondage than if they were laden with irons, and cast into the deepest dungeon that ever was digged. Convinced men are sensible of it, but they know not how to help themselves. Converted men are in part freed; the dominion of sin is broken in them, though its life be prolonged for a season. But because it is a nice case how to distinguish between the remaining of sin and the reigning of it, and the life from the dominion, and every degree of this hated enemy is a burden, therefore they pray earnestly, Ps. 119:133, 'Order my steps in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.' Watch and strive: Rom. 6:12, 'Let not sin reign therefore in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey the lusts thereof.' Comfort themselves with their justification, in the imperfection of their sanctification: Rom. 6:14, 'For sin shall not have dominion over us; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' But the great encouragement of all is Christ's undertaking; 'He came to destroy the works of the devil.' And surely his end will not be frustrated: Rom. 6:11, 'Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.' Therefore you may see it a-dying, and Christ destroyeth the power of sin by degrees, putting an enmity in your hearts against it: Gen. 3:15, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' Sin dieth as our love dieth to it; they grow every day more free from it, as heretofore from righteousness. The devil seeks to increase sin, but Christ to destroy it. When he hath once rescued the prey out of Satan's hands, he will maintain his interest against all the powers of darkness: Eph. 6:10, 11, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; for we fight not against flesh and blood.' The war is not only against visible enemies, nor against internal passions and lusts, but against spiritual wickednesses. Yet the divine grace is

sufficient; we have God's Spirit against the evil spirit: 1 John 4:4, 'Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.'

[3.] The being of sin shall at length be destroyed; for the final victory is sure and near, for Christ will perfect the conquest which he hath begun: Rom. 16:20, 'The God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly.' At death sin is totally disannulled, and then sin shall gasp its last, and the physician of souls will then perfect the cure. The Papists say, as Bellarmine, that either we must be perfect before death, or in purgatory after death. I answer—As we are sinners in the first moment of our birth, so after death no more sinners; no, not in the last moment of expiration. Christ taketh time to finish his work. No sinner doth enter into the state of bliss. Death doth remove us from this sinful flesh, and admits the soul into the sight of God, which is in that instant perfected; as remove the veil, and light breaketh in all of a sudden.

Object. 1. How doth Christ destroy the works of the devil, since the kingdom of sin and Satan yet remaineth in so great a part of the world?

Object. 2. How doth Christ destroy the works of the devil, since many of Christ's own people are sorely assaulted, shaken, and many times foiled by the devil?

(1.) For the general case. In time Christ doth destroy them, all the opposite reigns or kingdoms, the kingdom of sin, Satan, and death. Christians have no enemy to their happiness but such as shall be conquered by Christ; sooner or later he will overcome them all. Yet, for the present, this destruction is not so universal but that sin and Satan do still continue. There is not a total destruction of these things, but an absolute subjection to the mediatorial kingdom; they are so far destroyed as they cannot hinder the salvation of the elect;

they are destroyed so far that they shall not hinder the demonstration of his mercy to them; but as they are subservient to the demonstration of his justice, error is so far continued. In reprobate and damned souls, the spot of sin remaineth in its perfect dye, the dominion of sin continueth in its absolute power. Guilt is an obligation to eternal pain; but all this in a subjection to his throne. Some continue slaves to Satan, and evermore remain so, and we are not altogether gotten free from Satan's power. God hath a ministry for the devil in the world. Absolute subjection to Christ is at the day of judgment; the infernal spirits shall then bow the knee to Christ, as things in heaven and on earth, and things under the earth: Phil. 2:10, compared with Rom. 14:10, 11, and Isa. 45:23, 'Unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.' The saints shall then judge angels, 2 Cor. 6:2. God hath a ministry for Satan to punish careless souls, to hinder the word, inject ill thoughts, lay snares, raise persecution, sow tares, accuse and trouble the faithful, vex their bodies as he did Job; so Paul had a messenger of Satan, some racking pain in his body, the stone or gout, or the like.

(2.) As to the second case, I answer—To try and exercise the godly, Job 1:12. The godly are sometimes foiled, and yield to his temptations, yet not taken captive by him at his will and pleasure. He may prevail in some cases on them, as he did on David: 1 Chron. 21:1, 'And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number the people.' All watchfulness should be used: 1 Cor. 7:5, 'That Satan tempt you not for your incontinency;' 2 Cor. 11:2, 3, 'For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty.' They may be drawn, in some rare case, to some particular sin: 2 Sam. 11:4, 'And David sent messengers, and took her, and came in unto her, and lay with her;' whereby God may be dishonoured: 2 Sam.

12:14, 'By this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme;' or to mar their own peace: Ps. 32:3, 4, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.' He may assault them for their exercise, yet not touch them with a deadly wound: 1 John 5:18, 'He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not;' so as to overcome and destroy their salvation: 1 Cor. 10:13, 'Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' This opposition is an evidence when we feel it, or groan under it, otherwise they would be at peace: Luke 11:21, 'When the strong man keeps the house, his goods are in peace;' as when wind and tide go together, there is calm. When they feel it: Rom. 7:9, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died;' and groan under it: ver. 24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rev. 12:12, 'For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows he hath but a short time.' Dying beasts bite shrewdly.

Use 1. Let us not cherish sin. It doth not become christians to cherish what Christ came to disannul, to build again what he came to destroy, to tie those cords and knots the faster which he came to unloose. As much as in you lieth, you seek to dissolve the work of Christ, and put your Redeemer to shame.

2. Our condemnation is just and clear if we do not cast out sin, having so much help. Will you by your voluntary consent give Satan an advantage?

3. It is our comfort to feel the effects of Christ's dominion, in subduing the work of Satan within us, when the Lord Jesus taketh

the throne in our hearts, and doth deliver us from the slavery of corruption: John 8:32, 'And the truth shall make you free.'

Use 2. If you find anything of the works of the devil in you, run to Christ, though your souls are entangled.

1. Make your moan to him: Rom. 7:24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Wherefore is Christ a Saviour but for sinners; wherefore a Redeemer but for captives? Will Christ be a Saviour, and save none; a Redeemer, and redeem none?

2. Let us depend upon the fulness of his merit. The reason why the converted find so little effect of Christ's purchase is because they make so little use of their interest in him. Let us conquer during the conflict by faith. We have burdensome corruptions that exercise us, grieve the Spirit, wrong Christ, but they shall be overcome at last. We have heard, and read, and prayed, yet still they remain; but Christ's undertaking cannot be frustrated; our pride and passion shall not always last.

3. Let us give up ourselves to be ruled by him, willing to be the Lord's servants: Mat. 11:29, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest to your souls.'

4. Let the beginning of the work assure you of the perfection of it; he that hath begun to pardon our sins will at length pronounce our full absolution.

5. Let us apply all this to the sacrament; here we renew our vow, not to cherish sin, lest we cross our Redeemer's undertaking; here we express our confidence of the fruits of his death, according to the word. We thankfully commemorate his grace, by which Satan is and

will be more and more vanquished: we see him falling. We admire Christ's condescension, that he will give us to eat of his own meat, and drink of his own cup, 2 Sam. 12:3. We look upon this table as spread for us in the sight of our enemies: Ps. 23:5, 'Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies;' maugre their malice. We are well provided for in Christ, though they grieve to see the riches of his bounty to us and care for us. A royal feast and banquet it is, which our enemies may snarl at, but cannot impeach and hinder; and we take it as a pledge of our everlasting triumph, which we are shortly entering upon.

SERMON XIV

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

—1 JOHN 3:9.

THIS verse is a perfect antithesis, or standeth in direct opposition to the former. There he reasoneth against a sinful life, because the committing of sin argueth conformity to the devil, who is the great architect of all wickedness, and sinners are of his confederacy and party. Now he reasoneth, on the contrary part, that non-committing of sin argueth conformity with God: 'He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning;' that was his argument there; but here he argueth from the principle of all grace and goodness, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,' &c.

In the words there is an assertion, with its reasons annexed—

1. The assertion attributeth two things to the regenerate person—(1.) That he doth not sin; (2.) That he cannot sin.

2. The reasons are annexed to both—(1.) Because his seed remaineth in him; (2.) Because he is born of God.

The words need a clear discussion, that they may not be abused by erroneous persons on the one side, to establish the impeccability and perfection of the saints; on the other side, by persons of a weak and tender conscience, who are apt to conclude against their own regeneration because of their daily failings; nor by a third party, who, because of these infirmities, and on the presumption of grace received, are apt to intermit their care and diligence, as if the new nature would preserve them, and bear them out against all possibility of declining from God and the ways of holiness.

Therefore I shall—(1.) Acquaint you with, or lay down, some preliminary considerations; (2.) Acquaint you with the different thoughts of sundry interpreters; (3.) Assert the true sense of the words; (4.) Vindicate them from abuses.

First, The preliminary propositions.

1. That there is not a man upon earth that sinneth not, believers and persons regenerate as well as others: Eccles. 7:20, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not;' and James 3:2, 'In many things we offend all.' Of us, even the holiest and most regenerate commit many acts of sin.

2. That notwithstanding this, there is a difference between the carnal and the regenerate: ver. 10, 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.' Otherwise the godly and ungodly would be confounded, and there would be no difference between the wicked and the sincere. Certain there is a people that do not sin as others, and, in a good and commodious sense, cannot sin: Deut. 32:9, 'Their spot is not the spot of his children.'

Secondly, I shall show the different thoughts of men about this place. Ambrose interpreteth it of the state of glory, where there is no more sin; but it agreeth not with this place; for the apostle speaketh of the state of the regenerate in this life, and would lay down a sign by which the children of God may be distinguished from the children of the devil, ver. 10. It is true our perfect state in heaven is spoken of, ver. 2; but the apostle is off from that argument, and inferreth thence our holiness: ver. 3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure.' Others, as Austin in his book of nature and grace, chap. 14, supposeth the apostle speaketh de jure, what should be of right, and not de facto; not what is, but what should be, viz., that he that is born of God should not sin. But this will not suit with the apostle's scope, which is to lay down a mark of difference, and the unregenerate are under an obligation not to sin. Neither will it consist with the reason here alleged, 'His seed remaineth in him.' If the jus were considered, this argument would do better, because sin is forbidden by the law, from whence right and wrong is determined; but the apostle argueth from the remaining principle of grace, which is proper to the regenerate. Some understand it, as Bernard, of God's non-imputation of sin; he sinneth, but it is not reckoned for sin. But though this would agree with the former part, 'committeth not sin,' yet it would not with the latter, 'cannot sin;' for God may impute sin, though he will not. And it establisheth evil doctrine; for the evil acts of the regenerate are sins in God's account, and damnable in themselves, merito operis, and so should be reckoned by us. Others say that it is very absurd, very unbecoming; so 'cannot' is taken for a moral cannot, not a natural cannot, which noteth a monstrous incongruity, not an utter impossibility: Gen. 39:9, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' So Acts 1:20, 'We cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen.' The heart, as thus constituted, cannot be brought to it: 1 Cor. 10:21, 'We cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; we cannot be partakers of

the Lord's table and the table of devils.' That it is very absurd and unbecoming: Gen. 29:8, 'We cannot roll away the stone till all the flocks be gathered together.' It is not the law and custom and fashion among us.

Thirdly, To state the true sense of these words—(1.) I must open the assertion; (2.) Give the reasons; (3.) Show the cogency of them.

1. The assertion.

[1.] 'He doth not commit sin.' It is not to be understood, committeth no act of sin at all, but he walketh not ordinarily and customarily in any course of known sin; he doth not sin as wicked men or as the unregenerate are wont to sin. So Job appealeth to God, chap. 10:7, 'Thou knowest that I am not wicked.' He durst not avouch it to God that he was not a sinner, but that he was not a wicked sinner: Ps. 18:21, 'I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God,' saith David; and we read of ungodly deeds ungodlily committed, Jude 15. Where lieth the difference? The habitual inclination is to please God, yea, that is the drift, scope, and business of their lives; and therefore they do not cherish any evil habit and disposition of soul, nor easily fall into acts of wilful sin.

(1.) Certainly he doth not fall into any course of inordinate living in the world. There is a way of sinning which the scripture speaketh of, when men walk after the flesh, or after their own lusts: Rom. 8:1, 'Who walk not after the flesh;' 2 Peter 3:3, 'Walking after their own lusts;' and 'living after the flesh,' Rom. 8:13.

(2). As to particular sinful acts there is a difference; there are three sorts of sins—

(1st.) Some that are bare simple infirmities, which a man cannot avoid, though he would; as the first motions and risings of corruption, imperfections of duty, want of some degrees of love, reverence, and delight in God when we are employed in his immediate service, vain thoughts. These are sins; though not to be avoided by the ordinary aids of grace vouchsafed to God's people, yet they are forbidden in the law of God. God's law is not imperfect, though our natures be so. These came in by the fall. Adam in innocency knew no such things; therefore they are to be bewailed by us; but these are pardoned on a general repentance, as we address ourselves to God every day, and renew the exercise of faith and repentance: John 13:10, 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all.' They do not change our state, nor vacate our right to the promises.

(2dly.) There are comparative sins of infirmity, which are infirmities of a middle sort; not bare weaknesses and frailties incident to our imperfect state, but such as we might forbear if we kept a strict watch over our own hearts, and improved the grace and strength offered and received; as vain, idle, passionate speeches, censurings, whisperings, discontent, rash anger, and the like. Now a child of God, through suddenness and unadvisedness, may break out into some lesser escapes in this kind, but to allow ourselves in them would not stand with sincerity. It is treason to coin a penny as well as a pound-piece; therefore these comparative infirmities should be prevented by our utmost diligence, though they do not amount to gross enormities (such as drunkenness, gluttony, adultery, hatred of the brethren, false-witnessings). Though a christian cannot wholly subdue them, yet we must not suffer these to be unresisted and unrepented of, and in some measure we must overcome them. Anger will stir when we are provoked, but by the ordinary assistance of God's grace we should keep it from running out into furious words

and actions, or cursing and swearing or reviling. An envious thought may arise against our brother because he is preferred before us; but we should hate it, and labour to keep it under, chide ourselves for it; do not let our envy break out into malignant detraction from their worth, blemishing their gifts and graces. A child of God will feel the ticklings of pride, but he will not suffer it to break out into boasting language. So for distrust and discontent; it is some conquest to dash Babylon's brats against the stones. We read of Achan, Joshua 7:21, 'That he saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels; then he coveted them, and then he took them.' A child of God doth ordinarily stop at the first and second pass. There may be an inordinate desire of what we see; our senses may betray our souls; but though they covet, they do not steal; they are not drawn to lying, or deceit, or unjust dealing to get it. Some motions of revenge they may have, but they do not break out into mischievous and vindictive acts. So for sensuality; there may be inordinate motions, and fleshly desires, or urging inclinations; but they are checked, and stopped from breaking out into drunkenness, gluttony, uncleanness, lasciviousness, in speeches or actions, or making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. In short, there may be sluggishness; we may be affected with the ease of the flesh, but we will not suffer it to withdraw us from God, or grossly to neglect the duties of our general and particular calling.

(3dly.) There are great enormities, or gross and scandalous sins; now in this a christian doth not ordinarily sin. In some rare case, by the suddenness or violence of some great temptation, they may be overtaken or overborne, but they therein act quite contrary to their habitual resolutions and ordinary practice; and when they commit them, they do not lie dead in sin, though shrewdly bruised, diseased, and distempered: these do not commit them with an habitual hatred

and contempt of God, though they proceed from a less love. They have an habitual love and fear of God; as Peter, that denied Christ out of fear, yet telleth him, 'Lord, thou knowest I love thee,' John 21:18. But this love is obstructed for the time, and by this violent shock grace is so hindered that it cannot obtain its effect; they do not consider what unkindness it is to commit such sins. So their faith, though it faileth not, as it did in Peter, is obstructed, so that they cannot for the present counterbalance the pleasures of sin with the danger of it; or if they do consider these things, it is but coldly and carelessly. In short, they may fail in the degree of affection to God, but they do not change God for sin; there are dislikes and checks which arise from the new nature, yet they are not strong enough for the present to defeat the temptation, and though they be for a time foiled, yet they cannot rest or persist in sin: Jer. 8:4, 'Shall they fall, and not arise?' A fountain muddied soon worketh itself clean again; the needle in the compass may be jogged and discomposed, but it turneth to the pole again. There is a sudden recovery; as a candle sucketh light as soon as it is blown out more easily than a dead wick. Their hearts may smite them, as David's did for numbering the people, 2 Sam. 24:10. They bewail their sins: Mat. 26:75, 'Peter went out, and wept bitterly.' They run to their advocate: 1 John 2:1, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Sue out their pardon: 2 Sam. 24:10, 'I have sinned greatly in that I have done; now I beseech thee take away the iniquity of thy servant.' They relapse not, unless it be before the wound be well closed and healed. Thus they do not sin.

[2.] They cannot sin. In a regenerate man there is an aversion of heart and mind from it. He doth not simply abstain from sinning, but he cannot commit sin; he hath a strong, potent inclination and disposition, which carrieth him another way; his soul is averse from it. A child of God is never in a right posture till he doth look upon sin

not only as contrary to his duty, but his nature; it is an unnatural production, as if a sheep, instead of a lamb, should bring forth a serpent: 'A thorn cannot bring forth grapes, nor will a thistle produce figs.' And on the contrary, hips and haws do not grow upon vines, but every tree bringeth forth fruit suitable to its own nature; so one that hath a new nature showeth itself by eschewing of sin and by pursuing the death of sin. It is as natural to the new nature to hate sin, as to love God: Ps. 97:10, 'Ye that love the Lord hate evil.' There is in it an irreconcilable hatred and enmity against sin. There is a twofold hatred—*odium abominationis et odium inimicitiae*, the hatred of offence, whereby we turn away from what we apprehend to be repugnant and prejudicial to us; so is sin repugnant and contrary to the renewed will. It is agreeable and suitable to the unregenerate as draff to the appetite of a swine, and grass and hay to a bullock and horse; but to a renewed man, as meat that we loathe and have an antipathy against. Now there is in all these that are born of God this kind of hatred and antipathy against sin; it is an offence to them. Then there is *odium inimicitiae*, a hatred of enmity and hostility, which is a seeking the destruction of what we hate; we pursue it to the death. Thus the regenerate hate sin; they mortify and subdue it, and have no satisfaction in themselves till it be destroyed: *non cessat in læsione peccati, sed in exterminio*: Rom. 7:24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Now the heart of a renewed man being thus constituted, they cannot sin as others do; they are settled in such a love to God and hatred of sin, they cannot be at the beck and command of every lust, as they were before. Velleius Paterculus saith of Cato Minor, that he had gotten such a just frame and constitution of soul, that he could not but do justly. So the renewed are so set and framed, there is such a new life and a holy nature planted in them by God, that they cannot sin, that is, live and lie in sin, whatever out of infirmity they may fall into.

2. For the reasons, they are two, 'Because they are born of God;' and 'The seed of God remaineth in them.'

[1.] The general reason, from their change of state.

(1.) What is it to be born of God? It is to have a new life and nature wrought in us. To be made by God is one thing, to be born of God is another. All things are made by God, but all things are not said to be born of him; that is a term proper to the new creature. In every perfect generation, that which is born receiveth from him that begets it life and likeness. Likeness is not enough to constitute a birth. An exquisite limner may draw an exact picture of himself, yet the picture is not said to be begotten or born of him, for there is no life. And life alone is not enough; for putrid creatures, as frogs, toads, worms, animated and quickened by the heat of the sun, are not said to be born of it, because there is no likeness. When a man begets a man in his own image and likeness, then he is said to be born. To apply it to the case in hand: When we who were dead in trespasses and sins are framed anew to the life and likeness of God, we are said to be born of him. Life there is: Eph. 2:1, 'And you who were dead in trespasses and sins hath he quickened.' Likeness, or a nature in some sort resembling God: 2 Peter 1:4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature;' Eph. 4:24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness, and true holiness.' Now surely such a nature inclineth us to obey God and love him.

(2.) How this hindereth that we do not and cannot sin.

(1st.) Because this change wrought in us by the wonderful operation of God's Spirit puts a new bent and bias upon us: John 3:6, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.' We are changed from evil to good, from obeying the flesh to

obeying the Spirit, and inclined to live and walk after the Spirit. Therefore, this being the scope of the new nature, to live in a strict obedience to God, the reign of sin is broken, and the acts of it will be much prevented. Surely the dominion is taken away by the grace of regeneration, and the acts of it cannot be as frequent as before.

(2d.) He is interested in the care and protection of God. Whosoever is born of God is in covenant with him: Rom. 6:14, 'For sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace;' and adopted into his family, under his fatherly care, and God is concerned in his preservation: 1 Peter 1:5, 'Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation;' and John 10:28, 'And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' Christ therefore will not desert them so far as that they should be brought back again into the power and bondage of the wicked one, or that they should so fall into sin as to persist in it. Therefore consider a regenerate person in himself, and he may sin himself out of the favour of God, and all the hopes he hath by Christ; but as he is in the hands of God, and under his care, his heart is so governed and inclined by him, that he cannot totally and finally fall from the grace and life of the Spirit, nor easily fall into heinous acts of sin, though some infirmities remain still.

[2.] The second reason, 'Because the seed of God remaineth in him.'

(1.) What is meant by this seed of God? Some say the word: 1 Peter 1:23, 'Born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible;' Mat. 13:19, 'The good seed is the word of God.' Not improperly, because the word sown in our hearts and rooted by faith is the great let and check to sin: Ps. 119:9, 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word;' and ver. 11, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee;' ver.

104, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way;' 1 John 2:24, 'Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning: if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you shall continue in the Son and in the Father.' Others say this seed is the Spirit: John 3:5, 6, 'Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit, is spirit.' Certainly the word of God, if it be this seed, is to be considered not in the letter, but in the Spirit; for the word separated from the Spirit can do nothing to the regenerating of a sinner. The Spirit is the principal efficient, the word is the instrument. But I think by this seed of God is understood the effect of both, the principle of grace infused, or that vital grace which is communicated to us in regeneration, called living in the Spirit, Gal. 5:25.

(2.) How doth it keep us from sinning, so that he who is born of God doth not sin, and cannot sin?

I answer—This seed of God may be considered either as to its tendency and efficacy, or permanency and predominancy; all which infer the thing in hand.

(1st.) Its tendency. This impression left upon the heart doth cause it to bend and tend towards God, that we may serve, please, glorify, and enjoy him. As it came from God, so it doth incline us to God; for the tendency is according to the principle, therefore called a living to God, Gal. 2:19. It doth continually draw back from sin, and urgeth and inclineth to holiness; and therefore, when a man is about to sin, he cannot carry it on so freely, because of the rebukes and dislikes of the new nature, there being a fixed, settled frame and bent of heart towards God; therefore the heart by consequence must needs be set

against sin, which is irreconcilable with the motions and tendency of the new nature.

(2dly.) Its efficacy. The seed of God is an actuous, vigorous thing. The word seed imports it; for the spirit of the plant is in it. If it be not a dead seed, we see how it will work through the hard and dry clods to produce its plant and flower; so is this vital principle operative; it will not easily suffer us to do an act contrary to it; and it being a divine seed called Spirit, it is a principle of great strength and power. The apostle calleth it the lusting of the Spirit against the flesh, Gal. 5:17. Now if grace have any energy and life in it, it is directly contrary and incompatible with the committing of any sin. There is a seed and principle in him, which enlighten and enliven, and quicken him to serve and please God, and therefore he is held back from sin.

(3dly.) As to its permanency, a seed that remaineth; which may be understood both of its own defixion and radication in the heart of man. It is not a light touch, but a thorough change, such an impression of God as becometh a habit and holy nature in us, and is the constant principle of holy, spiritual operations; and also in regard of God's continuance of it, for it is one of the gifts of which the Lord repenteth not, Rom. 11:29. It is so planted in the heart by God that it is not lightly inclined, but thoroughly set to holiness; the good and honest heart, which, having received the word, keepeth it, Luke 8:15; a heart sound in God's statutes, Ps. 119:80. Now where the heart is thoroughly changed, soundly set, they do generally live according to the operation of this seed and principle of grace, and is so governed and inclined by it, that he doth constantly do the will of God, and war, and watch, and strive against sin.

(4thly.) This seed is considered according to its prevalency and predominancy. To its prevalency, it hath the mastery in the soul; for

though there be a double principle in a christian, you must not forget. the back bias of corruption, which still remaineth with us, and is importunate to be pleased; but yet you must carry it so that you may plainly show it is not superior in the soul, and keep watching and striving, that as little of it may be discerned as may be, that your conversations be not cast into a carnal mould, and fashioned according to the former lusts of your ignorance, 1 Peter 1:14, that sin may be mortified and beaten down more and more. The apostle supposeth the best is most powerful, so that a christian showeth himself spirit rather than flesh. The apostle describeth him here according to the operation of the better part. The old man in them is crucified, not wholly dead indeed, but dying, and greatly weakened.

Fourthly, I shall vindicate the words from abuse.

Men think, if they be regenerate, the seed of grace will preserve them without any care of their own. Herein they are mistaken, and that for two reasons—

1. Because there is an active warring principle still left in us; our lusts are but in part subdued, and our love to them is so soon kindled, that if we intermit our watching and striving, the gates of the senses are always open to let in such objects as take part with the flesh; therefore we must be beating down sin: 1 Cor. 9:26, 27, 'I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.' What is said of the new nature is not to make us idle.

2. Because grace doth not work necessarily, as fire burneth, but voluntarily; it must be excited and stirred up, both by the Spirit of God, who giveth us to will and to do, Phil. 2:13, and by ourselves: 2 Tim. 1:6, 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee.' We must be still blowing up this holy

fire, and keep it burning, as the priests did the fire of the altar. The bent of the new nature must be kept up with much watching, striving, praying, and the use of all holy means, and the vigour of it maintained.

SERMON XV

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.
—1 JOHN 3:9.

USE 1. Is exhortation, to press you that you are born of God, or profess yourselves to be so, to avoid sin.

1. You should look upon sin not only as contrary to your duty, but your nature; for the argument here is not taken from the law of God, but from the temper and disposition of a renewed man. The argument from the law is strong and binding, for no child of God should wittingly and willingly break his law. It is urged: 1 John 3:4, 'Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is a transgression of the law.' Every deliberate wilful sin is an act of disloyalty and rebellion against God, like Absalom's treason against his father. You should not sin because of the law; but here the argument is more pressing and close. 'You cannot sin,' if you be what you profess to be, because God hath given you another nature. Now for you not only to offer violence to the law, but to offer violence to your nature, to go against the very constitution and frame of your own hearts, as it is renewed by God, will aggravate the guilt of the action.

2. The argument is not taken from objective, but subjective grace. The law forbiddeth sin, and grace offereth help and remedy against it. What the law condemneth, grace teacheth us to avoid. Now grace is twofold—objective in the gospel, subjective in the heart of a believer. As, for instance, when some are said to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, Jude 4, is God's grace capable to be turned

into lust or sin? It is objective, not subjective grace, which is there meant, the doctrine of grace, not the internal grace of the Holy Spirit, which resideth in the heart of a believer. Now objective grace yieldeth a notable argument against sin: Titus 2:11, 12, 'For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' How teacheth? Not as a man that would teach one that is ignorant; but as a man would persuade and quicken one that is backward. It is more by way of persuasion than instruction, as the doctrine of grace containeth many powerful arguments against sin; and it is a shame that we do not improve them to better purpose. But here the apostle reasoneth not from objective, but subjective grace; not from the doctrine propounded to us, but the seed which remaineth in us. Now this doth not only persuade but incline us to avoid sin, and yieldeth us help and strength against it.

3. This subjective grace is a vital principle, not a lighter disposition, but a settled and fixed frame of heart towards God and heavenly things, and therefore called life, and a new nature, and a divine nature. Now if there be such a principle, such a genius, such a new nature put into us, certainly upon the account thereof we cannot sin, as those do who have not such a principle; for *principiata respondent suis principiis*; the constant effects declare what is the principle, or principles are known by their proper actions, as fire by burning, and the rational soul by discourse and speech. So 'if we live in the Spirit, we must walk in the Spirit,' Gal. 5:25, and if we have a new heart, we must show it by newness of life, Rom. 6:4. You cannot force men from their principles; you may put them out of the way a little, but they return to it again. You see it plainly verified as to the principle of corruption. Reason with men, persuade them, show them their danger, you may rouse them up a little, yet, till God change their

hearts, they still return to their former courses: Jer. 13:23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' When men are habituated to evil, no means will work it out of them, or work them to any good. Nature will return, though you seem never so much to check it, and beat it back. Proportionably, if grace be as a new nature, you will find it work after this sort. Therefore it is utterly inconsistent with making sin our trade, custom, and delight. We have felt the tyranny of sin, but when we are renewed and changed, we should also feel the sacred power and influence of grace.

4. This vital principle containeth in it an everlasting enmity and repugnancy to sin, as sin also doth to it: Gal. 5:17, 'The Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, for these two are contrary;' so contrary as never to be reconciled, no more than fire and water, light and darkness. Now a man that hath such a contrary principle to sin in his own bosom cannot give way to it without great reluctancies and dislikes, and checks from the new nature. I observe this for two reasons—

[1.] Partly to show that that doth somewhat abate the operations of the opposite principle; the flesh cannot carry it so freely, you cannot do what you would in the satisfaction of your lusts, because of this repugnancy and dislike, Gal. 5:17. Therefore, if you sin freely, you have not the new nature in you, for where it is it will make resistance. It is not wholly dead nor asleep; if not strong enough wholly to defeat the temptation, yet certainly to break the force of it, that it doth not fall upon us with all its weight: Rom. 7:15–17, 'For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent to the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' There is a contrary principle indeed, which retaineth some life and

vigour; yet surely in the regenerate it is much abated; there is not such a reconcilableness to sin as there was before. Grace serveth us for some use, giveth some strength, or else why is this gracious gift bestowed upon us?

[2.] And partly to show that these checks and dislikes do aggravate the sins which we commit. We make it an excuse; I strive against them, but do not overcome them, and so the striving is an aggravation of the sin. Carnal men have their reluctancies, which aggravate their sins; as Pilate against the crucifying of Christ, but yielded to it at length against his own conscience, for his interest's sake, to preserve the good-will of the people and his credit in his government; he would fain have washed his hands of it after he yielded to it. Balaam resisted a while, but yielded at length to the ways of unrighteousness. The conscience of most men will bear back and hold off for a time, because it apprehendeth sin to be offensive to God and destructive to the soul, but the pleasure and profit of sin prevaieth at length. Now if these reluctancies of bare natural conscience may aggravate the rebellion, and make it the greater crime for a man to venture upon that which is evil, against the checks of his own conscience, so much more doth this reason concern the people of God. He that will break through, not only when there is a rule or law in the way, but his natural disposition or the bent of a gracious heart in the way, in the general, he doth not only the sinful act, but overcometh that which hindereth the doing of it; he hath somewhat in his bosom to the contrary. Look, as it argued Christ's love to lay down his life notwithstanding the innocent reluctancies of his human nature, Mat. 26:39, these words, 'Father, let this cup pass,' did not argue his unwillingness, but willingness; 'Nevertheless, Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt;' we should not have understood the greatness of his love nor the dreadfulness of his sufferings if the human nature had not showed its just abhorrency against them; so it

argueth the great heinousness of sin to break through notwithstanding these reluctancies, not only of enlightened conscience, but the renewed heart. If unrenewed men's sins are aggravated by the dislikes of conscience, which pleads God's right and our duty, so much more will renewed men's sins be aggravated by the rebukes of the new nature, which not only show our duty, or excite us to our duty, but give us help and strength to perform it, and are so notable a check to sin.

5. There is not only an express contrariety to sin, but a predominancy above it. He that is born of God hath indeed two principles of operations in him, but the one hath the mastery over the other, and is superior in the soul, else he could not be said to be born of God: John 3:6, 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' The best principle is the most powerful; so that a christian showeth himself to be spirit rather than flesh, and that Jesus hath a greater interest in him than Adam. The apostle here describeth him according to the operations of the better part; he doth not sin, he cannot sin; the old man in him is crucified, not dead indeed, but dying and greatly weakened; the new man is superior, and governeth our hearts and actions. The heart of a regenerate man is like a kingdom divided, but grace is in the throne, and the flesh is the rebel, which much disturbeth and weakeneth its sovereignty and empire, and by striving seeketh to draw the will to itself, that it may be sovereign and chief; but in those who are born of God, they cannot be, else there would be no distinction between nature and grace; for a man is denominated from what is predominant in him, and hath chief power over his heart. If it be the flesh, he is carnal; if it be the Spirit, he is a new creature, or born of God. Many convictions, and good meanings and wishes, may proceed from common grace, and be found in those that shall never be saved, because they do not prevail over the contrary motions and inclinations. But God's children have not only a spirit

contrary to the flesh and the world, but prevailing over the flesh and the world: 1 Cor. 2:12, 'Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God.' Men are denominated from that which beareth rule in them. If sin reigneth, or grace reigneth, that is his master to which a man yieldeth himself, Rom. 6:10, by which he is ordinarily led and governed, and which disposeth of his time, and strength, and mind, and heart, and life, and love; so that though corruption remaineth in the faithful, yet it is a rebel, and the government is in the hands of grace. All the acts of sin are disowned acts, and we may say with Paul, 'It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me.' They proceed from us against the bent and habit of our wills, and settled course of life; and therefore you see how it concerneth us to carry it so that as little of the flesh may be discovered as may be, that our conversations be not cast into a carnal mould, or fashioned 'according to the former lusts of your ignorance,' 1 Peter 1:14. That sin be more mortified, and not gratified. The flesh is importunate to be pleased, but our pretences to God and regeneration cannot be justified if we should please it, and turn head against the better part.

6. This vital, contrary, predominant principle against sin is the fruit of a new birth; and if it be so, there appeareth a shoal of arguments to draw us off from sin, and to press us to avoid sin. I will content myself with two—

[1.] The way by which regeneration is brought about, which is by a deep sight and sense of sin, and the dreadful consequences of it. And surely those that have been acquainted with the pangs of the new birth will not easily venture upon sin again, as the burnt child dreadeth the fire, or those that have been bitten by playing with a snappish cur will not easily expose their fingers to such danger. You remember what sin cost you formerly when you were first reconciled to God, what terror of heart, what tremblings of soul, and how long it

was ere you could settle in a" holy peace and serenity of mind. Surely we should sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto us. Will you drink again of those bitter waters, and renew the cause of your anguish and sorrow, or taste again of the cold cup of trembling, which filled you with such astonishment and fear? A convinced sinner is filled with his own ways, Prov. 1:31. He hath enough of sin when God sets it home upon his heart. Then he seeth what an evil and bitter thing it is to make bold with God, Jer. 2:19, at what a dear rate he bought the pleasures and contentments of the flesh: and wilt thou again run this hazard? The Israelites were jealous of setting up a new altar: Josh. 22:17, 18, 'Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day (although there were a plague in the congregation of the Lord), but we must turn away again from following the Lord?' Alas! we cannot forget the old scorchings of conscience, and shall we venture once more?

[2.] The effect of it, which is a settled constitution of heart, acted and discovered either in a way of faith, or hope, and love, and so the seed of God goeth under divers names: 1 Cor. 13:13, 'And now abideth faith, hope, charity;' 1 Thes. 1:3, 'Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope;' Jude 20, 21, 'But ye beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Now all those graces which constitute and make up the new creature give us powerful arguments and inducements against sin. Therefore, if we are born of God, we are highly concerned not to sin against him.

(1.) Faith maketh use of the whole christian doctrine to purify the heart, Acts 15:9, or cleanse it from sin; especially that of redemption by Christ: 1 John 3:5, 8, 'And he was manifested to take away sin. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy

the works of the devil.' And the eternal recompenses: when sin sets the bait before you, faith sets heaven and hell before you; heaven to sweeten the ways of God, and make them more easy to us, that we may be constant in them: Rom. 8:13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' Hell to deter and frighten you from sin. When the flesh showeth you the bait, faith showeth you the hook; and so take all together, the beginning and the end, you will have little stomach to sin. When you consider how many are suffering for those sins which you are now tempted to commit, dare you venture? What! upon the everlasting burnings, into which every one is cast, whosoever maketh a lie, or giveth way to his lusts, and filthy excess?

(2.) Love, which is the weight that inclineth and poiseth us to God, and so by consequence to hate sin: Ps. 97:10, 'Ye that love the Lord hate evil.' Which is the great overruling principle which levelleth our actions to his glory, and directeth them according to his will: 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.' Sin is not only impertinent, but inconsistent with our great end.

(3.) Hope, which looketh and waiteth that we may see God, and be like him: 1 John 3:3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, as Christ is pure.' What! look for these things, and live so contrary to them? If this be the effect of the new birth, surely it concerneth us to mortify and avoid sin.

7. This birth draweth to it God's assistance; for whosoever is born of God is taken into God's family and under God's protection: 'For all things are of him, and through him, and to him;' as in a way of

nature, so in a way of grace, Rom. 11:35. They have their preservation from him from whom they received their being; the new creature is through him as well as from him; and no dam can be so tender of the young brood in the nest as God is of the new creature, which is of his own production. He cherisheth that grace which he hath infused: Phil. 1:6, 'Being confident of this, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ.' The same power doth carry on the work of grace which did begin it in us. Paul was confident of this very thing, of their perseverance in grace on this account. Now herein lieth the stability of the saints, not in the strength of their own resolutions; for our steps are apt to slip after the firmest engagements to God: Ps. 73:2, 'But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped;' for fixedness of gracious habits is not from themselves, for we are to 'strengthen the things that remain, and are ready to die,' Rev. 3:2; but from the power of God, which by promise is engaged for their preservation against all opposition. Now this doth secure God's children so far, that those who are born of God cannot degenerate so as to fall into total impenitency; and it does also condemn our laziness if we do not make use of the grace offered to keep ourselves from sin, and do not make use of the means provided, that we may be fortified against it. There is a waxing and waning grace, and ebbings and flowings in corruption; but God's covenant and paternal love admits of no abatement: our antipathy to sin may abate, but not Christ's compassion to the saints. He hath instituted, not only outward means to confirm us, but still supplieth internal grace to nourish our faith, hope, and love, that they may be lively and strong against sin.

8. If we sin wilfully, the seed of God that remaineth in us, though it be not utterly extinct, yet it is sore battered and bruised, and there is such havoc made in the soul, that it is hard to know whether we have any grace in us, yea or no. We are as if we had none; if there be any,

it is best seen first in our sudden recovery; for the time we are as if we had none. Therefore David speaketh as if the work were to begin anew, and his recovery were a kind of second conversion: Ps. 51:10, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' The grace of the Holy Spirit is so obstructed, and the flood-gate of natural pollution so opened, that it is a kind of creation, or second conversion, to restore the principle of grace to its vigour and power, as if all were to begin again. Indeed it was not so, for he presently added, 'Cast me not away from thy holy presence, and take not thy Spirit from me.' He had some interest in God still, somewhat of the Spirit left which he did not lose; though he had sadly fallen from his wonted purity and sincerity, yet he owneth some presence of the Spirit still, and desireth that God would not take it from him, as having never more need of it than at this time. Secondly, If we cannot lie in sin, but by our falls we do much more resolve and strengthen ourselves against sin for the time to come, running to our advocate, and seriously making our peace with God, 1 John 2:1, and resolve to be more watchful and cautious for the time to come: Ps. 51:6, 'In the inward parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom;' and Ps. 85:8, 'Let them not return to folly;' that is, commit such foolish and inconsiderate acts again; if it be thus with us, it argueth that the root remaineth, and hath life in it, though the branches be shrewdly rifled and withered; if they work themselves clean again, as a living spring that purifies itself; but where sin is made light of, and not truly repented of when committed, there it is not so.

9. That this avoiding of sin is here brought as the most sensible, visible note and character, to distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil: 'He that sinneth is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning: and he that is born of God sinneth not. In this the children of God, and the children of the devil are manifest.' To walk in a sinful course is plainly to entitle ourselves to

the devil, who is the eldest sinner, as being the first of the kind; the most constant sinner, for he sinneth from the beginning, never ceaseth, is never weary of sin; and the most industrious and painful sinner, for he compasses the earth to and fro to draw men into a rebellion against God; and therefore he is the father of all those that live in a trade and course of sin. But, on the contrary, he that sinneth not is born of God. God is holy, and the great work of his Spirit is to renew us in holiness and cleanse us from sin; therefore by committing or avoiding sin we may soon see, yea, the world may see, to whom we belong. And surely it doth not become the children of God to border too near upon the wicked. There should be a broad difference between them and the children of the devil, or else they dishonour their Father, because they come too near the carnal life; therefore when the two seeds are thus intermingled or blended together, it is a nice and difficult case to distinguish them; so that either it must be determined against you, that you are not a child of God, or at least you perplex the case, and make it doubtful; you are too like the ungodly, and Satan hath too much interest in you. Holiness is God's image; doth it not grieve you that you are so little like him? By his graces he keepeth possession of you; if these have not their effect upon you, you dishonour him by professing such a nearness to him, and can so little distinguish yourselves from his enemies. Surely the more nearly you are related to Christ, the more tender you should be of offending and dishonouring him. If Christ hath done his part to difference you from all the rest of the world, and you will not declare the difference, and make it manifest, you harden the world, and they will think that to distinguish between the seeds is factious singularity, not regular zeal; they hold up their ways with greater pretence, as justified by you, when you are covetous, envious, wrathful, giving to tippling or vain company.

10. The evidence of this character, and as it concerneth the satisfaction of our consciences, is made to consist in two things—(1.) That he that is born of God doth not sin; (2.) Cannot sin; and both expressions contain great arguments in them.

[1.] That he doth not sin. It is not to be understood that he doth not sin at all, for the contrary is verified by sad and lamentable experience; nor yet it doth not limit and set out the bounds so exactly and plainly as that it may be stated in the word. If the scripture had set down how much sin is consistent with grace, we should then have gone as far as we could, and would not so strictly stand upon our guard as now we are obliged to do after such a warning and intimation. That the new creature doth not, cannot sin; the very intent of these expressions is to make us afraid universally of all sin; for the infirmities of the saints may be distinguished from the presumptions of the wicked, otherwise we could have no certainty of our sincerity, and the scripture would not distinguish between the spots of God's children and the spots of the perverse, Deut. 32:5. Surely as the priests of the law had direction to distinguish between the leprosy that had malignity in it, and made the people utterly unclean, and the leprosy that did not fret the flesh, and made them only unclean for the present, so the ministers of the gospel have direction to distinguish between weaknesses and wilful failings. Yet there is great difficulty in the case; partly because some sins, which in their nature are infirmities, may prove iniquities in the committer; as suppose vain thoughts, idle words, distractions in prayer, if a man abandoneth himself to them, the case is altered; and partly because the same sin may be an infirmity in one man which is not in another, who hath more knowledge and helps of grace; and partly because that may be an infirmity at one time which is not at another, as it cometh backed with temptations, which make such a sudden and forcible impression upon the will that there is no time of

deliberation, but its consent is precipitated, whereas at other times the sin may be withstood and resisted; and partly because that which was an infirmity at first may afterwards commence into iniquity, as when a man hath sinned away his spiritual strength, broken the power of his will, lulled his conscience asleep by some foregoing sin; partly because it is hard to determine how long sensual passions may keep the soul from sober consideration. Therefore our best way is to keep up a constant care and solicitous desire to please God in all things, at least to keep the soul from settling in a trade and course of vanity and sin.

[2.] The other part of the note, 'That he cannot sin;' that is, the constitution of his soul, or the settled purpose and habitual bent of his heart, is more against sin than for it; and then it will follow that his constant course or the scope and tenor of his life is accordingly; for where sin is more hated than loved, and men are sincerely willing to avoid it, they will be watchful against it, groan under the burden of it, seek to prevent and weaken it by all holy means, as I shall show in the next verse. But here a notable argument ariseth. If we should plead, You can avoid sin, at least more sin than you do, if you were sincerely willing, we should plead strongly, and leave you wholly under blame for your transgressions. It is a certain truth that a man hath power to do more good than he doth, and avoid more evil than he doth avoid. But the Spirit of God puts the argument into other words, of a higher import and signification, 'You cannot sin;' as if the business were not whether you could avoid sin, but whether you can commit it, being thus constituted, and having these advantages of grace which you have. You complain, I cannot renounce this bewitching lust, whereas the debate lieth here, how you can live in it, and lie under the power of it; which should rouse up christians out of their laziness and cowardly fears.

Use 2. Directions in this case.

1. The general mortification must go before the particular. The general mortification is when the first thorough change is wrought in us, and 'We put off the body of the sins of the flesh,' Col. 2:11; for then the heart is fixed against sin. But the particular mortification is when some particular lust or sin is more struck at. Now the one must go before the other, because else all that we do is but like stopping a hole in a ruinous fabric, that is ready to drop upon our heads, or to make much ado about a cut finger when we have a mortal disease upon us. Besides, particular mortification dependeth on the general, as our avoiding sin doth on our being born of God: Col. 3:9, 'Put off all these, anger, wrath, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouths, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds.' Seeing you have put off all corruption, allow yourselves in no one sin. Alas! to set against a particular sin before you set against the whole body of sin, it is but to put a new patch upon a torn garment, and so to make the rent the worse; or to lop off a branch or two while the root and trunk remaineth in full life and vigour, and so it sprouteth the more for cutting. Therefore look first after the general work, that you are born again; when sin is stabbed at the heart, the particular branches and limbs die by degrees.

2. Consider where the new nature is in most danger, there is vitium sæculi, vitium gentis, and vitium personæ.

[1.] The fault of the age and nation, where sin being the more common, it is the less odious. Sins are in reputation where usually practised, and the inundation and torrent of examples carry men away strangely: Gal. 2:13, 'Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation.' Though a good man could easily condemn the practice of the rude multitude, and be as Noah, upright in a corrupt

age and time, Gen. 6:9. But when those that we honour and esteem for godliness, have adopted such an error or such a sin into their practice, the error and sin is authorised, and we run into it one after another, as sheep do out of the pasture by the gap or breach in the hedge made by others that have gone before them. Oh, take heed of this; be followers of none no further than they are of Christ.

[2.] The fault of the person. We must labour most to mortify our particular sin: Ps. 18:23, 'I was upright before thee, and kept myself from mine iniquity.' Some that we may call ours, by temper, evil custom, course of employment. Now these should be the more mortified for their own sake, and for the sake of others, for the master-lusts, like great diseases, seldom go alone. Sometimes it is worldliness, or an inordinate love of riches, which gaineth such interest in the hearts of many, that they set light by Christ and his precious benefits, and thoughts of God and heaven grow unwelcome and displeasing to them, rather desire wealth than God's favour, do not lay up treasures in heaven, but value an estate by the possession rather than the use. Some men's distemper is a sensual disposition; their hearts are carried after all the alluring vanities of the world, and are basely surprised by the baits of the flesh, cannot deny themselves, or govern their fancies and appetites. Others' distemper is pride, when they mind high things, know little of that poverty of spirit recommended in the gospel, and is reconcilable with a mean condition; they can hardly live with any but those that will honour and please them. Now the darling sin may be known by the frequency of its assaults, its power over other sins, thoughts that haunt us in duty; and every wise man knoweth where his temptations lie most.

3. Remember the lesser acts of sin make way for greater, as the lesser sticks set the great ones on fire. As in anger; give way to the

distempers of it, and from folly it groweth to downright madness, Eccles. 10:13. So for envy, if it break out into detraction, it will make us malignant, and undermine those whom we envy, and mischievous malice is the final product. So for pride and self-esteem, let it break out into boasting, and it will breed contention, Prov. 13:10. Let the love of the world make us immoderate in the pursuit of it, then God is neglected, charity omitted, and it will in time draw us to unjust gain. So for sensuality; pamper the flesh with all the delights it craveth, and in time men will be scandalous in their apparel, meat, or drink. Let lust break out into wantonness, and wantonness will produce downright uncleanness; lusts will beget acts, and these acts multiply into deeds of a more foul and heinous nature. Therefore stop betimes; when you run down-hill there is little hope of staying yourselves.

4. Renew the inclination of the new nature by the means appointed thereunto, especially the Lord's supper, which is the food of the new nature, wherein we remember Christ crucified, and we remember him, that the end of his death may be accomplished, which is, that, 'we may die unto sin, and live unto righteousness,' 1 Peter 2:24. He purchased the grace whereby this might be accomplished, and wherein we renew our covenant with God, for the strengthening our baptismal vow. Baptism is an avowed death to sin, and here we renew it again.

SERMON XVI

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.—1 JOHN 3:10.

IN these words you have the conclusion of the whole discourse, together with a transition to another. The former discourse was about abstaining from sin, the subsequent and following discourse about love of the brethren. Both exceedingly become the children of God; the one showeth their respect to their Father, the other to those in the same relation with themselves.

In this verse observe—

1. The preface, which asserts that this is the true note and character by which the two seeds are distinguished, 'In this the children of God are manifest,' &c.

2. This note of difference is referred to two heads—purity and charity.

3. They are propounded negatively, 'Doeth not righteousness, neither he that loveth not his brother.' But the affirmative is understood, that whosoever doeth righteousness and loveth his brother is of God, namely, he that liveth to God, and doth what God requireth and approveth.

Doct. 1. That there is, and should be, a broad and manifest difference between the children of God and the children of the devil.

Doct. 2. That charity and purity are true notes of God's children.

The first doctrine may bear two senses—that this difference is manifest to others, or to themselves.

1. To others. I exclude not what the apostle mentioneth, Gal. 5:19, 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest.' Look, as the lewd lives of some do plainly speak out their corrupt estate to the conscience of any discerning man; as Ps. 36:1, 'The transgression of the wicked

saith within my heart, There is no fear of God before his eyes.' Either they do not believe there is a God, or they do not really and in good earnest care for him. Now if the wickedness of the wicked doth discover itself to an attentive beholder, so, on the contrary, grace should not be concealed, but break out into the conversation: 2 Thes. 1:11, 12, 'Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of his calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him.' God is more glorified, the world more edified, and we ourselves more comforted, the more explicitly we show ourselves to be christians. The wicked man is known by his fruits: Mat. 7:20, 'Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.' And the good man by his fruits: Ps. 1:3, 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf doth not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.' But on the one side, all graceless and unconverted men do so plainly manifest themselves; and on the other, too many good christians do not so easily interpret themselves in their actions, or 'declare plainly' (in the apostle's phrase) 'that they seek a country,' Heb. 11:14, that is, heaven.

2. This being manifest is meant of being manifest to ourselves, in the sense of our consciences; for conscience is a nearer discerner of our actions than the observation of other men can be. It is hard to think that the soul should be a stranger to its own operations: 1 Cor. 2:11, 'There is a spirit in man which knoweth the things of a man.' There is a privy spy in our own bosoms, which is conscious to all that we do, and can reflect upon it, and judge of it whether it be good or evil; it knoweth when we understand, or will, or purpose, and resolve, or do anything; much more is it conscious, if not to single acts, yet to our conversation and constant course, and that for a fourfold reason—

[1.] Because acts of grace are the most serious and important actions of our lives. Many ordinary acts may escape us, they being not of such moment, for want of advertency; but surely he that acteth for eternity will mind what he doeth. This is the great business that we attend upon, and with the greatest sollicitude and diligence: Phil. 2:12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.'

[2.] All acts of grace are put forth with difficulty, and with some strife and wrestling; for there is a continual opposition of the flesh: Gal. 5:17, 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit.' Now things difficult, and carried on with much opposition, must needs leave a notice and impression of themselves upon the soul.

[3.] There is a special delight that accompanieth acts of grace, because of the excellency of the objects they are conversant about, and the excellency of the power they are assisted withal, and the excellency and nobleness of the faculties they are acted by, and the excellent ends and uses they are designed unto. There is a pleasantness in the paths of wisdom: Prov. 3:17, 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' Now the experience of this pleasure, and grief, and trouble for the contrary doth make the acts of grace more notorious to the soul.

[4.] A serious, constant, uniform course of obedience will evidence itself; for though conscience be unobservant of particular actions, yet the course and drift and tenor of our lives cannot be hidden from it. A man in a journey doth not count his steps, but he doth observe his way; so here methinks a christian should not be ignorant of his mark, drift and scope, course, and constant business. Am I going to heaven or to hell? Phil. 2:12. Am I pleasing God or men? 2 Cor. 1:12; 2 Cor. 5:9, 'Whether present or absent, I desire to be accepted of the Lord.' What is my labour, my ambition, my daily work and business?

Two reasons.

(1.) Because they are governed and influenced by different powers, God and the devil. The children of God are guided by his Holy Spirit: Rom. 8:14, 'As many as are the children of God are led by the Spirit of God.' The children of the devil by the evil spirit: Eph. 2:2, 'They walk after the prince of the power of the air, that worketh in the children of disobedience.' Now are God and the devil so agreed as that the votaries and followers of each cannot be distinguished? The children of God are led by the Spirit of God; that is, they obey his sanctifying motions, either by way of restraint, or invitation and excitement. By way of restraint: Rom. 3:13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' Or invitation and excitement: Gal. 5:25, 'If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.' On the contrary, the unregenerate follow the motions and suggestions of the devil, whom they resemble in their sin and wickedness. He doth by their outward senses tempt them to sin, and the tempted sinner soon yieldeth; and he by pleasure, profit, and credit withdraweth them from God, and hardeneth them; and they are so addicted to sin and vanity, that they cannot refrain it. Satan hath too great a power on the godly, but he doth not so efficaciously work in them as on the carnal. Therefore between these two sorts of people there should be a manifest and broad difference.

(2.) They have a different principle, the seed of God and corrupt nature: John 3:6, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.' Now both correspond with their principles. It is true the principles are mixed in the regenerate, but the better part is predominant; and therefore the acts, for the most part, suit with it, and so there is a broad difference between them and those who are only influenced by the flesh.

3. They have a different rule; the one walk according to the law of God, wherein he hath declared his will, the other according to the course of this world. According to the law of God: Gal. 6:16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the whole Israel of God.' The other according to the course of this world: Eph. 2:2, 'Walking after the prince of the power of the air, which worketh in the children of disobedience.' According to the fashion and example of unrenewed men, or the general and corrupt custom and example of those with whom we live; and they conform themselves to it more than to the will of God. Now the fashions of the vain world and the strict law of the holy God are so different, that he that walketh according to the one must needs distinguish himself from the other; there being a distinct rule, there must needs be a different course; the one doeth righteousness, the other committeth sin.

4. There is a different end and scope; the one studieth to please God, the other to please themselves. The one studieth to please God: Col. 1:10, 'That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;' 1 Thes. 4:1, 'I exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more;' 2 Cor. 5:9, 'For we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' The other to gratify their carnal desires: Rom. 13:14, 'And make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' The one seek their own things, Phil. 2:21. They spend their time in the flesh, 'to the lusts of men, not the will of God,' 1 Peter 4:2. Now there being such a different scope, the practice must be different also.

5. There is a different event and issue; all the world emptieth itself into heaven or hell. Now heaven and hell are much unlike, and vastly

distant, and so are those that are travelling to either place: Phil. 3:19, 20, 'For many walk, of whom I have told you, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' If the end be different, the way must be so also.

Use 1. Is to reprove them that profess themselves to be the people of God, but do not distinguish themselves from the children of the devil; they are so like one another that there is no manifest difference to be seen. A christian never liveth up to the majesty of his profession till he be the world's wonder and the world's reproof: 1 Peter 4:4, 'They think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot.' It is no strange matter to please the flesh, but it is strange to row against the stream of flesh and blood. It is no wonder to see men carnal, proud, covetous, sensual; the wonder is to see men dead to all these things, to be humble, meek, sober, modest. It is no wonder to see men walk as men, but it is a wonder to see men walk as born of God. It is no wonder to see men court the world, but to live in a contempt of the world, and to see men ready to part with what they see and love for a God and glory which they never saw, this is the wonder. Yet such a mystery and wonder should a christian be that liveth up to his principles. Secondly, The world's reproof; as Noah: Heb. 11:7, 'By preparing an ark to save himself and his household, condemned the world;' that is, judged them for their laziness and disrespect of God's warning and impenitency, for that they repented not when God gave them time to repent. God hath told the world of the danger of sin, and showed them the way of salvation. By our diligence and seriousness in his ways, and in the use of the means prescribed to save our souls, we must condemn the world for their sloth and negligence; otherwise, if we do not condemn the

world, we justify the world, as Israel justified Sodom, Ezek. 16:51; namely, that they are not so culpable in slighting God and the offers of salvation by Christ.

Use 2. Is information. It informeth us of two important truths; the one concerneth the ministry, the other all christians.

1. If there be such a manifest difference between the children of God and the children of the devil, then ministers must carefully make the distinction, and convince the one sort and comfort the other: Jer. 15:19, 'If thou shalt take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth;' that is, thou by thy teaching put a difference between the godly and the wicked, by confirming and comforting the one, and soundly convincing and reprovng the other; as if I myself had spoken it. The contrary is charged on a corrupt ministry: Ezek. 13:22, 'With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked ways, by promising him life.' This is to turn the ordinances of Christ to the service of the devil, and to gratify his children; as usually those that are indulgent to the wicked are severe against the godly, and traduce them with wrong imputations; as the naughty steward 'did eat and drink with the drunken, and smite his fellow-servants,' Mat. 24:49; uphold the wicked in their carnal life; but the serious are sure to meet with a buffet from them, and smart for it.

2. The other concerneth all christians, and that is, to show us the lawfulness, yea, the necessity, of trying our estate, and taking comfort in our estate, from marks and signs of grace, taken from our works or conversations. Many think this is to lead them off from Christ to themselves, but vainly; for this is the method the Holy Ghost directeth us unto.

[1.] What comfort can we take in the promises if we must not look at those evidences in ourselves which may prove our interest in them? All privileges have their conditions annexed, and our right is suspended till the condition be performed, and our comfort till we know that it belongs to us. For instance, God hath said, John 1:12, 'To whomsoever have received him, even to as many as believed in his name, God hath given this power, that they should become the sons of God.' Now how will you know that you have this power but by knowing that you are a true believer? and how will you know that but by marks and signs of faith? If you say, No man can know that he is a true believer, you make the promise vain; for what good will it do any man that adoption is promised to believers, if we cannot know whether we be believers, yea or no? If it may be known, we must look after the qualification, which must evidence it to be our privilege. Will you apply the promise to all, or some, or none? If to none, then it is in vain; if to all, then you deceive the most; for though some be of God, the whole world lieth in wickedness, and the most are the children of the devil. If to some, what is the reason of the restraint? How will you know who they are, but by being believers, or doing righteousness, and loving our brother?

[2.] It informeth us that if conscience be a judge and witness within us, in order to our joy and comfort, then we must judge by what we are, or what we have done, or how we have lived; for conscience can take notice of no other things. Now it is certain that conscience hath a great hand and stroke in our comfort, assurance, and peace: Acts 24:16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men;' 2 Cor. 1:12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world;' 1 John 3:20, 21, 'If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. If our hearts condemn us not, then

have we confidence towards God.' Much dependeth on its verdict and testimony.

[3.] We shall be judged according to these things by God, and therefore we should judge ourselves by them; for we cannot judge by a righter way than God will judge, whether our estate be good or bad. Now this is the way of God's procedure: Rev. 20:12, 'All of us shall be judged according to our works.'

[4.] If the Lord hath propounded this way as a likely course to produce solid consolation, surely man should not murmur against it, and gratify the cavils of the loose professor. But even so it is: Gal. 6:4, 'Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.' Many rejoice in this, that others are worse than they; but they should try their own work and carriage by the rule, for otherwise they do but rejoice in the sins of others. No; prove so as you may approve your own work, that is, your own state and actions.

Use 3. It is an awakening to God's people, who after long profession are no more clear in their own qualification. You should so unquestionably carry it for God, that others should know you; at least you should know your own selves: 'Examine yourselves, prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' It is a shame to live so long, and not to know what is in us. But you will say, If the case be so evident, why then do so many good people want assurance, and live in doubtfulness of their sincerity? I answer—

1. There need two witnesses: Rom. 8:16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;' Rom. 9:1, 'I say the truth in Christ, and lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' Why? Because the heart of man is so deceitful,

Jer. 17:9, and the operations of it so various, dark, and confused, that we dare not trust our private judgment: 1 Cor. 4:4, 'For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not thereby justified.'

2. That so few know their spiritual condition is through their own default, for otherwise the Spirit is ready to witness, if we are ready to receive his testimony. There is a fourfold fault—

[1.] They do not exercise grace to the life in the mortifying of sin or perfecting of holiness, and therefore the remainders of sin are active and troublesome, and grace is weak and small, and doth little discover itself in any costly and self-denying acts, and so are not accompanied with that delight and sweetness by which they should be noted and observed. Surely great things are more liable to sense and feeling than little; a staff is sooner found than a needle, and they that cross the inclinations of corrupt nature can sooner discern a divine spirit and power working in them than others that only cull out the safe, cheap, and easy part of religion; as valour is more seen in an open field than by lurking in a garrison.

[2.] It may be they do not examine their state or heed soul-affairs, that they may get their uprightness interpreted: 1 Cor. 11:28, 'But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup;' 2 Cor. 13:4, 'Examine yourselves, prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye are reprobates?' Now if men do not reflect upon themselves, no wonder they be ignorant of their own estate.

[3.] Sometimes, out of a faulty modesty and humility, they deny what is wrought in them and by them. A child of God should own his graces as well as corruptions. Hezekiah said, 2 Kings 20:3, 'O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and done that which is good in thy sight.' We should

not so far look to what we should be as not to observe what we are and have already been; for the day of small things must not be despised, Zech. 4:10. The spouse owneth grace in the midst of infirmities: Cant. 5:2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh;' and he in the Gospel, Mark 9:24, 'Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief.' We are sensible of a disease more than health. We come short of what we should have, but is there nothing of God in our souls? We should not only observe our sins and infirmities, but also take notice of the good things that are found in us. Christ taxeth this over-humility in Peter: John 13:8, 'Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.'

[4.] The general cause is laziness: 2 Peter 1:10, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' Heb. 6:11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end;' 2 Peter 3:14, 'Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace.' So far as we neglect our duty, the sense of our interest may abate. Foolish presumption costs a man nothing, but solid assurance cometh with diligence; and the more grace is exercised in acts of communion with God, the more it is known by us: Job 22:21, 'Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace.' In difficulties and afflictions: Heb. 12:11, 'No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' In all the duties of holiness: John 14:21, 23, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him. 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.' In duties towards God: Heb. 11:4, 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that

he was righteous.' In duties towards men: 1 John 3:19, 'And hereby we know we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.'

Doct. 2. That purity and charity are true notes of God's children.

These are characters laid down here, as manifest evidences whereby our estate may be determined.

First, Purity. See how it is described in the text, 'He that doeth not righteousness is not of God.' Where observe—

1. That not only sins of commission, but omission, may render our estate questionable. He had said before, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil;' now he altereth his manner of speaking, 'He that doeth not righteousness is not of God,' and so by consequence of the devil, though he should not offend by doing harm or doing unrighteousness. To do righteousness is to do that which righteousness calleth for and requireth at our hands, when time and occasion is offered; and he that doth not so is not of God; and therefore not only commission of sin, but neglect of a christian life, involveth us in this blemish of being children of the devil: Mat. 3:10, 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.' Not only the poisonous, but the barren tree. And it is made the character of the wicked: Ps. 36:3, 'He hath left off to be wise, and to do good.' To cast off or neglect the ways of wisdom and holiness is an argument of wickedness, though no other apparent evil should be charged upon us. The unprofitable servant is cast into everlasting fire, Mat. 25:30; not he that embezzled his talent, but folded it in a napkin. Many think, if they do nobody any harm, God will accept them; but what good do you do? That child is counted undutiful not only that doth not wrong and beat his father, but he that doth not give him due reverence. Therefore it should humble us that we do no more good, that we so much neglect God, that we do

no more edify our neighbour, or take care for the saving of our souls. We think omissions no sins, or light sins, but God doth not think so. Surely omissions are sins; there is in them the nature of the first sin, as considered in Adam or us; there was an aversion from God, and a conversion to the creature. In us there is *caentia originalis justitiæ*, first a want of that grace that should incline us to God, and then followeth all the corruption and pollution of nature; the daughter is like the mother. In actual sin there is a cessation of acts of love to God, then inordinate acts of self-love: Titus 2:12, 'Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.' Secondly, From the nature of the law. A sin of omission is contrary to the precept, as well as a sin of commission. To the prohibition: 'Cease to do evil, learn to do well,' Isa. 1:16. There we must use the bridle, here the spur. Thirdly, Our mercies are not only privative, but positive; deliverance from hell, and eternal life, John 3:16. God is both a sun and a shield, Ps. 84:11; Gen. 15:1, 'I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' As our mercies, so our obedience. Sinning is a direct way to hell, as doing righteousness is to heaven. Fourthly, Christ came that we might live unto righteousness, as well as die unto sin, 1 Peter 2:24; to promote vivification as well as mortification; that we might know the power of his resurrection as well as be planted into the likeness of his death; that the good principle might be cherished and induced into act, as well as the bad principle curbed and restrained. Fifthly, Because we cannot else improve our talents, but God's best gifts would lie idle upon our hands if we did not exercise ourselves unto godliness. Every relation puts new duties upon us; so doth every new gift and talent. To be sure our relation to God calleth for more duty at our hands than we are wont to perform; and the general wickedness that is charged upon mankind is, that they do not seek after God, Ps. 14:2; and Ps. 10:3, 4, 'The wicked through the pride of his heart will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts.' But besides this, consider our relations to one another, as magistrates, subjects,

ministers, christians, parents and children, masters and servants; consider this, and you will find that the greatest part of the sins of the world lieth in sins of omission. When we look into our bill, to see what we owe to God, according to the advice of the unjust steward, instead of a hundred, to put down fifty, we leave out all our omissions. We do not worship an idol, but we forget the true God days without number, Jer. 2:32. We do not take away that which is another's, but do not give our own; they do not swear, but do they honour and glorify the name of God in their conversations?

2. But let us explain the nature of this doing righteousness. It is to fear God, and walk in all his ways: Acts 10:35, 'He that feareth God and worketh righteousness.' Or he is said to do righteousness who, being justified and sanctified by the Spirit, doth give up himself to God to do his will, and maketh it the business of his life to grow more complete therein. Renewing is in it: Eph. 2:10, 'Ye are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works.' Dedication is in it: Rom. 6:13, 'But yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.' The will of God is your rule: Rom. 12:2, 'That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable will of God.' After dedication, our work and business should be to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,' Titus 2:12. This is the righteousness which should so be carried on from an everlasting principle by a divine rule to eternal ends. Well, then, they do but arrogate a place and a name among God's people that do not live holily.

Secondly, The next mark is charity; this is not mentioned at random, nor merely to bring on another discourse, but with good advice.

1. The general note of God's children is holiness, and the particular note is love of the brethren. It is a great branch of righteousness, take it largely for holiness, or more strictly for our duty to our neighbour. So alms is often called righteousness in scripture; for doing good is one special act of our duty, and so a branch of righteousness: Ps. 112:9, 'He hath given to the poor, and his righteousness endureth for ever;' Isa. 58:7, 8, 'If thou give thy bread to the hungry, then shall thy righteousness go before thee.'

2. It explaineth the former note; for righteousness and love to the brethren are joined together, and so it showeth that he doth righteousness whose works are good, and come from a good spirit, from love to God, which is the soul of all duties; for he that loveth his brother for God's sake loveth God: Gal. 5:14, 'All the law is fulfilled in this one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' How all the law? Namely, as second-table duties arise out of the first, and are done for God's sake.

3. He is speaking of being born of God, and the seed of God. We resemble God in nothing so much as love: 1 John 4:8, 16, 'He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' And we resemble the devil mostly by malice. It is the devil's work to do all the hurt he can to the bodies and souls of men, 'for the devil is a murderer from the beginning,' John 8:44. Devouring malice is the true image of Satan, the devilish nature in us. When Jesus Christ came to discover the amiableness of the divine nature to us, it is said, Acts 10:38, 'He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.' Christ did nothing by way of malice and revenge; he used not the power that he had to make men blind or lame, or to kill any; no, not his worst enemies, when he could easily have done it, and justly might have done it. No; he went up and down

giving sight to the blind, and limbs to the lame, health to the sick, and life to the dead. Therefore those that are God's children, and are born of God, and have the seed of God abiding in them, should be as zealous in doing good to all as Satan's servants are in hurting.

4. Much of Christianity consists in love and doing good. Love is made to be the fulfilling of the law, Rom. 13:8, the end of the gospel institution: 1 Tim. 1:15, 'Now the end of the commandment is charity.' The great lesson which God teacheth us: 'Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another,' 1 Thes. 4:9. The grand characteristic of Christ's disciples, by which they are notified to themselves and others: John 13:35, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' With what eyes do men read the gospel that can overlook all these things, and live in malice, envy, and hatred?

5. The parties to be loved are called brethren, and elsewhere neighbours, Mat. 22:39. By common nature every neighbour is a brother; but saints have the preeminence in this love, but not the confinement: 'Do good to all, especially to the household of faith,' Gal. 6:8; 2 Peter 1:7, 'And add to brotherly-kindness, love.' Enemies are not excepted: Mat. 5:44, 45, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.' God must be loved in all his creatures; his natural image in all men, his spiritual image in his saints. Well, then, if you would be accounted children of your Father which is in heaven, love to all in their several capacities must be your very nature, and the doing them all the good that you can must be the very business of your lives.

Use. Look after these evidences, and see they be more and more found in you.

1. Nothing quiets the mind but a persuasion that God loveth us as his children, and that he will give us eternal life. Get this persuasion once, that God is your Father and you are his children, and then all the controversy between God and us is at an end. The reason is clear: He that taketh God for a judge only can never be fully satisfied in his condition, nor live in peace; there is no safety but in God's family, and no holy security but in being his children. The great business of the Spirit of God is to clear this to us: Rom. 8:15, 'But you have received the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father.' So Gal. 4:6, 'Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;' Eph 1:13, 14, 'Whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.' The great business of our Redeemer was to purchase this blessing for us: Gal. 4:5, 'To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;' John 8:36, 'If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed.' The great privilege which we have by baptism as a sign: Gal. 3:26, 27, 'For ye are all children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' By faith as to the reality: John 1:12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' The church of the new testament, as to her outward estate, is an estate of sonship and adoption; and the truly godly have the real effect of it; they have the dignity, the privileges or the rights which belong to the children of God.

2. Purity of life and charity, which are here asserted to be the two sure signs of a child of God, are to be understood evangelically. If so, then they that lead impious and uncharitable lives are no children of God, however they flatter themselves in the goodness of their estate. The exclusive mark is more easy than the inclusive, because of the

many failings of God's children, who have a deep reverence for God's holiness and the exactness of his law, therefore they are not so clear. What shall be said to them? They must labour to make their qualification more explicit, and remember it is to be interpreted evangelically, that is, if they be sincere. The first covenant required unsinning obedience, the second alloweth of uprightness and sincerity; the old covenant bringeth all things to the balance, the new to the touchstone. If the best of us were put into the balance of the sanctuary, we should be found wanting, and then who can be saved? Ps. 84:11, 'He is a sun and a shield, and will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' The upright are the Lord's delight, Prov. 11:20. These may take comfort in God, as God delighteth in them, both in affliction and prosperity: Ps. 112:9, 'To the upright there ariseth light in darkness,' not only after, but in life: 2 Cor. 1:12, 'This is my rejoicing, the testimony of my conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.' In death: 2 Kings 20:3, 'Remember, O Lord, that I have walked before thee with a perfect heart, and done that which is good in thy sight.'

3. No sincerity is to be discerned but by our constant walk and course: 'He is a sun and a shield to them that walk uprightly;' and 'I have walked before thee with a perfect heart.' Here the upright are described by their conversations; newness of life is the perpetual testimony of our adoption. A man may force himself for an act or two; Saul in a raptural fit may be among the prophets; therefore we are to judge by our scope and walk. A child of God may be under a strange appearance in some simple acts; so the wicked have their good moods; an aguish man hath his well days: Ps. 106:3, 'But blessed are they that keep judgment, and do righteousness at all times.'

SERMON XVII

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.—1 JOHN 3:11.

IN these words we have a reason of the last clause in the former verse, why he that loveth not his brother is not of God. This is his argument: He that keepeth not God's commandments is not of God; he that loveth not his brother keepeth not God's commandments. The major is evident in itself, the minor is proved in the text, 'For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning,' &c.

In the words we have—

1. A duty, 'That we should love one another.'
2. The authority by which it is recommended to us, 'This is the message that ye have heard from the beginning.' Where—

[1.] It is a message or command, 'This is the message.'

[2.] An ancient doctrine or command, 'Which ye have heard from the beginning.'

1. The duty recommended to us, which is mutual love, 'That we should love one another;' that is, that we should love all men, but chiefly that christians should love christians.

2. The authority by which this command is enforced.

[1.] It is the declaration and message, or the commandment. Everything we read in the word of God, or hear from the word of God, is a special message sent from God: Acts 13:20, 'To you is the word of this salvation sent;' not brought, but sent. I allude to that of

Judges 3:20, 'I have a message from God to thee, and he arose off his seat.' Every message from God bespeaketh its own respect and reverence.

[2.] 'From the beginning:' The same phrase is used 1 John 2:7, 'I write no new commandment unto you, but the old commandment which ye have heard from the beginning.' This is to be understood either—

(1.) From the beginning of their conversion, since ye were called to the knowledge of God. Love is one of the first lessons of christianity; for, Gal. 5:6, 'Faith worketh by love;' and Eph. 1:15, 'After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints;' expressing thereby their christianity. Ever since they became christians they were possessed with the necessity of this duty.

(2.) From the beginning of the gospel state, or ever since the faith of Christ was published and preached in the world. This is the doctrine so often and so earnestly inculcated by Christ when he was here upon earth: John 13:34, 35, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; that as I have loved you, so ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another;' and John 15:12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.' And this is often inculcated by our apostle, as one that lay in Christ's bosom, and had a true sense of his Master's doctrine, and did partake largely of his spirit.

(3.) From the beginning of the Mosaical administration, even under the law, this was a duty pressed: Lev. 19:18, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; I am the Lord.' And the neighbour was not only the Jewish neighbour, or one that lived within the pale and line of the Jewish communion, as appeareth by the language of the commandment: Mat. 20:16, 17, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness

against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house;' which prohibitions imply the gentile as well as the Jewish neighbour. All men, considered as men in respect of nature and creation, are our brethren; so an Edomite is reckoned a brother, Deut. 23:7. So in respect of commerce and occasion of intercourse they are our neighbours; to them must we perform all acts of love and mercy, as their necessities do require.

(4.) From the beginning of the world, ever since Adam; for it was not only enforced by Christ's and Moses' law, but implanted and engrafted on man's heart or the law of nature. It is a matter of natural equity to love our neighbour, to do or not to do to others as we would have done or not done to ourselves, Mat. 7:12. The gentiles were bound to this by the law of nature. Well, then, you see love to one another was always in great esteem with God; therefore every one that is born of God should make great conscience of it. If the gentiles, by the law of nature, were bound to love others as themselves, and the Jews by the law of Moses, much more are christians under an obligation by the express command of Christ to love one another.

Doct. One great duty which God hath recommended to our obedience is to love one another.

Here I shall show you—

1. What is this love to one another.
2. How God hath recommended it to our obedience.

I. What is this love to one another? There are two branches of it: 2 Peter 1:7, 'And to brotherly kindness, charity.'

First, There is contained in it brotherly kindness, a grace wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, inclining us to love all those without exception as brethren who are made partakers of like precious faith with us. In which description note—

1. The author of this grace, and that is the Holy Spirit renewing the heart: 1 Peter 1:22, 'Seeing ye have purified your hearts through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' Naturally there is in us pride, self-love, wrath, strife, which dispose us only to please ourselves and love ourselves, without any regard to others; and besides, till our souls be purified and sanctified, we shall never love purity and holiness in others, but the upright will be an abomination to us: Prov. 29:27, 'He that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.' They are unsuitable to them, and they are objects reviving guilt. Whatever good nature men have yet in their natural condition, they are enemies to the godly. Naturally we hate God because he is a holy God, and we hate his law because it is a holy law, and we hate his children because they are a holy people; but when the soul is purified, its love and inclinations and aversions are altered, both as to persons and things. We love God for his holiness, Ps. 103:1; we love his law because it is pure, Ps 119:140; and we love his people because they are holy: Ps. 15:4, 'In whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.' The new creature loveth what God loveth, and hateth what God hateth.

2. There is a propension or inclination in the new nature to this love, with all the acts and fruits of it, though no outward respects invite us thereunto: 1 Thes. 4:9, 'Concerning brotherly love, ye need not that any should write unto you, for ye are taught of God to love one another.' Instruction and persuasion doth not put us upon it so much as inclination, and the tendency of the new nature: 1 John 4:7, 'Every

one that loveth is born of God;' and 1 John 5:1, 'He that loveth him that begat, loveth also those that are begotten by him.' Those that have the new nature in any degree of strength and prevalency are inclined and disposed by it to love others, who are partakers of the same nature; so that it is a duty kindly and natural to the regenerate, flowing from an inward propension and inclination, and needeth not much outward excitement. All the saints have a new heart of one and the same making and nature, and propound unto themselves one and the same end and scope, and so their hearts are suited to one another, and take pleasure in one another.

3. The acts and fruits of this love are these—

[1.] An esteem of them, and complacency in them, as having more of God in them than other men. They are said to be partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4. We love God's natural image in all men; we love his spiritual image in the saints; and therefore the bond is stronger than the bond of common love: Ps. 16:3, 'My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight;' Prov. 12:26, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' therefore a greater object of love; as Austin said of himself and his friend Alypius, that their friendship grew more entire when they both became acquainted with Christ, and were cemented together with the blood of Christ. *Eodem sanguine Christi glutinati.*

[2.] By an affectionate desire of their good and spiritual happiness. The philosopher telleth us to love any is to wish well to them, to desire them all the good we can; and we cannot desire a greater good to others than spiritual good, than the best good; not to wish them health and strength of body, and greatness and worldly accommodations, but grace, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and

light, life, and eternal happiness: Col. 1:9, 'We cease not to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding;' Phil. 1:8, 'God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.' God knoweth the secret motions and inclinations of our inward affections. Now, when we can appeal to God for the fervency, sincerity, and spirituality of our love, and have in some measure as hearty a good-will to them as Christ had to souls when he died for them, then we have this Christ-like love which is called brotherly kindness.

[3.] As occasion serveth, we must really promote their good to the uttermost of our power; for it is a cold love that will not be at any pains and charges, or hazard any interests, for the sake of those whom we love; that contenteth itself with wishes, yea, though they be formed into prayers. No; we must not say only, Be warmed, be clothed, but really do them good, and seek their welfare as we would our own. In short, we must sympathise with them in every condition: Rom. 12:15, 'Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep;' 1 Cor. 12:20, we should have the same care one for another. Want of feeling is a self-excommunication, a casting ourselves out of the body. Nay, there must be not only sympathy and compassion, but real succour: Gal. 6:10, 'Do good to all, but especially to the household of faith;' Rom. 12:13, 'Distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality;' Heb. 6:10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.' We must do them all possible service, as the exigencies of their circumstances and occasions do require, assisting them with our favour, countenance, labour, estates; yea, and, as we shall see afterwards, by hazarding and laying down life itself.

[4.] By conversing with them, and delighting in their fellowship, for our mutual comfort and edification. Love is a uniting thing; it

draweth to communion; as the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, 1 Sam. 18:15; and the apostle biddeth christians to be knit together in love, Col. 2:2. Brotherly love is such an affection as knits the hearts of the professors of the same faith to one another, as if they had but one heart and one soul in common amongst them: Acts 4:32, 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.' And therefore it is called the bond of perfection, Col. 3:14. The saints are bound together in a holy society, and preserved by it; and without it, as a besom unbound, they fall all to pieces.

[5.] In passing by failings and infirmities: 1 Peter 4:8, 'And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.' Love will prevent and pass by many mutual wrongs, which otherwise would disturb the comfortable society of the Lord's people; therefore brotherly love is not come to its due height, growth, and fervency when it is easily interrupted by every offence. We cannot expect to converse with any in this life but some failings and wrongs it is like will be often reiterated, both against God and one another; therefore, unless we have learned to pardon failings, we have not learned the true art of loving one another; we must pardon the person for the wrong done to us, and we must intercede with God for the pardon of the wrong done to him. Love must cover these, not upbraiding the party with them, and concealing it from the wicked as much as may be, lest religion be disgraced.

[6.] The impartiality of this love; we must love those without exception who are godly, whether rich or poor, prosperous or afflicted.

(1.) Whether rich or poor; for we must not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ in respect of persons, James 2:1. No; if it be sincere, it

must be love to all the saints, Eph. 1:15, to the meanest as well as the greatest, otherwise we despise the church of God, 1 Cor. 11:20. Meanness doth not take away christian relations. There are many differences in worldly respects between one of God's children and another, and in spiritual gifts some are weak and some are strong; yet we must love all, for all are brethren; all are children of one Father, all owned by Christ; co-heirs not only with the richest and strongest christians, but with Christ himself; therefore we should love them without respect of persons, yea, love them when no respect of our own doth invite us thereunto; for love is not to be measured by our profit, but by a desire to profit others.

(2.) We should love them in adversity as well as in prosperity. Some seem to love good people when the times favour them, and they suffer no loss by owning them. No; you must own them in their troubles also and persecutions: Heb. 10:33, 'Partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became companions of them who were so used.' Some suffered as the parties persecuted, others as their companions, who were not at first in the original process. So Moses left all the pleasures of the court, and his friendships there, to join with God's despised people: Heb. 11:25, 'Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' Alas! there are many painted butterflies and summer-friends to the gospel, who are gone when the sunshine of prosperity is gone. Brethren then do almost forget that they are brethren, if not altogether, and stand aloof, and are loath to own the afflicted.

(3.) We should love them all, whether we be obliged or disobliged; for in brotherly kindness we are not to mind our own things, but the image of God and the glory of God, and the good and benefit of others: Phil. 2:4, 'Look not every one upon his own things, but every

man also upon the things of others.' Whether we are invited to this love by benefits or courtesies done to us, or discouraged by neglects, we are to consider our duty to people as they stand related to God, otherwise we know one another after the flesh, when we value men by personal respects to us rather than by what of God we find in them: 'If you love them that love you, do not even the publicans the same?' Mat. 5:46. What singular thing do we? We are monsters of ingratitude if we should do otherwise.

(4.) The objects of this love are those that are partakers of like precious faith with us, or, in one word, the brethren, or our fellow-christians. Our brethren in a natural sense are all mankind, as it is said, Acts 17:16, 'He hath made all nations of one blood.' There is a communion of the same nature. But in a christian sense, all the faithful are brethren in Christ, because of the communion of the same faith. Of these, some are only professors of the faith, who, in opposition to infidels, are called brethren: 1 Cor. 5:11, 12, 'If any called a brother be a fornicator, or a drunkard, or a railer, or covetous, or an idolater, with such an one eat not.' Others are really regenerate, or give hopeful evidences thereof; these are born of the same seed, adopted by the same Father, brought up in the same family, partakers of the same Spirit, estated in the same inheritance, of the same brotherhood the apostle maketh mention, 1 Peter 2:17. Now though they should not be such as we take them to be by their profession, yet our love is acceptable to God, because we love them upon this supposition, that they are brethren.

(5.) The reduplication or qualification of this object. These brethren must be loved as brethren with such a love, and upon that account, as Christ distinguisheth between giving to a disciple and giving to him in the name of a disciple, Mat. 10:42; as one that belongeth to Christ, stamped with the image of God, and sealed with his Spirit. If

it be for some external respect, though the love be real in its kind, yet we have our own ends in it; as many may show respect to the people of God to get advantage by them. Self-love is great in every one of us, and therefore in sincerity to love the brethren is a very difficult thing; most have their ends in it, and make a market of their religion. Then it is brotherly kindness when we love them out of a respect to their holiness, or because of the image of God in them. A saint is to be loved as a saint, and a disciple as a disciple, *eo nomine*, not because learned, potent, opulent, but as a child of God; if so, a *quatenus ad omne*, then we will love all in whom we see anything of Christ. Love will cover something that is unlovely in them, because partakers of the same grace, and look for salvation by the same Christ. Surely we will love them whether they be of our party or no; but (*sicut se habet simpliciter ad simpliciter, ita magis ad magis*) the more godly, the more we will love them. Many love godliness in a low degree, while mingled with imperfections,—the impurity is a part of the reason of the love,—whilst a very strict man is hated. Well, then, this is brotherly love. By this brief view of it we see it is very rare to be found amongst christians. Self-love and the love of the world have almost destroyed it; and where it is, it is not so fervent and effectual as it should be. In most persons, though professed christians, we either find no love, or if any be, a very cold one, such as will run no hazards for and with those whom we love.

I come now to speak of the other branch, charity, or love to all men, for it must not confine itself to fellow-christians only, but be diffused to all men, though they be not heirs of the same grace of life. In short

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1. This love is either *amor justitiæ*, which consists in justice and righteousness. We are not to wrong them or defraud them of their due, but so deal with them as we would be dealt with ourselves; for

this is one sort and kind of love: to love my neighbour as myself, and do as I would be done by, are equivalent expressions: Rom. 13:7, 8, 'Render to every one their due; owe no man anything, but to love one another.' Again, there is amor compassionis, we must not hide ourselves from our own flesh, Isa. 58:7; we must be affected with their misery, both by reason of sin and affliction, relieve their wants, seek their conversion, and promote it by ourselves and others by all ways and means possible. This we owe to barbarians and wicked ones, of what nation soever; though we hate their ways, we must pity their persons.

2. From this love enemies and persecutors are not excepted: Mat. 5:44, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.' For this is to be like God, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil: Luke 6:35, 'But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil.'

3. The fruits of this love are not only seen in bestowing temporal benefits, but to the uttermost of our power (because they are capable of eternal blessedness) making it our unfeigned desire and prayer to God, that they may be saved: Rom. 10:1, 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved.' And our earnest endeavours should be to procure their spiritual good: James 5:19, 20, 'Brethren, if any one of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.'

Secondly, The reasons.

1. Why we should love all men. The reasons that may induce us are—

[1.] Equality, the actual equality of all men by nature, who were all made by the same God, and all made of one blood. Diversity of rank doth not take away identity of nature: Mal. 2:10, 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?' So Job 31:13–15, 'If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me: what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb, make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?, So Neh. 5:5, 'Our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, and their children as our children.' Why is more due to you than them? And the possible equality of all men, as to their condition and state of life: Heb. 13:3, 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves in the body.' Before we go out of the body there may be strange changes in the world, and God may make us as low as others.

[2.] We are to imitate God, as children do their father, Mat. 5:45. Now God loveth all his creatures, and hateth none; the more we imitate God, the more we know we are children of our Father which is in heaven.

[3.] God hath so cast the world, that sometimes we need the help or others, as they need ours, that, by mutual necessities and a combination of interests, the world may be upheld. As in the body natural, no member can say to any, I have no need of thee; so also hath God disposed it in the great frame of mankind, that we may have a mutual care of one another, 1 Cor. 12:25. As he requireth from every man a respect to the world of mankind, so he hath turned all the respects of the world of mankind upon one man. We would be

glad to be loved of all the men in the world, if we could bring it to pass; and surely we may the better expect it if we have this love to all the world.

2. Why we are to love strangers: Heb. 13:2, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for hereby some have entertained angels unawares.' By 'strangers' he meaneth those that are far from home, in another place and country, where they have few friends, and are not well known, especially when exiled for the gospel. We find this in Abraham's and Lot's instances, who were kind to the angels, and had their recompense. Abraham's barren wife had a promise of bearing a son to him. Lot had benefit also, being saved from the flames that destroyed Sodom. Surely such a work of mercy shall not go unrewarded.

3. Why enemies? Partly because there is more reason to love them than hate them, because there are some relics of God's image in them; and God hath forgiven us greater wrongs: Eph. 4:32, 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' We commit a sin against God, or else, upon the apprehension of the injury done us by man, we are deeper in danger than our enemy; we daily trespass against God more than they can trespass against us. God forgiveth talents, we cannot forgive pence; God forgiveth a hundred thousand, we cannot one hundred, Mat. 18. We look that God should forgive us, and we will not forgive others. In short, though it be more comfortable to love a friend, it is more honourable to love an enemy: Prov. 19:11, 'It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression.'

II. How God hath recommended it to our obedience.

1. It is a precept and a commanded duty, and not bare counsel and advice only. There is a great deal of difference between allowing and

commanding; where a thing is allowed, licet, it may be done; but where a thing is commanded, oportet, it must be done, a necessity is laid upon us; and therefore none must look upon love as an indifferent thing, which we may practise or forbear at our own pleasure. No; it is a debt or duty by virtue of Christ's express command, a duty to Christ, a debt that we owe to God more than to our neighbour; we owe love to them as our fellow-creatures, but chiefly upon the injunction of our Creator.

2. It is a special command which Christ hath adopted into his new law. Christ calleth it his new commandment: John 13:34, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.' How new, since it was as old as the moral law or the law of nature? Because it was so solemnly renewed by him, and commended to their care. Laws, when new, are more regarded and obeyed. Christ would ratify it afresh, that the law of love might never be out of date, but be looked upon as a statute in force and newly enacted, and fresh in the remembrance of his people. Or a new commandment, because pressed upon a new ground and pattern: before it was 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' now it is, 'As I have loved you.' The great love of Christ discovered in the gospel must leave a suitable impression on us. He came from heaven not only to represent the holy and amiable nature of God, but to propound us a pattern of love and charity. Once more, the scripture is impatient of being denied when it calleth for love to the brethren; therefore it applieth itself to our dispositions either way. Some prize old things, others new; therefore it telleth us, 1 John 2:7, 8, 'I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning.' Again, 'A new commandment write I unto you;' 2 John 5, 'Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which ye had from the beginning, that ye love one another.' It is old and not old, new and not new; thus it plieth us on all hands, that we may look

upon ourselves as deeply concerned. Some novelty is suspected, therefore he telleth them of an old commandment; it is the same which was commanded in the law, yet solemnly reinforced in the gospel. There are some commands which are new and not old, such are the sacraments of the new testament; some are old and not new, as the ceremonies of the law now antiquated; some both old and new, as the precepts of the moral law, and in particular this command of love, which, though it were enjoined before, yet it is revived by Christ, and renewed and recommended by him to his disciples as a chief and singular duty.

3. It is his dying charge: John 15:12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another.' He appropriateth it, and challengeth it as his commandment, which, though given by God before, yet he would make his own by an express charge: If my authority be of any force with you, do not entertain it with a careless indifferency, as a thing which you may neglect without any great inconvenience. The season is to be observed when those things were spoken by Christ, when he was departing from his disciples, and preparing them for his departure. Speeches of dying men are received with much reverence, especially the charge of dying friends. The brethren of Joseph, fearing he should remember old injuries, came to him with this plea, Gen. 50:16, 'Thy father did command us before he died, saying.' Let us fulfil the will of the dead. Our Lord commanded us when he died, saying, 'Love one another.' Christ foresaw how his disciples would quarrel in their Master's absence, how his work would thereby be interrupted, and their own peace; how his religion would be exposed to reproach and obloquy by the contention of his followers; therefore he left this charge, 'See that ye love one another.'

4. It is a comprehensive command; for to love one another implieth all those things which concern our duty to our neighbour. John 15:17,

'These things I command you, that ye love one another.' These things, and yet but one thing pressed, and that is to love each other. But love containeth many duties in the bosom of it: Gal. 5:14, 'All the law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' How is that to be understood? There are other precepts besides this; there are respects of love due to God, and there is justice due to our neighbour, as well as love. But love God, and we love our neighbour for God's sake; and the acts of justice which we perform to them are the fruits and products of love, and must flow from love; yea, the acts of charity, how pompous and plausible soever they be, yet if love be not at the bottom, they are not right: 1 Cor. 13:1–3, 'Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' So that all the law is fulfilled in this one word. Therefore love is called the fulfilling of the law, Rom. 13:8.

5. It is a duty that fitteth us to partake of the blessing which God hath commanded for his people when united: Ps. 133:1–3, 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon Aaron's head, that ran down upon the beard, that went down to the skirt of his garment; as the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descendeth upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.' This holy concord is a blessing both pleasant and profitable. God delighteth to pour out his graces on such a society: Mat 18:19, 'I say unto you, If two of you shall agree on earth touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.'

God will not hear one sort of his children against another; it is like 'the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirt of his garment.' There the pleasantness is described by the fragrancy of the holy ointment wherewith Aaron and his sons were anointed; it is often called the oil of gladness, because it cheered the spirits of the chief priests, and all that were present in the temple. The profit of it, ver. 3, 'As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.' It is as the dew which moistens the earth, which was a great blessing in those hot countries, and caused the fields to laugh with fatness; he mentioned Mount Hermon and Mount Zion. Hermon was a fat and fruitful place; it is usually put among the fair and pleasant pastures. There is the blessing; they have most communion with God who have most communion with one another, and all this is in order to eternal life.

6. This is a duty that doth most discover the temper of our religion, which is wholly made up of love. It is a God of love that we serve, and they have no acquaintance with him that love not their brethren: 1 John 4:7, 8, 'Let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.' Again, 1 John 4:16, 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' Redemption by Christ, which is the great mystery of the christian religion, the most conspicuous end was the demonstration of God's love: John 3:16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' So 1 John 3:16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us.' What is this mystery of redemption but a wonder of love? It was love stepped in, and recovered us out of that destruction and ruin wherein we had involved ourselves. What was the Son of God but love incarnate, love coming down from

heaven to earth, to die for a sinful world? Now why was all this made known unto us? Only to talk of, or comfort ourselves withal? No; that we might imitate it, that the true stamp and impression of our religion may be upon our hearts: Eph. 5:2, 'Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us;' 1 John 4:11, 'If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' He that seeth the true face of redemption, and understandeth the gospel and the grace of Christ, will easily be induced to see the reasonableness of such a duty. And what is the work of the Holy Ghost but to shed abroad this love in our hearts? Rom. 5:5; the intent of the ordinances, but to represent this love and seal up this love? So that we do express the true genius of our religion by love.

Use. The use is to show us the excellency, and amiableness, and beautifulness of the christian religion in both these regards, as it requireth brotherly kindness and charity. Brotherly kindness or communion of saints: some things are pleasant and not profitable, as vain delights; some things are profitable and not pleasant, as afflictions and the sorrows of repentance; some things neither profitable nor pleasant, as hatred, variance, strife; some things pleasant and profitable, as the concord of God's people. Man is a sociable creature, and religion doth mightily befriend human societies; for besides that brotherly kindness, that it requireth to be exercised among christians themselves, it requireth also love to all men, not only forbidding injustice to the names and persons of others, but uncharitableness, and those oppressions and injuries wherewith the world aboundeth. These things would be banished if men would be but true to this religion, and love their neighbour as themselves. It commands universal love and kindness among men, a readiness to forgive our greatest enemies. How easily would men be induced to pardon wrongs! how patiently would they bear a modest dissent, where in this state of frailty all men cannot force their

judgments to be of another mould and size! How far would men be from doing hurt to one another, hurt no man, speak evil of no man! Yea, how beneficial and helpful would men be to one another, seeking others' good as their own, affected with one another's welfare as their own, and rejoicing in it! Oh, that the world would consider how much of Christianity consists in love and doing good! Without that there is nothing so fierce, so bad, so cruel, which you may not be drawn to think, say, or do against your brother. The world is prejudiced against religion as an ill-natured thing, but there is no ground for such a prejudice, when we consider the christian religion requireth nothing but what is most fit for God to command, and most reasonable for man to obey.

SERMON XVIII

Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.—1 JOHN 3:12.

THE apostle having urged the precept of brotherly love, now speaketh of the contrary, which is hatred to the power of godliness, and of this by way of instance and example. This instance is fitly chosen—

1. As being a most eminent example, or an early discovery of the malignity of corrupt nature. Therefore Tertullian calleth Cain the patriarch of unbelievers. Enmity to religion began betimes, and the world keepeth its old wont, then, and now, and ever. Those that will live godly in Christ Jesus must expect troubles, 2 Tim. 3:12.

2. As best to represent the tragical effects of envy and hatred. When once brotherly love faileth, there is nothing so bad and cruel which

you may not be drawn to do against your brethren; for corrupt nature is cruelly bent against all that stand in the way of our esteem and desires. When once a brother is represented as an enemy, if it be in the power of our hands, what will we think unlawful to be acted against him? If malice be curbed and restrained, we seek to draw those in with us who have power to serve our private quarrels and revenges; and hatred given way to will not be slaked without blood and ruin.

3. It showeth that devouring malice is the true devilish nature: 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one.' It was one of Cæcolampadius' observations in a sermon to the children of Basil, that the ordinary pictures of God and Satan were in good books for the instruction of children either in the nature of God or Satan. The truest representation that can be made of God to children should be to teach them what truth is, what mercy is, what love is, what goodness is, for this is God; and the best picture that can be taken of Satan would be the true characters of malice, falsehood, envy, and hatred. God is love, God is mercy, God is goodness; but falsehood, envy, and hatred, and cruelty are natural to the old serpent: 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.'

In the words observe—(1.) Cain's fact; (2.) The reason of it.

1. His fact, 'He slew his brother.'

2. The reason. In this latter, one reason is expressed, viz., contrariety of practice; *acerbissima sunt odia ex diversitate morum*. The other implied envy at God's favour to him, for envy soon runneth into malice.

First reason. Abel is seldom spoken of in scripture, but he is honoured with the title of righteous: Mat. 23:33, 'From the blood of

righteous Abel.' So Heb. 11:4, 'By which he obtained witness that he was righteous.'

Second reason. Envy at God's favour: Gen. 4:4, 'God had respect to Abel and his offering.' It must be known by some visible token, for thereupon Cain's countenance fell, and in his wrath and envy he slew his brother. Some say, as Claudius Marius, that the smoke of Cain's sacrifice went downward to the earth, and Abel's upward to heaven; others say other things, but without any clear warrant. Probably the sign was fire coming down from heaven, and consuming Abel's sacrifice to ashes. The apostle telleth us, 'God testified of his gifts,' Heb. 11:4. Theodosius saith, Surely this was the sign of God's favourable acceptation afterwards: Ps. 20:3, 'The Lord accept thy burnt-offerings;' in the margin it is, 'turn to ashes.' So Lev. 9:24, 'At Aaron's sacrifice there came a fire out from the Lord, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the fat.' So in Elijah's contest with Baal's priests: 1 Kings 18:38, 'Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.' So in Gideon's sacrifice: Judges 6:21, 'And there rose up a fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh.' So Manoah's sacrifice: Judges 13:20, 'The flame went up towards heaven, and the angel ascended in the flame.' So 1 Chron. 21:26, 'The Lord answered David by fire from heaven on the burnt-offering.'

Doct. That there is such a sin as antipathy against the power of godliness, or a hatred of others because of their strictness in the service of God, and diligence in heavenly things.

1. I shall give you instances of this in the word of God.
2. Some discoveries of this malignity.

3. The reasons of it.

I. Instances of it from scripture. The world's hatred is disguised under other pretences. Now what doth the word of God say? The word of God doth tell us doctrinally that it is so, and giveth instances and examples of it.

1. Doctrinally that it is so: let us take notice of that place which describeth the first rise of it: Gen. 3:15, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' There is a natural enmity between the two seeds, as there is between a wolf and a lamb.

2. By way of instance and example, to see how this spirit of enmity hath been working, and how the men of God have had bitter experience of it. Thus Abel was slain by Cain; Isaac was scoffed at by Ishmael; and Jacob was driven out of his father's house by his brother Esau.

II. Discoveries that this hatred that is commenced against the people of God ariseth from an antipathy to godliness, though wicked men will not own it to be such. But to remove cavils, let us see how it appeareth that this hatred is the effect of their abhorrence of that which is good and holy.

1. This is some discovery of it, because the servants of God have been hated most, and troubled by the worst of men.

2. Because the best men, who have the least allay of corruption, and are most eminent for strict and exemplary conversations, are most hated and maligned.

3. Because when religion is accompanied with other things, that a man would think should assuage malice and allay the heat and rage of men against them, yet it escapeth not. Thus godly meek men, that are guilty of nothing but worshipping God in sincerity, and desiring to go to heaven with all their hearts, are most persecuted in this world.

4. It appeareth by their inventing of lies and ridiculous crimes to palliate their hatred; as against the primitive christians, their worshipping an ass's head, their drinking the blood of a child in their meetings.

5. Because if a man be strict, mortified, sober of life and behaviour, the world is apt to judge him one of such a hated party; as if any named the name of God with reverence, they suspected them for heretics if they said, 'If the Lord will.'

6. The consciences of wicked men are a thousand witnesses.

7. It appeareth by the joy that wicked men take when they have anything offered to justify their opposition, as the scandal of any that profess the ways of God.

III. Having given the instances of the world's hatred, I come to the reasons.

1. The difference and estrangement in course of life is a provoking thing; therefore men that live in any sinful course are loath that any should part company with them.

2. This is not all; it is not only a difference, but a difference about religion; and usually hatreds that arise from difference in religion are very deadly.

3. It is not only difference about religion, but between the true religion and the false.

But why is there such a spite and enmity at the sincere and serious profession of the true religion? I answer—

[1.] The devil's instigation is one cause; he hath great rage against the saints.

[2.] On man's part there seemeth to be a double reason—pride and envy.

(1.) Pride, which is impatient of reproof.

(2.) Envy at God's favour bestowed on them.

Use 1. Is to press us to avoid this sin and snare of death, especially in these times of dissension. Whatever party and sort of christians you stick unto, be not drawn to hatred against the power of godliness. We are told that in the latter times men shall be despisers of those who are good, 2 Tim. 3:3, not-lovers, or haters, as the word signifieth. It is a more common sin than we are aware of. Indeed this spirit of enmity and malignity walketh under a disguise, seeketh other pretences wherewith to mask itself. But the children of God should beware of it, lest the sheep act the wolves' part, and cry up a confederacy with the wicked world in their spite against others of God's children. Now that we may avoid this snare, I will represent—(1.) The commonness of the sin; (2.) The heinousness of it; (3.) Some remedies against it.

First, The commonness of the sin.

It appeareth by this, that the scripture everywhere divides all the world into two ranks—the godly and the ungodly, the converted and

unconverted, the unsanctified and sanctified, the carnal and spiritual, the earthly-minded and the heavenly-minded, the children of God and the children of the devil; and Christ will at last divide all the world into sheep and goats. Thus standeth the case, not only between the church and the world, but within the church, between the serious and profane, the real and nominal christians; though they have the same bible, creed, and baptism, yet they hate one another, malign one another. It must needs be so, for otherwise these things are said in vain, for the scriptures are not written to infidels. Therefore it concerneth us to look to ourselves, our own soundness and sincerity with Christ. If we engage in the differences and espouse quarrels before we are gained to Christ, take heed the quarrel be not rather against the life and practice of religion than a pure zeal for the truth; and that we do not reproach those for heretics and schismatics that are more diligent and serious in God's service than ourselves; for the zeal of the carnal is always to be suspected. First plant the fear of God, and then men will best own the cause of God. Certainly it is usual for the formal to hate the serious, and the christian in the letter to despise him who is so in the spirit. An outward, superficial, apocryphal, bastard holiness filleth us with this hatred. Cain had his sacrifice as well as Abel, but Abel goeth thoroughly to work, and was accepted, which Cain doth not, and therefore hateth and killeth him: Isa. 66:5, 'Your brethren that hate you, and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let God be glorified.' Men that are brethren, that profess the same religion, yet being loose and false in it, may hate others that are strict and true; as it is said in the Revelations, they pushed with the horns of the lamb. Therefore it concerneth us to consider—

1. What is our state, what is the ground of our quarrel, what are the ends and motives in all contests that we have with others.

2. If the cause of the quarrel be never so good and just, yet it may be carried on with too great heat and animosity against godly brethren; bitter zeal argueth some breach made upon brotherly love: James 3:14, 'If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.' Those that have this bitter contention, or feverish kind of zeal, have seldom a true zeal for God, but a partiality to their own interests, if not a hatred against their brethren. It is a spirit of carnal envy against the credit and reputation of others, a kitchen, not a celestial fire; and though it be not downright mischievous hatred, yet it is a great unkindness, as Job was too deeply censured by his godly friends.

3. There may be a secret rising of heart and envy against the purity and strictness of others, even by some of those who are right for the main themselves. It should promote holy emulation and imitation; so the apostle saith, 'Your zeal hath provoked many,' 1 Cor. 9:2, and Heb. 10:24, 'Let us provoke one another to love and good works.' But many times it draweth envy, and then natural malignity beginneth to work. You had need to suppress it betimes, for lusts stirred will grow more tumultuous. One eminently godly man may reprove the conscience of another by his life; they cannot look upon it without some shame and check: it should stir in us only a holy emulation, not a carnal envy.

4. In opposing those that are godly, you had need be tender, that you go upon sure grounds, and that your opposition proceedeth not to mischievous violence: Mat. 18:6, 'He that offendeth one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.' As was said concerning Paul, 'Take heed what you do, for this man is a Roman.' Men that know the danger will not easily kick against the pricks, at least do not join with the opposite: 'Eat and

drink with the drunken, and beat your fellow-servants,' Mat. 24:49; and cry up a confederacy with wicked men to promote your private differences with more advantage; there may be much of the hatred of godliness in it. The devil will be a defender of the truth and church with a bloody and killing zeal, so the soundest and holiest members be destroyed; those go in the way of Cain, Jude 11, if slaughters and massacres will do, and so think they serve God by murdering his servants, John 16:2.

5. If you be glad when you find any blemish to eclipse the lustre and glory of their innocency, this argueth a secret hatred to them as godly: 'Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth,' 1 Cor. 13:6; and Phil. 3:18, 'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ.' They were not real christians, but enemies to the cross of Christ. You are glad at the miscarriages of some, and those few are cast upon all.

Secondly, The heinousness and greatness of the sin.

1. A malicious opposing of those that are good, and do belong to God, under that consideration, bordereth near to the great transgression, which is a malicious desertion or opposition of the truth after sufficient conviction; it is not it, but it cometh near to it in the height of it.

2. Religion is a commendation of kindness on the one side, so it is an aggravation of malice on the other: Mat. 10:40, 'Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, he shall not lose his reward.' Therefore to hate men for their godliness is a provoking sin.

3. It is a mark of a child of the devil, the express image of Satan. Thereby our Saviour convinced the Jews to be of their father the devil, because they hated him that came from God, John 8:40. You express Satan's image to the life when this is the ground of hatred.

4. When you have no other quarrel against them but their goodness, that which should be the cause of the greatest love is the cause of the greatest hatred; and so God himself is despised when his image is despised and the devil's had in reverence and honour.

5. This sin is the greater because of the many blessings we enjoy by them; they are the honour and blessing of a country. Elijah, that was counted the troubler of Israel, yet is by the prophet called the chariots and horsemen of Israel, 2 Kings 2:12, that is, the defence of the country. When such are gone, it is the worse for any people: Gen. 19:22, 'I cannot do anything till thou art gone thither;' Acts 27:24, 'And I have given thee the lives of all that sail with thee in the ship.'

Thirdly, The means to avoid it.

1. Keep up the love of all men. He is not godly that loveth not all men with the love common to christianity, and those that fear God with a special love; the one is the preservative from dashing against the other. Free the mind from malice, and you will free it from hatred to the power of godliness, for malice blindeth men that they cannot see the good in those they hate. You are at the greatest distance from this sin when you take heed of the hatred of any man. We should love all with the love of good-will, though our delight should be in the excellent ones of the earth. Live in enmity and malice with none, though you take just offence at their sins. Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day, 2 Peter 2:8, yet he lived peaceably in Sodom. They are an abomination for caution to ourselves, but not with a mischievous hatred.

2. Take heed of an uncharitable appropriating of Christ; this is the readiest way to confine your love, and hate all the world besides; but love the gifts and graces of God in any party and sort of men, for God's interest lieth not in one party; do not therefore impale the common salvation, 'theirs and ours,' 1 Cor. 1:2. If God hath received him, though weak, we should own him. The devil hath a great hand over those that enclose all religion within the lines of their communion, either because their party is the best, or greatest, or uppermost, or chief in the house, city, or kingdom; they are all the church. Alas! often it is so, but God will not reckon his children by the opinion of an angry brother.

3. Do not think evil of any without constraining evidence, for 'charity thinketh no evil,' 1 Cor. 13:5, 6. Charity doth not force and wrest things by a strained interpretation. For our caution, if they be as bad as malice can imagine, and you certainly know any fault by them, take warning to avoid it; and consider what need there is of watchfulness, when they that set their faces heavenward do so fall and stumble in their way thither; and see what need you and others have to be better. This is to improve the failings of others, not to censure them.

4. Cherish those that invite you to love, as messengers from the God of love: 'For this is the message we have from the beginning.' But those censurers, backbiters, and slanderers, that make the worst of other men's actions, look upon as Satan's messengers inviting you to hate your brother, as if they said, I pray hate such a one; for he that speaketh evil of another without a just cause and call doth but entice you to hatred and mischief, at least to abate your love; for to persuade you another is bad is to persuade you to hate him.

SERMON XIX

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.—1 JOHN 3:13.

IN these words you have an application of the instance of Cain—(1.) For the support of present believers; (2.) As a new motive to brotherly love.

1. For the support of present believers. The world is of the same spirit that Cain was; he envied his brother and slew him, to presignify to the world what the corrupt nature of man would prove, and how opposite the carnal and wicked would be to the sanctified; what the holy seed, who are accepted of God, must look for in the world, and patiently endure for the hope of an everlasting blessedness with God. The world was of the same spirit that Cain was; and if we be upright, the same causes of hatred do continue still.

2. As a new motive to brotherly love. The children of God should love one another the more fervently, because they are all exposed to the hatred of the world. The same connection you may observe, John 15:17, 18, 'These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hate you, you know it hated me before it hated you.' The world's hatred to believers is a strong argument to persuade them to love one another. You are sure to meet with hatred from them, and therefore you must be more careful to maintain mutual love between one another. Usually when love decayeth, God doth enkindle and blow it up by the storms of persecution. Eusebius said that before the tenth persecution the church was rent and torn by intestine broils, pastors against pastors, and people against people. Ease and pride beget wantonness, and that maketh way for contention. We warp like green timber in the sunshine, and rend from one another; the dog is let loose that the sheep may run together. Nazianzen was wont to call the enemies of the church the common reconcilers: it is well when it proveth so. To this end is this spoken.

Doct. That there is no cause of perplexing wonder at the world's hatred.

For distinctness we will put it in two propositions.

1. That the world hateth God's children.
2. That when we feel the effects of it, we should not marvel at this hatred.

For the first point, we shall handle four things, and show you—(1.) What the world is; (2.) What God's children are; (3.) The hatred of the one to the other; (4.) The reasons of it.

First, What the world is. By the world is meant all carnal and unregenerate men, they may be delivered to us under a fourfold character: It is a foolish world, a sensual world, a lazy world, and a furious world.

1. A foolish world: Titus 3:3, 'We were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived.' They are all blinded with the delusions of the flesh, and very hard to be convinced of their mistakes and errors: 2 Peter 1:9, 'He that lacketh grace is blind, and cannot see afar off.' They are ignorant, and wander in darkness, and yet will not be convinced of their ignorance. Herein spiritual blindness differeth from bodily. If a man be blind as to the eyes of his body, he would be glad of a meet guide: Acts 15:4, Elymas, when struck blind, would have somebody to lead him by the hand. But it is not so with them that are spiritually blind; they count it a torment if any would direct them and guide them into the right way; they are angry with those that would stop them in the way to hell: Prov. 4:1, 'A fool rageth, and is confident.' They are never more ragingly confident than when most deceived and most blind. Therefore in the world folly carrieth

it, and wise men are discouraged, and tempted often to leave the foolish world to itself, as likely to do no good upon them, but only to bring hatred upon themselves.

2. It is a sensual world, where the beast rideth the man, and reason and conscience are enslaved to sense and appetite: Titus 3:3, 'Serving divers lusts and pleasures.' Wantonness and pride, and sports and vanity, and living in excess in meat, drink, and apparel, is the business of their lives, and their whole time is spent in making 'provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof,' Rom. 13:14. If you tell them of a soul to save and lose, you are an enemy to their designed course of life, and they think you infringe their liberty, and have a plot upon them, to make them mopish and melancholy. To invite this sensual world by counsel or example to a holy, self-denying life, is as if you were about to snatch away the prey from a ravening wolf, or the carrion from a hungry dog, and they are ready to turn again and rend you; and therefore a godly man maketh himself to such either a scorn or a prey; you cross their lusts, and check their very natures and inclinations; they think strange you are not affected as they are, and whilst you invite them to godliness, you do but tempt their reproach: 1 Peter 4:4, 5, 'They think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: who shall give an account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead.'

3. It is a lazy world, that will not be put out of their pace in religion, which is so slow and easy that it will not displease the flesh. Man in his degeneracy yet retaineth a conscience, and therefore though he serveth his lusts, yet must have some religion to please his conscience and palliate his lusts, but as little as may be serveth the turn. Conscience is like the stomach, which must be filled; therefore if it be not able to digest solid nourishment, it sucketh nothing but

wind, and filleth itself with wind. The conscience must have a religion, but a dull, cold, and dead-hearted form serveth the turn; the life and power which the faithful subjects of God seek after, and recommend to the world, is too searching, and not for their turn. Mat. 9:17, Christ compareth these duties to new wine, full of spirit and life; and pharisaical fastings and hypocritical devotions to taphash, alluding to their skin-bottles. There is a spirit in holy serious duties, which old bottles cannot bear without breaking; and therefore if you cross and put them out of their dead way, they cannot bear it.

4. It is a malignant or a furious world: Titus 3:3, 'Living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another;' who have an implacable hatred to godliness; because of their malice they will hate, and because of their multitude and power they often can trouble us: 'The whole world lieth in wickedness,' 1 John 5:19. Some are more venomous, and have an inbred radicated envy to all that goodness which themselves want; but all dislike goodness and serious thoughts. Some are more gross in the outbreking of their malice and sensuality, but all have a spice of this malignity, because of the perfect difference and contrary course of life between them and the people of God. In short, they mind earthly things, while the other mind heavenly, Phil. 3:19, and so are enemies to Christ, and his interest and people: 'They are of the world, and speak of the world, and the world heareth them,' 1 John 4:5. They serve the god of this world, 2 Cor. 4:4; and surely he hath rage enough against the sanctified; and they have their portion in this world, Ps. 17:14, all that which they prize and value. These are one of the parties which are here described, the world.

Secondly, What God's children are and should be? A wise, holy, and self-denying company, whose work and scope it is to please, and glorify, and enjoy God.

1. They are such as place all their hopes and happiness in a life to come; there is their treasure, Mat. 6:20, and there are their hearts and affections, Col. 3:1, 2. They dare not choose perishing things for their portion, but look mainly to things unseen and eternal, 2 Cor. 4:18.

2. They make it their business to get thither: Phil. 2:12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;' and Phil. 3:20, 'But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour.' Their life and love, time and strength, minds and hearts, are wholly taken up about these things.

3. They use this world only in order to the next: Heb. 11:13, 'And were persuaded of them,' viz., the promises, 'and embraced them, confessing they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.' And contemn all the wealth and glory of the world in comparison of God and their own salvation, and meddle sparingly with the delights of the flesh, lest their hearts be perverted or diverted from better things: 1 Peter 2:11, 'As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.'

4. They are willing to take others along with them to heaven, partly out of pity, as having been once of the world themselves, as opposite to God and godliness and godly people, and unmindful of heavenly things, as others are, till the Lord Jesus delivered them out of that cursed estate: Gal. 1:4, 'Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.' Therefore moved with the more pity and compassion towards others, who are left in these chains of darkness and sensuality: Titus 3:2, 3, 'Showing meekness to all men; for we ourselves were sometimes disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts.' And partly because grace is diffusive, and will seek to propagate itself, as fire turneth all about it into fire: 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.' Mules and creatures of a bastard production do not propagate after their kind. A good man would be saving all he can; he that believeth heaven and hell cannot think with patience of the perishing of souls for which Christ died, but endeavours to save them. Now these are the children of God, or such as these they should be; and it will be hard for a holy man to pass through his whole life without his portion of the world's hatred. Certainly few that are truly wise, good, and heavenly can escape it. Two things in this kind of conversation are distasted—

[1.] It is convincing, and has the force of a reproof on those that will not submit to this way of living: Heb. 11:7, 'Noah condemned the world.' When you convince and condemn the foolish, furious world, it will show itself an opposite world.

[2.] It is provoking: 2 Cor. 9:2, 'Your zeal had provoked very many.' The holy, heavenly, charitable life hath an excellency in it; it provoketh to imitation, or it provoketh to envy, or heart-rising indignation and opposition; and therefore because the good have no mind to imitate the bad, the bad will emulate or hate the good. They convince the carnal, provoke the lazy; therefore they hate them, and do not imitate and follow them; but where God blesseth the example of heavenly, mortified, and self-denying christians, to the conversion of others, it hath a provoking efficacy in it. Holy conversation worketh as the word worketh; some are pricked at the heart, some are cut at heart: Acts 2:37, with Acts 7:54, they that were pricked at heart were converted and healed; they that were cut at heart gnashed upon Stephen with their teeth.

Thirdly, The implacable hatred of the carnal to the sanctified showeth itself many ways, but they may be referred to these two—violence and calumny or reproach. So our Saviour hath sorted them: Mat. 5:10, 11, 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake.' There is a twofold effect of hatred—persecution and slander; the greater or lesser sort of persecution, when they pursue their persons with violence, casting them out of the church, yea, out of the world: John 16:2, 'They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that he that killeth you thinketh that he doeth God good service.' But sometimes men's hands are restrained from blood, but their hearts boil with malice; therefore they seek to make religion odious, and cast out the names of the people of God as evil, by scorning and reviling them, and taking all occasions to slander them and misrepresent them, and that either with princes, by insinuating to them that they who are seriously godly are enemies to their interests, and such an odious sort of men as are unfit to live in their dominions. As Haman said of the Jews, 'There is a certain people whose laws are divers from all people, neither keep they the king's laws, and therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them to live.' Alas! were we conscious to all the insinuations which are whispered and buzzed into the ears of the kings and princes of the earth, we should wonder more at God's providence and our protection. Sometimes they take all occasions to slander them to the populacy; as those envious Jews, Acts 17:6, 'These have turned the world upside down, and are come hither also.' It may be they may be troublesome to a corrupt world, as a physician is with his medicines to a body filled with ill humours. If they trouble the world, it is for their health, for their peace, for the saving of their souls. Again, they revile and scorn them upon ordinary private occasions; as David was the song of the abjects and hypocritical

mockers in feasts, Ps. 35:15, 16. They expose them to the contempt of base people, and their names are torn and rent in pieces in every jovial and festival meeting; and when they are warming themselves with wine and good cheer, one dish brought to the table is John Baptist's head in a charger, some godly, christian, and grave minister; and usually scoffs and jests at godliness are the most relishing sauces of all their banquets. The dinner never goeth well off unless they scoff and rail at some that fear God.

Fourthly, The reasons; and they are—

1. Ignorance; which is twofold—simple and plain ignorance, or the ignorance of prejudicate malice.

[1.] Simple and plain ignorance: 1 John 3:1, 2, 'The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.' They know not our birth and breeding, our hopes and expectations, and are not acquainted with the nature and worth of spiritual things, and so it is but the scorn of a fool that valueth a carnal life above a spiritual.

[2.] Prejudicate malice. When men will not search into the principles, practices, and reasons of the godly life, they are willingly ignorant; they will not hear any arguments and reasons, because they have a mind to condemn and hate; and so will not understand the thing they judge of: Jude 10, 'Speak evil of the things they know not.' Justin Martyr's complaint was, that the christians were condemned unheard, without any just inquiry into their principles and practices. A nearer view would undeceive them, as Peter Martyr's similitude, related by Celius Secundus Curio in the life of Galiacius, expresseth it, that if they were not blinded by malice, they might see a beauty in the ways of God, and the reasons and motives by which his children are governed. One John Francis Caserta, a nobleman, was earnest with his cousin to hear Peter Martyr preach. One day with much

entreaty he was drawn to hear him, not so much with a desire to learn and profit, as out of curiosity. Peter Martyr was then opening the first epistle to the Corinthians, and showing how much the judgment of the natural understanding is mistaken in things spiritual. Among other things, he used this similitude: If a man riding in an open country should afar off see men and women dancing together, and should not hear their music according to which they dance and tread out their measures, he would think them to be a company of fairies and madmen, appearing in such various motions and antic postures; but if he came nearer, and heard the musical notes, according to which they exactly dance, he would find that to be art which before he thought madness. The same happeneth to them who at first see a change of life, company, fashions in their former conversations; he thinketh they are brain-sick and foolish; but when he cometh more intimately to weigh the thing, and what an exact harmony there is between such a life and conversation and the motions of God's Holy Spirit and the directions of his word, he findeth that to be the highest reason which before he judged madness and folly. This similitude struck this gallant to the heart.

2. Envy, because of the different course of life, and the privileges attending it, comfort, blessing, success. So Pilate knew that the priests delivered Jesus for envy, Mat. 27:18. Avarice sold him, but envy delivered him. What envy it was is expressed in another evangelist: 'You see how we prevail nothing; if we let him alone, all the world will go after him,' John 11:47, 48. They saw God's presence and power was with him, and that stirred up their envy. Their worldly interest was their great idol, and they looked upon the success of Christ's kingdom as contrary to it. So Acts 17:5, 'The malignant Jews, moved with envy,' stirred up all that trouble against Paul.

3. Christ is the head of one party, and Satan of the other. Christ hath introduced truth and holiness, and the devil is the principle and architect of all wickedness and cruelty and hatred; therefore since he worketh in the children of disobedience, and they are taken captive by him at his will and pleasure, is not the hand of Satan in all this?

Object. But how can it stand with the goodness and righteousness of God's providence that such a numerous and potent party as the multitude of ungodly should live in enmity with his people, and that his faithful servants should be continually exercised with their hatred and molestation, and sometimes to the utter loss and ruin of all their worldly interests? I answer—

[1.] It is for the glory of his providence that he ruleth in the midst of his enemies, Ps. 110:2, and upholdeth his church not only against opposition, but by opposition. His church is really the bush that is burned but not consumed; he can keep them from the evil of the world, though he doth not take them out of the world, John 17:15.

[2.] That self-denying obedience is most acceptable to God. A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing. Though we be deep sufferers in this world, and our demand in arrear unpaid till another world, yet it is fit we should be tried: James 1:12, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life.' It suiteth with God's conduct now, when he is trying, not rewarding the children of men.

[3.] He that soundly believeth the promises of God will not stick much at suffering by the hatred of the world; he doth but lose a feather to win a crown: Mat. 5:11, 'Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.'

[4.] This kind of government is necessary to prevent that scurf and dross which is apt to overgrow the church and particular believers, the scurf of hypocrites creeping into the visible societies of the faithful. When profession is cheap, many will take it up though their hearts be not with God, Mat. 13:21; and the scurf and dross of vanity and corruption growing into the lives of the saints, as filth on standing waters. Tribulation is God's fan and physic: Mat. 3:11, 'Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor;' Isa. 29:9, 'By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged out.'

Doct. 2. We have no reason to wonder at it, if it prove our lot to meet with the world's hatred.

This is dissuaded in two places, and there is a different word used in both, as here in the text, and 1 Peter 4:12, 'Think it not Strange concerning the fiery trial.' We wonder at what is great and grievous, terrible and strange, at what is rare, new, and unusual, not thought of before.

First, I will inquire how we are apt to wonder, or to count it grievous and strange—(1.) Out of security; (2.) Impatience of the cross.

1. Out of our security. The children of God are loath to forecast trials, and therefore, if we have any rest from troubles, we think it will be perpetual: Ps. 30:6, 'I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.' As if this breathing-time and short truce were a sure peace, that will never be interrupted. If we can put a carnal pillow under our heads, we lie down and sleep, and dream of much worldly ease, as if all bitterness were past, and so are very apt and subject to security, usually when trials are nearest. Christ finds his disciples asleep just as the high priest's officers were coming to attack him, Mat. 26:40, and Jonah was asleep in the ship when about to be thrown into the sea, Jonah 1:5.

2. Impatience of the cross. We consult with present sense; ease is pleasing to flesh and blood. We say rest is good, and are loath to have our ears grated with the remembrance of the cross, though Christ biddeth us take it up daily, Luke 9:36, in the preparation of our minds, and reconciling and making it familiar to our thoughts before it cometh; therefore we remove those things out of our thoughts, and so marvel and are amazed when they come upon us.

Secondly, Why is marvelling forbidden? what great harm is there in that? (1.) That we may not be surprised; (2.) Perplexed or offended when the trial befalleth us.

1. We must not marvel or be amazed, as men are when they meet with some new and strange thing, but be affected as with a matter we looked for before, and accordingly have prepared for it. Sorrows foreseen leave not so sad and forcible an impression upon the spirit: Job 3:15, 'The evil which I feared is come upon me.' When we expect evils, they hurt the less; but when it cometh unlooked for, it is the more burdensome. That child saith his lesson best that hath often conned it over.

2. Perplexed or offended; for this marvelling is forbidden in order to offence; when we see nothing befalling us but what we have heard of beforehand, and were warned of long beforehand, we are not so apt to stagger at the cross, and shrink under it: John 16:1, 'These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be offended.' We pretend to believe the scriptures when we read them, yet complain when they are fulfilled. Never any one afflicted as I am, scorned and hated as I am; and all because we promised to ourselves a more quiet estate than the world's hatred or the tenor of God's dispensations will permit.

Thirdly, What reasons there are to take off our marvel.

1. Our troubles, by which the world's hatred is manifested, are decreed by God; the fulfilling of God's eternal counsel and decrees should be no marvel to us: Rom. 8:29, 'He hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son;' first in affliction, then in glory: 1 Thes. 3:3, 'That no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.' There is nothing strange in it, but what God hath determined to come upon us.

2. We should not marvel at that which we are frequently forewarned of: these things are foretold in scripture: 'You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake,' Mark 13:13; John 15:19, 'Because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you;' John 16:33, 'In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;' Acts 14:22, 'That we through much tribulation should enter into the kingdom of heaven;' 2 Tim. 3:12, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.'

3. Because it was fulfilled in our head: John 15:18, 'The world hated me before it hated you.' If the world hated Christ, no wonder if it hate us; if Jesus Christ, who never committed sin, who came into the world with a design of love, to do mankind the greatest good, was hated so far as to be put to a shameful death. Jesus Christ was the greatest enemy to sin that ever was born; he hath endured the contradiction of sinners before us. Therefore if we are heirs to his sufferings, and that enmity which began with him, and it light upon us for his sake, should we marvel and strain at it? Nothing should seem grievous to a believer which he hath once tasted. If Christ drank of the bitter cup himself, he will have the more sympathy towards us when we pledge him in it. In short, it is a valuable preferment, the fellowship of his sufferings, and conformity to his death.

4. That which ever from the beginning of the world hath been the lot of good and holy men should not be marvelled at: Mat. 5:12, 'So persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' The best have undergone these troubles, and surely we are not better than our fathers, 1 Kings 19:4.

5. That which is necessary to mortify the old man, and break the force of our pride and carnal affections, to try our patience, to reclaim us from our wanderings, to awaken in us a more earnest pursuit of things to come, to keep us from surfeiting of ease and prosperity, and to cut off the fuel and provisions of our lusts, should not be marvelled at; but this discipline is necessary for all those things: 1 Peter 1:6, 'If need be ye are in heaviness for a season, through manifold temptations.' The scriptures abundantly show this everywhere. Therefore let us not marvel if we meet with trouble and opposition from men for Christ's sake; it hath ever been so, and will be so, and shall we be surprised and perplexed at it? If men use to be startled or surprised, it is at something that is strange. The wonder is rather of the other side, if there be any remission of this enmity, considering the disposition of the world.

Use 1. Is to persuade us to venture upon the profession of christianity with this resolution, to bear patiently the frowns and hatred of the world. Christ telleth us the worst at first, Mat. 16:24, and is therein contrary to Satan, who showeth us the bait but hideth the hook; but Christ telleth us that, when God seeth fit, we must be willing to encounter temptations and the displeasures of the world; whether they come or no, we must arm ourselves with a mind to endure them. God never intended Isaac should be sacrificed, yet he will have Abraham lay the knife to his throat. To think of going to heaven, and yet dream of a life of ease and peace, free from all manner of troubles and afflictions for conscience sake, it is all one as if a soldier going to

the war should promise himself continual peace with the enemy, or a mariner going a long voyage should imagine a perpetual calm. Therefore you must reckon upon the scorns of the world, the distaste of carnal friends, the oppositions of the froward part of mankind, and be 'shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' Eph. 6:15. Have a resolved mind to go through thick and thin, and to follow Christ in all conditions.

Use 2. Fortify your minds against the world's hatred by such considerations as may best support you. Though you be hated of the world, it is enough that you are beloved of God and accepted by God; that is a christian's greatest ambition, 2 Cor. 5:9, greatest joy, Ps. 4:6, 7. When God smileth, it is no matter who frowneth.

2. God will take your case in hand, and then whatever you lose by the hatred and wrath of man shall be compensated to you and made up to you by the love of God: 2 Thes. 1:6, 7, 'Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you that are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels.'

3. That faith and love to God tried is better, and will yield more comfort, than bare faith and love without trial: 1 Peter 1:7, 'Knowing that the trial of your faith is much more precious than gold that perisheth, that your faith may be found to praise, glory, and honour, at Christ's appearing.' It is the self-denying obedience that yieldeth most comfort; when graces are proved so as to be approved, then they have the clearest evidence in our conscience.

4. The way to live happily is to obey the will of God rather than to obey the lusts of men; for by pleasing of God, though you seem to endanger your interests, you do best establish them: Prov. 16:7,

'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.'

Use 3. If this hatred be restrained, be the more thankful to God and men.

1. To God. Certainly a good day should be well improved; Acts 9:31, when the church had rest, they walked in the fear of God and comforts of the Holy Ghost. When we are not called to passive obedience and sufferings, our active obedience should be the more cheerfully performed. The primitive christians suffered more willingly for Christ than we speak for him; they dreaded the fire less than we do a frown or scorn. Surely when we are exempted from outward troubles and sufferings, our peace and comfort will cost us more in getting; and therefore we should be more in service, and zeal, and diligence. If we cannot deny the ease of the flesh for the labours of the gospel, how shall we deny the interests of the flesh for the sufferings of the gospel, and lay all at Christ's feet?

2. To men. Let us make all thankful returns to the magistrates we live under, by prayers for them, and exemplary obedience. The apostle telleth us that the magistrate is 'the minister of God to thee for good,' Rom. 13:4. God by them reacheth out this good to thee, of peace and quiet in the profession and practice of godliness; therefore all manner of prayer is due for them: 1 Tim. 2:1, 2, 'I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.' Were it not for the ordinance of magistracy, what a shambles and slaughter-house would the world be! Now when God inclineth their hearts to give peace and rest to his people, the favour

is to be acknowledged by such ways as become christianity, by hearty prayers to God for them, and eminent obedience to them.

Use 4. Is information. Some practical corollaries I will thence deduce.

1. What little need we have to be troubled, if we meet with the hatred of the world in doing our duty. Surely it is better to suffer injuries than to do them, better be an Abel than a Cain; there is glory and comfort in sufferings, but shame in sin. It is a discouragement to us ministers that a man cannot promote any public good, but he is like to be a sacrifice to public hatred, but he must displease men; nay, not only the carnal part of the world, but even the weaker sort of the people of God, who, because of remaining darkness, many times put good for evil, and evil for good: 'If I yet pleased men, were I the servant of Christ?' Gal. 1:10. Displease them you must to their profit, though it be to your own hurt.

2. What need the children of God have to walk circumspectly. We live in the midst of those that hate us, and malice and hatred is quick-sighted, and will soon spy out our failings: Ps. 27:11, 'Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies;' in the margin it is, 'those which observe me.' Enemies are observers: Jer. 20:10, 'They watch for my halting;' if they could find him tripping in anything, to defame him. Among friends we are more careless, but before enemies we look to every step. If you falter in your duty a little, their mouths will be opened against you: Neh. 5:9, 'Ought we not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?' Col. 4:5, 'Walk in wisdom towards them that are without.'

3. If it be no wonder that the world hateth the brethren, and you were sometimes of this world, you must show forth the reality of the change which God hath wrought in you by love. The characteristic of

the world is hatred, but the people of God, love; this is the very constitution of their souls, and this love is first to the saints, and then to all men: John 13:35, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.' In regeneration there is not only an impression of the purity and holiness of the divine nature, but the goodness and amiableness of it in real inclinations of doing good, and seeking the welfare of others to our power.

4. If the world hate God's children, see that this hatred be not deserved by any fault of yours, as pride, indiscreet zeal, unnecessary intermeddling, or any injurious dealing: 1 Peter 4:15, 16, 'Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or a busybody in other men's matters. But if any suffer as a christian, let him not be ashamed; but glorify God in this behalf.' See that it be for truth and holiness. It is a sad thing to be a martyr to passion, pride, vainglory, self-interest, private conceits and opinions; this hardeneth the world, and will be cause of shame to yourselves. The world will justify themselves, and say it is not for their religion, but their pride and peevish singularity; and besides, you will lose that true comfort which otherwise you might have in your sufferings for Christ.

SERMON XX

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.—1 JOHN 3:14.

FOR the connection of this verse with the former, this may be given as a reason why we should not be troubled with the world's hatred, because, as that opposite world to Christ and his kingdom are known

by their hatred, and, however divided in interests, yet are united by their enmity to God's people, so are we known and distinguished by our love. Our love to those whom they hate may expose us to great sufferings, and therefore they judge us miserable; but if by our love, though it be to the loss of life itself for owning them, and the cause for which they suffer, we may come to clear up our right to eternal happiness, we have no reason to be discouraged. In short, if the world will be known by their hatred to the brethren, let us resolve to be known by our love to them, whatever indignities and scorns we suffer for their sakes: 'We know we have passed from death to life,' &c.

In the text there is a comparison of opposites—(1.) The happiness of those that love the brethren; (2.) The misery of those that love them not.

1. In the former clause there is—(1.) The privilege; (2.) The qualification; (3.) The conclusion thence inferred.

[1.] The privilege is a translation 'from death to life;' that is, from a state of spiritual and eternal death into a state of grace, peace, and happiness; for it is explained, ver. 15, so as to have eternal life abiding in us. By our unfeigned love to the brethren we know that we are regenerate christians, and have all the privileges which belong to such; for we have passed from the death of sin to a life of grace, from wrath and condemnation to a life of glory. The terminus a quo, from which we turn, is death; the terminus ad quem, to which we turn, is life. The motion between both, 'we have passed,' or we are already in a state of life.

[2.] The qualification, sign, and token of it, 'love to the brethren;' it is not mentioned as the cause of the thing, but as the mark whereby we know it.

[3.] The certainty of the connection or conclusion drawn from thence, 'we know.' He doth not say we think, or hope well, but we know; it is not a conjectural, but a certain knowledge.

2. The misery of those that have not this qualification. Where—

[1.] The expression of their defect is to be noted, 'He that loveth not;' not he that hateth, though he be not apparently one of the opposite world: 'Marvel not if the world hateth you;' but 'He that loveth not.' It is not enough if a man be not found among the persecuting world, and keeps himself from hatred and malice, if he doth not own the people of God when persecuted by others, when scorned and persecuted by others.

[2.] His danger, 'He abideth in death;' that is, remaineth in a carnal state, and so obnoxious to eternal death and damnation; he is not regenerate, and shall die in his sins. As it is said in the case of believing, so it is true in the case of loving: John 8:24, 'He that believeth not that I am he, shall die in his sins.' To go to the grave before we get rid of sin, to die impenitent and unreconciled to God, is the greatest misery that can befall us.

Doct. That a sure note of our passing from death to life is our love to the brethren.

I shall—(1.) Open what it is to pass from death to life; (2.) What love of the brethren is here understood; (3.) Consider it as a sure note and evidence.

First, What it is to pass from death to life. This I shall show in several propositions.

1. Man before the fall did enjoy a spiritual life and communion with God, being his creature, and fitted for commerce with him; but upon his defection lost it. The common notion that we have of death is a privation of life: we once had life by virtue of our conjunction with God, but we lost it by our defection from him. The natural life consists in a conjunction of the soul with the body, and the natural death is a separation of the soul from the body; the spiritual life consists in the union of the soul with God, and the spiritual death is a separation and estrangement from him: Eph. 4:18, 'Alienated from the life of God.' So that man by nature is wholly destitute of the life of God. We did once partake of the life of God, but have now lost it. It was threatened, Gen. 2:17, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;' and executed, Rom. 5:12, 'Whereas by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so that death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Spiritual death is one thing there included.

2. In this state of separation from God, man is impotent to every good work, and liable to eternal death and condemnation.

[1.] Impotent to every good and saving work: Eph. 2:1, 'We were sometimes dead in trespasses and sins.' We are all deprived of original righteousness, or any principle of grace which might incline us to God. The life of God consisted in his image impressed on man or bestowed on man, that by Adam's fall was lost to us all from our very conception and birth: Eccles. 7:29, 'God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.' It must needs be so, for redemption, reconciliation, and salvation do all imply it. Redemption implieth a man in thralldom; and reconciliation an enemy, a man fallen and lapsed into the displeasure of God; and salvation the saving of that which is lost: so that we were all sinners by nature, or else we needed no redeemer, nor reconciler, nor saviour. If our

salvation be now by a redeemer, it implieth a recovery and restoration; and sinful, miserable mankind is the object of it. Infants from their very conception and birth cannot be excused nor exempted, for all that are saved by a redeemer were once lost, and need a recovery; we all need to be reconciled and sanctified. The necessity of a redeemer proveth the guilt, and of a sanctifier the corruption of mankind. Actual sin will easily be granted, but the earliness and commonness of evil inclinations do as sensibly prove original sin, even before actual sin had time to breed evil habits in us. It is true, that the longer men live in their unregenerate state, the more they are estranged from God, and contract a further impotency by their ignorance and hardness of heart; but at first, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh,' John 3:6; and their operations can rise no higher than a fleshly inclination moveth them, and therefore carnal men are dead while they live: Luke 15:24, 'This my son was dead, but is alive; was lost, but is found.'

[2.] Man is obnoxious to eternal death and condemnation by reason of sin, and if he continue so, will certainly for ever perish: Eph. 2:3, 'And were by nature children of wrath, even as others;' and John 3:36, 'Whosoever believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him;' and therefore he can expect nothing but everlasting death and destruction. This is the condition of man by nature. Now every man would desire to be freed from death, and to be made a partaker of eternal life.

3. The Lord Jesus, out of his wonderful mercy, came to restore life to mankind thus dead and lost; he died that we might live, therefore called the prince or giver of life, Acts 3:15, because this was the great benefit which he procured for us. And this life which we have by Christ answereth to the death which we incurred by Adam. Instead of death spiritual, he hath procured for us the life of grace, and also the

life of glory, to take off death eternal merited by sin, that the sentence of death might be reversed by justification, and the penitent and believing sinner put into a living condition by sanctification, and finally admitted to glory. All this is purchased by Christ: 1 John 4:9, 'God sent his Son into the world, that we might live through him;' live spiritually, live eternally. All this is inferred in the covenant of Christ, to those that will submit to his healing dispensations: John 5:24, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but hath passed from death to life.' All this is applied by Christ to those that really submit to his covenant; but in a different manner they all pass from death to life. First, Partly as their hearts are changed, which is sometimes called a quickening of the dead, a new begetting, a new creating. Sometimes it is called a quickening, a making men that were dead alive: Eph. 2:5, 'Yet now hath he quickened us together with Christ.' Therefore when they are converted or regenerated, they are said to be alive from the dead, Rom. 6:13. It is also called a new begetting, or a new birth, without which none can enter into heaven: John 3:5, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Making us new creatures: Eph. 4:24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' 2 Cor. 5:17, 'He that is in Christ is a new creature: old things are passed away, and all things are become new.' From all which it followeth, that conversion is a bringing us into a new state of life. Life is a power to move itself in its own place. This new power and new life is therefore a great privilege. Secondly, Partly as their states are changed, and so sometimes the privative part is expressed, 'shall not come into condemnation,' John 5:24, and Rom. 8:1. The sentence of eternal death is taken off. But that is not all, but they have a covenant right unto eternal life: Rom. 5:18, 'The free gift came upon all men, to the justification of life.' But this is

done in a different manner, the one by his Spirit, the other by his new covenant gift. The one by his Spirit: 2 Peter 1:3, 'By his divine power hath given us all things necessary to life and godliness.' Therefore Christ is said to be our life, Gal. 2:20. The other by his free donation, or grant, or deed of gift. In the covenant he granteth us to be heirs of eternal life, pardoning our sins, and removing out of the way what may hinder the enjoyment of it. Sanctification is wrought in us; justification is God's act towards the sanctified: 1 Cor. 6:11, 'But ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God.' Justified in the name of Christ according to his terms, and what way Christ is made known in the new covenant.

4. From the whole, it may be well said of those who are interested, that they are passed from death to life; for the life of grace is begun in them, as they have new principles and powers infused, or gracious qualities planted in the soul: Ezek. 36:26, 27, 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' And these continually acted and excited by the influence of the Holy Spirit, who watcheth over the new creature. And as they have a right to glory: Titus 3:5-7, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' And as they are accompanied with peace of conscience, and joy unspeakable and glorious, surely these are in a happy condition; and we should give all diligence to see that it be our condition, that they who were dead in trespasses and sins, born heirs of God's curse, should have a

new life communicated to them, and heavenly qualities planted in them, whereby the soul in some measure is made like God and Christ; and whereas before they were without any true and well-grounded hope of a better life, whatever foolish and groundless presumptions they might entertain, they should now have this threefold happiness. First, They should be dispositively fitted for eternal life: 2 Cor. 5:5, 'For he that hath wrought us to this self-same thing is God;' and Rom. 9:23, 'Prepared unto glory;' Col. 1:12, 'Hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Secondly, Have an unquestionable and indefeasible right, by the grant and promise of God: John 5:24, 'He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.' Thirdly, Have the earnest, first-fruits, or begun possession of eternal glory: 2 Cor. 1:22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit.' Partly in the graces and partly in the comforts of the Holy Spirit. The graces in the new birth: Titus 3:5, 'According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' The immortal seed, 1 Peter 1:23. Saving knowledge, John 17:3. There is an eternal principle in them, which carrieth them to eternal ends. The life is begun which shall be perfected in heaven, and is still working towards its final perfection. As to comforts, in peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, by which we have a foretaste: Rom. 15:13, 'The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing;' 1 Peter 1:8, 'In whom believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious.' Surely of all privileges this is the principal and the choicest, which can be given us on this side heaven, and should be most rejoiced in and endeavoured after.

Secondly, What love of the brethren is here to be understood; for I have observed that many will retreat to this evidence, as if this single and alone would witness their gracious estate, when they are grossly

defective in other things. In my dealings with the consciences of men, I have observed several of the fallacies and cheats which men have put upon themselves; sometimes in the object of this love, 'brethren.' If they have a love to their own sect and party, though they hate all the world besides, and are unconscionable in their dealings, and loose and uncircumspect in their walkings, yet still they have satisfied their consciences with this, that they love the brethren; and this must bolster them up, and support their confidence, notwithstanding all their other enormities. Sometimes I have observed it to be in the affection itself; they call that love to the brethren which is not. We may do many things which materially are acts of love to the brethren, but flow from false principles, as good nature, vainglory, gallantry. Some are of a soft and quiet temper, not difficult to any, but of a fair, loving carriage and behaviour; and shall their natural easiness be taken for this high and special grace of love to the brethren? Some will seem to do great and worthy things, but it is out of greatness of spirit and vainglory, without true charity and love to the brethren, without that love which the apostle mentions, 1 Cor. 13:3, 'If I give all my goods to the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing.' This love is something more than giving, something more than venturing our interests; for charity, or christian love, containeth in it a sincere respect to God's glory, and a hearty desire of promoting the kingdom of Christ, and a holy complacency in those who are our companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, and shall be our everlasting companions in heavenly glory, together with a public good-will and compassion to the souls of men. Some I have found will go lower, and maintain their comfort at a meaner rate; they are not those that hate the brethren, and procure their molestation and trouble, but it may be frequent their meetings, applaud their persons, can now and then plead for them, and censure and speak against those that hate them: and here is their evidence; how defective

soever they are in other parts of christianity, they think they love the brethren. But not to insist further, I am verily persuaded that if this one evidence were well thought of and understood, it were of as hard interpretation as any of the rest. Therefore let us see what this love of the brethren is, that will be such a sure note unto us.

1. It must be a real love, not pretended only, or showed in bare words; for so it is explained, ver. 18, 'My little children, let us not love in word, or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' Verbal compliments may make up a love and friendship in the world, but christian love is a knitting of souls, or a communication of interests, as our mutual necessities do require: Rom. 12:10, 'Be kindly affectioned one to another, in brotherly love.' If there be not a hearty real christian affection, what will words do? Alas! will you build your eternal state on such a weak foundation, or all your comfort and hope on so slight an evidence? A cold complimentary love is soon worn off.

2. It must be a self-denying love, for it is hated brethren who are here spoken of as the objects: 'Marvel not if the world hate you;' and then, 'We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' If we can love them then when the world hateth them; yea, if we can love them so as to lay down our lives for them when the glory of God and the public good calleth for it: ver. 16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he hath laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' In what cases I shall show you afterwards. Now such a regular and fervent love will make an evidence. It is self-denying graces that have a voice in the conscience; when we so love the brethren that we are at some cost about them, taking pains to instruct the ignorant, comforting the afflicted, exhorting the obstinate, confirming the weak, relieving the necessitous, owning the persecuted, this showeth God's love hath made some impression upon us. The acts about which we shall be

questioned at the day of judgment are self-denying acts. Have you visited, have you clothed, do you own the servants of God when the times frown upon them? Lip-labour and tongue-service is a cheap thing, and a religion that costs nothing is worth nothing. When we apparently deny ourselves, and value God's interest and his people's interest above our own, then our sincerity is most manifest. A cheap course of serving God or loving the brethren will bring you none or little comfort; and therefore, when you tell me you love the brethren, and do nothing for them, you may as well tell me that you have satisfied your creditors by shaking your purse, as if the noise of money would pay your debts.

3. A sincere love flowing from communion of nature, and because of the new nature, and because of the image of God in them whom ye love. Love is a fruit of the new nature, and none can sincerely love his brother with a supernatural sincerity but he that is renewed by the Spirit: 1 Peter 1:22, 'Seeing ye have purified your hearts in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' To love one because he is holy, and because he is sanctified, because he hath the same spirit, that is to love one another with a pure heart. We may love godly men for other respects than godliness, but we must love them as having a nature suited to this love.

4. It must not be understood as separated from other qualifications which prepare us for everlasting life; we cannot make out our sincerity by one evidence alone, no, not faith itself: James 2:14, 'Can faith save him?' that being alone, ver. 17. Still it will stick in our consciences: James 2:10, 'He that keepeth the whole law, and yet offends in one point, is guilty of all.' It is a law maxim if interpreted of absolute perfection or unsinning obedience, but it is a gospel maxim if understood of allowed failings. Therefore, when you read

such scriptures as 'Hereby we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren,' and 'He that calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,' they must be understood positio omnibus ad hoc requisitis, if other things hold good. Certainly for this place you shall see 1 John 5:2, 'By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.' He proveth the love of God by the love of the brethren, and the love of the brethren by the love of God. There is a mighty conjunction between these two things, loving the brethren and loving God; and therefore, if we would know if we love our brother sincerely, yea or no, we cannot better judge of it than by examining and knowing whether we love God; and truly our love to God is not a fellow-like familiarity, but a dutiful subjection: 'If we love God we will keep his commandments.' So that, in the trial of our estate, we must take in all that is necessary for the decision of the case. I observe this, because, next to the grace of the gospel, men are apt to abuse this evidence. Some look to none at all, others pitch all upon this one. But you see plainly it must be interpreted so as that you love God first, and then the brethren for God's sake; and the intent of these evidences is to show we must not in any point be lacking.

Thirdly, Let me consider it as laid down as a sure note and evidence of our passing from death to life; and there we shall consider—(1.) Why so much is ascribed to love of the brethren; (2.) What sort of evidence this is.

1. Why is so much ascribed to the love of the brethren, that the decision of our spiritual estate is often put upon this issue, whether we love the brethren, yea or no?

Ans. For several reasons.

[1.] Because it is the immediate effect of the new nature: 1 John 4:7, 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God;' and 1 John 5:1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.' Love to God and his people is the proper effect of the spiritual life; that same new nature which inclineth us to love God inclineth us to love the brethren.

[2.] This suiteth most with the great love which God discovereth in the gospel. The gospel is wholly employed in setting forth the love of God; we see his power more eminently in the creation of the world: Rom. 1:20, 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.' His wisdom in the law: Deut. 4:6, 'Keep them, for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations.' And his love in the gospel: Rom. 5:8, 'Herein God commended his love.' He doth indeed discover all in all, but eminently one in each. Now the new creature, being of a gospel production, hath the print and stamp thereof left upon it, for the thing sealed must be according to the seal: love is his very nature.

[3.] Because God would not leave the trial of our condition upon an imaginary case, and remote from daily experience. We pretend to love God, and to have a zeal for God, and would venture all our interests for God, because in the bountiful part God hath no need of us, and we are not likely to be put upon the expressing of love to him in that kind. In the dutiful part of obedience we are daily put upon a trial. Now in the bountiful part God hath made our brethren his proxies, and devolveth that love and gratitude due to himself upon his servants. Hence is that reasoning, 1 John 4:20, 'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he

hath not seen?' Men's pretences of love to God are more in imagination than in real proof and performance; here we have occasion often given us to express and testify our love by real effects; we see our brethren daily, we know their necessities, have opportunities of sensible demonstrations of our love. Now these kind acts of love to our brethren, as they do most verify and justify our love, so they are most apparent and visible to our own feeling and experience.

[4.] Because naturally a man delights in that company which is most like himself, otherwise he is more straitened and restrained, cannot so freely let out his soul; therefore if the constitution of a man's heart be altered, he will show it in his complacency and displacency. As in things so in persons; there is a kind of grief and trouble at the non-conversion of the wicked: Ps. 15:4, 'In whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth those that fear the Lord.' He hath a dislike of wickedness, let it be in whomsoever it will, but payeth a hearty honour, affection, and respect to every good and godly man; his joy and delight is to the saints, and to the excellent of the earth, Ps. 16:3. 'Lot's righteous soul was vexed by seeing and hearing the unlawful deeds of the Sodomites,' 2 Peter 2:8. A good man is never so well as in the company of those that fear God; and so ill at ease as when conversing with the wicked; therefore it is a sensible evidence.

[5.] In obedience to God, as this is his great and new commandment: 1 John 3:23, 'Love one another, as he gave us commandment.' God's love is a love of bounty, ours a love of duty.

[6.] Christ delights to draw his people into a society, therefore he requireth love, and maketh love the great evidence: Col. 3:14, 'And above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection;' an affection whereby we desire communion one with another, and

communication of good one to another: Acts 2:42, 'And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship;' and ver. 45, 'They parted with their possessions to every man as he had need.' Therefore this is the evidence of Christ's disciples.

[7.] Christ's heart is much set upon the good of this society, which is preserved by love, but destroyed by hatred and division. Our Lord Christ foresaw what grievous wolves would enter into the flock, to scatter them, and to destroy them, and how much they would be weakened by their own divisions; therefore he would not only make it his command, but his mark; it is his charge, it is the means appointed to receive the blessing, Ps. 133:3, and it is the sign, as if Christ would not take them for friends, but enemies, that divide his people, that do not by all means and ways seek to unite them, and cause them to love one another.

[8.] It is a great part of our recovery to be delivered from the private, envious, selfish spirit by which we mind our own things and seek our own things: James 4:5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy;' Titus 3:3, 'We were hateful and hating one another.' Now since it is so, surely we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.

2. What sort of evidence this is. It is both inclusive and exclusive. There are some marks which are exclusive but not inclusive; that is, if we have them not, we are not the children of God; but if we have them, we cannot say we are. As, for instance, 'He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.' It excludeth the profane; yet all that barely hear the word cannot thence conclude that they are of God, for many hear and practise not. Therefore James saith, chap. 1:22, 'Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.' Again some

are inclusive, but not exclusive; as that, Rom. 9:1, 3, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh.' Or any degree of heroical grace; you are included within the number of God's children if you find these things in you, but not excluded if you find them not. These are marks to be aimed at, but not to try by; otherwise that would be matter of doubting which is only matter of humiliation. But some are both inclusive and exclusive; witness the text. The first proposition showeth it is inclusive, 'We know we have passed from death unto life.' A christian's estate may be known, not by a conjectural, but a certain knowledge, not we guess, but know; and the way of knowing it is by the evidences of grace, or finding something in us which accompanieth salvation. Our sanctification is more evident to us than justification, as being felt; and among the fruits and effects of sanctification, love to the brethren is one sensible evidence from whence we may conclude safely and certainly, 'That we have passed from death unto life.' But, on the other side, it is exclusive also: 'If any man love not his brother, he abideth in death;' is yet in a state of sin and misery; for this is such a property of the new nature that it cannot be severed from it.

Use. Keep this evidence clear, then, that you may take comfort in your condition. It is for our greater comfort, not only to be safe, but to know that we are safe. Some have salvation belonging to them, but they know it not; as Jacob said of Bethel, 'God was in this place, and I knew it not,' Gen. 28:16; so God is in them, life is in them, and they know it not. Would it not be comfortable to you if you could certainly know that indeed you have passed from death to life? I know not what your minds are busied about; but this should be your great care, to get out of the cursed condition you were in by nature, and to know you are gotten out, and shall not come into condemnation.

Here is one evidence will most help to clear it to you: If you love the brethren, you have passed from death to life; if you love not, you abide in death. Therefore let not this mark be obscure to you, lest your spiritual condition be dark and obscure to you; and therefore you must excel in brotherly love, and exercise it in a self-denying way. (1.) Love the brethren notwithstanding their infirmities; (2.) Love the brethren notwithstanding personal injuries; (3.) Love the brethren notwithstanding particular differences of judgment between us and them; (4.) Love them notwithstanding the disgraces and troubles that befall them.

1. Love the brethren notwithstanding their infirmities; the best of God's servants have their blots and failings, but love must cover them: 1 Peter 4:8, 'Above all, have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity covereth a multitude of sins.' You must not expect such a society of God's people to converse with, in whom you shall not discern any failings, either against God or one another; therefore unless you pass by a multitude of those, it is in vain to think of loving the brethren. Our love to the brethren must answer to God's love to us: 'We must forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us,' Eph. 4:32; 'Now the free gift is of many offences unto justification,' Rom. 5:16. Therefore if we cast off a brother for some few infirmities, it is a sign that the love of God, manifested in the gospel, hath not made a due impression upon us. Shall God pardon so many sins to us and all his people, and shall we be so severe upon every espied failing as to question their spiritual estate, and cast them out of our hearts?

2. Love them notwithstanding some personal injuries done to ourselves. When God forgiveth us talents, shall not we forgive pence to our brother? Mat. 18:24, 'And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents;' ver.

28, 'But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence, and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me what thou owest.' A talent was a hundred and eighty-seven pounds, and sevenpence halfpenny the Roman penny; ten thousand pounds for a hundred. They cannot deal so disingenuously with us as we do with God. If God will forgive us a thousand injuries, shall not we forgive one? We are poor dust and ashes; shall we stand upon our anger, as if it might be justified against our brother, rather than God's anger against us?

3. Love them notwithstanding particular differences of judgment between us and them; though they are not of our society, if they will not carry themselves brotherly, we should love them as brethren as long as they have anything of Christ in them. The perverse and harsh dealings of others do not dissolve our obligation to them, as to superiors, parents, and masters; we are to be obedient, not only to the gentle, but to the froward. So to equals, though they disclaim all fellowship with us, yet we should carry it towards them as christians; a difference of opinion should not breed an alienation of mind. The apostle's rule is, Phil. 3:16, 17, 'Nevertheless, whereto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing;' Rom. 14:5-7, 'One man esteemeth one day above another; another man esteemeth every day alike: let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth a day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it: he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.' We should never differ from any without constraining evidence.

4. Love them notwithstanding the disgraces and troubles that befall them; the primitive christians owned one another going to the fires,

though thereby they incurred present danger to themselves, and were made companions of them that were so used, Heb. 10:33.

SERMON XXI

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.—1 JOHN 3:15.

THE apostle had said, 'He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.' Now he goeth on to another degree, 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer.' It is less not to love than to hate; he that loveth not wisheth neither good nor evil to his brother; he that hateth intendeth mischief. Selfishness and want of love will in time produce great mischiefs, as it tendeth to ambition and covetousness, and thence to cruelty against all that stand in the way of their desires; but hatred doth soon commence mischief. Therefore surely if he that loveth not his brother 'abideth in death,' then he that hateth his brother 'hath not eternal life abiding in him;' the subject more, the predicate less. Again, this clause is added lest any should say, I do not slay my brother, as Cain did, yet he may be a murderer before God; he hath killed his brother in his heart, though not with his hand; he desireth his death, or doth not take it very grievously if he die: 'Whosoever hateth his brother,' &c.

In the words there are three things—(1.) A sin, 'Hating our brother;' (2.) The heinousness of that sin, 'Is a murderer;' (3.) The perniciousness and danger of it, 'Hath not eternal life abiding in him.'

Doct. 1. That hatred of our brother is in God's account murder.

I shall show you—

1. What is hatred of our brother.

2. How it is murder, and so how he that hateth his brother is a murderer.

I. What is the hatred of our brother? This needeth to be stated. That we may find out the sin so branded, let us except what is to be excepted.

1. There is an absolute hatred and a comparative. The absolute hatred is when I wish evil to another; the comparative hatred is when I neglect or show less love to another for some greater good. So Jacob is said to hate Leah, Gen. 29:30, 31. Hatred there imports a lesser degree of love. So in the law of the hated wife: Deut. 21:15, 16, 'If a man hath two wives, one beloved, and another hated.' It is not meant of one that was not loved at all, but of one that was not loved so much as the other. So in the case in hand: Luke 14:26, 'If any man hate not father and mother, brothers and sisters, he cannot be my disciple;' that is, doth not prefer Christ before them. Surely this hatred of our brother is not here meant, for this is piety, and not cruelty. The best objects are worthy of our best love, and our respect to the inferior relations must not be a snare to us.

2. There is a hatred of the sins and evil courses wherein our brother walketh, and not of his person; as we must not love the sin for the person's sake, so we must not hate the person for the sin's sake. We may cross his sin, but we must wish well to the person. It is hatred to the person to let him alone in his sin: Lev. 19:17, 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, and not suffer sin upon him.' We cannot but hate what we see evil in him; this is not a mischievous, but a holy and perfect hatred. When we reprove the person, seek to oppose and disappoint him in his way of

living in sin, this may be the greatest love we can express to him; and whenever his conscience is awakened, he will thank us for it.

3. There is *odium abominationis* and *odium inimicitiae*, the hatred of abomination and the hatred of enmity; the one is opposite to the love of good-will, the other to the love of complacency: Prov. 29:27, 'The righteous is an abomination to the wicked, and the wicked is an abomination to the righteous.' The righteous man hateth not the wicked with the hatred of enmity, so as to seek his destruction, but with the hatred of abomination or offence, so as not to delight in him while wicked. In opposition to the love of complacency, we may hate our sinful neighbour, as we must hate and abhor ourselves much more; but, in opposition to the love of benevolence, we must neither hate our enemy, nor our neighbour, nor ourselves; so we are to love ourselves without desiring mischief to them. So David: Ps. 21:5, 'I hate the congregation of evil-doers, and will not sit with the wicked.' Surely we cannot delight in them as suitable to us, nor frequent their company, unless it be in order to their cure. God, that distinguished the seeds, Gen. 3:15, never intended to make men of contrary dispositions to holiness to be our bosom friends and the objects of our delight. Therefore this hatred is not intended neither. Only we must take heed lest our abomination of them for their evil practices do not degenerate into a destructive enmity to them. We have a nature contrary to theirs, but we must not have a heart set to do them evil.

Object. But what will you say of Paul's wish, Gal. 5:12, 'I would they were even cut off that trouble you?' I answer—

[1.] He speaketh of prime seducers, and wisheth they were cut off from the church by the sentence of excommunication; and incorrigible and obstinate offenders are cut off from the body and

society of the faithful 'for the destruction of the flesh, that their spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord,' 1 Cor. 5:5, 6, and the church be not infected by the contagion of their sin. So the words signify in the ancient use of it.

[2.] That malicious and obstinate perverters of the faithful come under another consideration, of which I shall now speak. We must distinguish of those who are enemies, not only to us, but to God himself, and that not out of ignorance, but malice, implacable enemies; we may desire their destruction, but with great caution, and using much lenity and forbearance ere we make use of this liberty: so David: Ps. 139:21, 22, 'Do not I hate them that hate thee? and am I not grieved with them that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred, and count them mine enemies.' This is but zeal in God's cause, to pray for their destruction in any undertaking against God. But then we must be sure we are not inspired with a false zeal, and that this fire be enkindled from a coal taken from the altar, not from any private hearth and kitchen; and that it be against the irreconcilable enemies of Christ's interest in the world, and that it be not animated with private revenge. Surely all this must be excepted out of this heavy charge.

II. Let us state the sin here mentioned. (1.) Consider the object, 'Our brother;' (2.) The affection or passion forbidden, 'Hatred.'

First, For the object, 'Our brother,' which may be taken—

1. In a general sense, for any of mankind, for by right of nature they are our brethren. They are called our own flesh, Isa. 58:7, and we all come of one blood and stock: Acts 17:26, 'He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth.' And we are all made by one God: Mal. 2:10, 'Hath not one God created us? and have we not all one Father?' Now we are not to hate any in our hearts, but

by all ways and means to seek their good and welfare. We must love in them that which is of God, though we hate in them that which is of the devil.

2. In a special and limited sense, our brother is our fellow-citizen, whether in reality or profession only. With respect to them, love is called brotherly kindness, in opposition to that common love which is due to all men, 2 Peter 1:7; and the nearer the bonds are, the greater is the sin if we hate them; as when united with us in the same common profession of purer christianity, or give greater hopes of their sincerity therein, or of the same profession, society, and local communion, as to the worship of God, or related to us in bonds of nature as well as religion, as Esau hated Jacob, Gen. 27:41. The rule is, 1 Peter 2:17, 'Honour all men, love the brotherhood.' There is some respect due to all men, much more should christian society recommend them to our affection. All men partake of some excellency from God, and carry some resemblance of his image, and the best know more to loathe in themselves than they can do in the worst; yet there is a respect due to the persons of other christians above that which we give to men as men.

Once more, the persons hated come under a fourfold consideration—

[1.] If you consider them as those that have done us an ill turn; thus we read, 2 Sam. 13:22, that 'Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar;' and therefore plotted to kill him. Now this doth not excuse us, because we are not to avenge ourselves, and become evil to others because they have been so to us; this were to imitate them in their wickedness, and it is contrary to that lenity and meekness which should be in christians, who are to love those that hate them, Mat. 5:44; and if love did prevail, much mischief would be prevented: Prov. 10:12, 'Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love

covereth all sins.' Where hatred is allowed, every offence will be grievous; there is nothing but an interchange of mutual injuries, till one or the other be ruined or destroyed. But if men would mind the duties of christian love, lenity, and forbearance; many and great offences would be either excused or pardoned. This is not pusillanimity, but true greatness of spirit, the real glory of a man; and indeed it can be no disgrace to obey God.

[2.] When we hate one that loveth us, and hath been kind to us. To hate an enemy is unchristian, but to hate a friend is inhuman; and yet such monsters doth corrupt nature afford, who reward evil for good, and hate others without a cause, yea, when much cause to the contrary: Ps. 35:12, 'They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul.' Usually those who are over-obliged make this unkind return, injuries for benefits, and seek the life of those who, under God, have been the means of supporting and preserving theirs. Now this is a grievous unnatural evil, and their malice admitteth no terms of truce, much less of hearty reconcilment: Ps. 120:6, 7, 'My soul hath too long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.' Still prosecute their revengeful courses, and will not be appeased by any tenders of reconciliation.

[3.] When men are haters of those that are good, and love the evil, hate the holy and the harmless, and esteem only the profane and dissolute: 2 Tim. 3:3, 'Despisers of those that are good;' and Ps. 38:20, 'They are mine adversaries, because I follow the thing that good is;' Mat. 24:9, 'Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.' They have no quarrel against them but their doing that which is good. Alas! what have the righteous done? for which good work do they lay such a load on them? But the better any man is, the less they can abide him; and this is a heinous evil, to hate a christian the more, the more of christianity there is in him. It is enmity to the image of

God shining forth in his people, and they cannot endure this serious good conversation of theirs, because it is an upbraiding of their own slightness and licentiousness.

[4.] When we hate them not only that are good, but with all pity and compassion seek to do us good: Gal. 4:16, 'Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?' John 7:7, 'The world hateth me, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil;' 1 Kings 22:8, 'I hate him, because he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' Yet he told him still the mind of God, and that for his profit. Now this is the hatred that usually befalls not private christians only, but those that are employed in a more eminent ministry and service; often instruments of public good are made objects of public hatred, and have no other recompense from an unthankful world but scorn and violence.

Secondly, The passion forbidden is hatred, 'Whosoever hateth his brother.'

1. Not to love him is a great crime; that is the notion in the former verse; and indeed it is hard to keep without hatred, if we do not love. The softest sort of carnal men do not love God's children; but the venomous part of the world hate them, and seek their destruction. Not to will good to them is damnable in itself, much more when we will evil to them: 2 Tim. 3:3, 'Despisers of those that are good,' not lovers; these are in a fair way to hate when their lusts are crossed.

2. There is another degree, and that is, rash and unadvised anger: 'Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause,' Mat. 5:22; and that is within the prohibition, 'Thou shalt not kill,' as more anon. Now if anger be murder, hatred is worse than anger, for this is anger inordinate or inveterate. They were wont to distinguish of a threefold anger: sharp anger, soon raised and soon calmed; a more bitter

anger, hardly, and not without some respite, appeased; and anger not allayed without some requital and retaliation of wrongs; this is a great step towards hatred.

3. There is another affection and disposition of heart which is very natural to us, and yet is beneath malice and hatred, and that is envy, often joined with murder: Rom. 1:29, 'Full of envy, murders;' Gal. 5:21, 'Envyings, murders.' This is discontentedness at another man's good and prosperous estate, or the gifts wherein they equal or excel us, and showeth itself in rejoicing at their evils. There is a selfish desire in man to have all good things enclosed unto ourselves: James 4:5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' We would shine alone, seek to jostle others out of the way; this is bad, and hath a near affinity with murder, and therefore should be mortified by every good christian.

4. The passion here spoken of is hatred, which is a desire of hurt or evil to others, such a desire as wisheth evil to them, especially their destruction and ruin, that the object should not be: Ps. 35:12, 'They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul.' Nothing less will content them that hate us; as Esau, that 'hated Jacob, and said, I will slay him when the days of mourning for my father are come,' Gen. 27:41, so that hatred or anger kept too long will be concocted and soured into revenge.

Thirdly, How is it murder?

1. From the strictness of God's law. Man's law can only take notice of the overt act, but God's law of the thoughts, imaginations, purposes, and intents of the heart. It is said, Rom. 7:14, 'The law is spiritual;' and Ps. 19:7, 'The law of God is perfect, converting the soul.' It reacheth to the acts of the inward man, and forbids every evil motion of the heart. God is able to judge of their hearts; and every degree of

this sin is forbidden and condemned by his law: 1 Sam. 16:7, 'Man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' And therefore it is not the hurting of our neighbour, but the hating of our neighbour, which his law condemneth. It doth not only concern the hands, and the outward actions, but the will and the thoughts.

2. From the intention of the party. The purpose or desire of doing a thing is counted in the law as done, either good or bad. As to good, Abraham's offering Isaac: Heb. 11:11, 'By faith Abraham offered up Isaac.' He did it only in purpose and vow. Bad: Mat. 5:28, 'He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her in his heart.' So here, the intention of the heart to harm others, though the hands be tied and kept from execution, yet as much as in him lieth he hath murdered his neighbour. If he abstain from killing, he will rejoice that the death of that man happeneth some other way. Well, then, the hating is, by interpretation, the killing of them, because such is the intention of the heart, did not some outward restraint curb it, if their destruction be a pleasing thought to us.

3. God judgeth not only by the intention of the party, but the intent of the sin. There is *finis operis*, and *finis operantis*, the intendment of the sinner, and the intent of the sin, what it may bring us unto if it be allowed. It may be a man that hateth his brother doth not intend for the present his utter destruction; but if he shall cherish this evil disposition of soul, where shall he stop? Now, that God judgeth by the intent of the sin, as well as the actual intention of the sinner, I shall make evident unto you by these instances. By Baruch's reproof: Jer. 45:5, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.' Baruch's sin was tergiversation, he had appeared confidently at first in delivering the roll to the king, which was written by God's

command; but when the king burnt it, and gave order to apprehend Jeremiah and Baruch, but God hid them, afterwards God bids them write another roll, and Baruch begins to be discouraged, it was too hot service for him to meddle with; upon which God telleth him, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself?' When God was about to pluck up all things, alas! what did the good man seek for himself, but only that he might have his life for a prey? Baruch only sought his safety and the preservation of his life, which was in danger by reason of his zeal and activity for God; and God calleth this a seeking great things for himself. The meaning is, that disposition of heart which prompted him to seek ease and security for himself in troublesome times would prompt him also to seek great things in the world; for it argued a spirit wedded to its own worldly felicity, and that preferred the favour of kings before the favour of God. Every man thus affected seeketh his own things; at first he aimeth only at things which are within his grasp and reach, but then still he enlargeth himself, and would have more, and when that is obtained, he would have more, and fain be built a storey higher in the honour and greatness of the world. Thus doth God interpret the disposition of his heart, in seeking to save his life, by not displeasing the king. Another instance is Elisha's reproof to Gehazi: 2 Kings 5:26, 'Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants?' Why this rebuke? what is the sense of it? He asked no such matter of Naaman, he asked but a talent of silver and two changes of raiment, 2 Kings 5:23. But the same covetousness and self-seeking would carry him further. The prophet dealeth upon the full end of the sin. He was weary of being the prophet's man, and must set up for himself; he must then enlarge himself into a family, and purchase heritages, and be a great man in Israel. The beginnings of sin are modest, and the issues not known or thought of by the sinner himself. Now apply this to the matter in hand; a man that beginneth to have an aversion of

heart to another, he doth not love him; in time he cometh to hate him, and there thinketh to rest; but offences grow, and then he seeketh his destruction. Now God considereth the tendency of the sin, whatever be the actual intention of the sinner.

4. I need but one consideration more to make the demonstration full, and what is that? It is that the usual effects of hatred are blood and mischief; thence come the factions, and quarrels, and persecutions, and contentions in the world. Once entertain hatred, and there is nothing so bad, and mischievous, and cruel, which you may not be drawn to think, and say, and do against your brethren. To think: jealousy is the fruit of hatred, everything is suspected where the party is not loved, yea, odious crimes are supposed and imagined of them, and they think they do God good service if they kill them, John 16:2. They do only destroy you as so many vermin, which are the trouble of the country. So for saying: Luke 6:22, 'Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for my name's sake.' Do, by persecution: John 5:19, 20, 'Because I have chosen you out of the world, the world shall hate you, and persecute you, as they persecuted me.' And treachery: Mat. 24:10, 'And many shall be offended in me, and betray one another, and hate one another.' These are the mischievous effects of hatred. Well, then, may it be accounted murder, and he that hateth is a manslayer or murderer.

Use 1. Is information—

1. It showeth us the reason why divines refer all sins and virtues to the commandments, wherein the grossest sin of the kind is forbidden in the name of all the rest. You think we strain when we make anger to be murder or the like; but we have countenance from scripture, and we have the example of our Lord Jesus. I will only instance in a

pertinent case: Mat. 5:20, 21, 'Ye have heard it hath been said of them of old, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.' A place somewhat difficult, but I shall make no long business to explain it. Christ doth not enlarge the commandment of God given by Moses, but interpret it, and vindicate from the glosses of the pharisees; for they were their masters in the schools who lived before Christ. They thought the law was not broken but by actual manslaughter or murder; for Christ doth not reason against the letter of the law, 'Thou shalt not kill,' but against their gloss, 'Whosoever shall kill.' And the following words express three degrees of sin and three degrees of punishment, alluding to their ways of punishing. The three degrees of sin are rash anger, anger vented by contumelious speeches: 'Raca,' a vain man; 'Thou fool,' a wicked man. Their punishments were either of the three-and-twenty men who judged of manslaughters, or of the Sanhedrim, who judged of more heinous crimes; or of burning alive, which was their highest punishment; and in the expression he alludeth to the valley of Hinnom, where children were scorched to death. Now the wrathful man is subject to punishment in another world, as the manslayer is here by the judgment, which is beheading with the sword. Anger breaking out into opprobrious speeches by the Sanhedrim, where ordinary punishment was by stoning; 'Thou fool,' more violent railings and revilings, with burning as of the children in the valley Hinnom. So that all these things, which tend to murder, are murder in the sight of God, and must expect his punishment. A great caution to us, in these contentious times, to take heed how we involve ourselves in the wrath of God.

2. That it is good to refer sin to the most odious of its kind, and to interpret the law of God in its most comprehensive sense. Carnal men are but slight interpreters of God's law; that the ell may be no longer than the cloth, they make a short exposition of the law, that they may cherish a large opinion of their own righteousness; but in the word of God we are directed otherwise. Covetousness is idolatry, as it diverts our trust in God, Col. 3:5. Sensuality is setting up another god, as it diverteth our love from him: Phil. 3:19, 'Whose god is their belly.' Neglect of communion with God is atheism, Ps. 10:3; and worldliness is adultery, James 4:4; and here hatred of the brethren is murder. And there is a double profit by it—it serveth for an evangelical use and a moral use.

[1.] It serveth for an evangelical use, to quicken us to seek after justification by way of faith and repentance; for though we have not been guilty of gross immoralities, we are not murderers, adulterers, yet we cannot trust in our own righteousness. We are in danger of the judgment or the council for rash anger, hatred, malice, revenge, seeking or wishing mischief to others. There is no relief to be looked for in God's strict justice from the smallness of our sins; our hope standeth only in the fulness of Christ's ransom, and the largeness of his grace in the new covenant, which alloweth room for repentance. Thus the severe exaction of the law doth drive us to Christ.

[2.] The second use is moral, to make us hate sin. Oh, how carefully should we abstain from all indulgence to the beginnings of it! In mortifying sin, let us not weigh things in man's balance, but in God's, and not consider what is hateful to the world, but how things will appear before God's tribunal. There are sins *majoris infamiae* and *majoris reatus*. Some sins procure their own shame in the world, but others argue a greater aversion of heart, and enmity to God and his people. Many of sin's martyrs, that are publicly executed for the

warning of others, are less hateful to God than others whom he hangeth up in chains of darkness as the instances of the slavery of sin, being wholly addicted to pleasures, profits, and honours.

3. It teacheth us that sin originally cometh from the heart and inner man; for hatred is murder, that is, the seed of it; and what would it produce were it not for the restraints of providence? Mat. 18:19. How watchful should we be over our hearts! Prov. 4:23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life;' and over the first risings of sin there, that we may not give place to the devil, Eph. 4:27. Judas had never betrayed his Lord if he had crushed covetousness in the egg; many had never dipped their hands in blood, if they had smothered their envy and hatred as soon as it began to arise in them. It is wiser to keep from the first degrees, for by yielding to them we run into further degrees of sin. How humble should we be! Oh, what monsters lurk in the heart of man! Jer. 17:4, 'Wash thy heart from wickedness.' We would not think so if the word or experience did not discover it. What a foul stomach have they that vomit up nothing but knives, and daggers, and instruments of destruction!

Use 2. Is to press us to beware of this sin, the hatred of our brother.

1. It is such a sin as is brought for one instance of the corruption and degeneration of human nature, Titus 3:3. We are all hateful to God, and yet we hate one another, that one man is as a wolf to another, seeking to devour or undermine one another.

2. It is not such a sin as shall have its pardon of course, with our ordinary failings and frailties. No; it is represented as one of the heinous transgressions of the law, 'murder;' such sins as are quite contrary to the evangelical state: they have 'not eternal life abiding in them;' that is, life spiritual, which is eternal life begun: Gal. 5:21, 'They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God;'

and Eph. 5:6, 'Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.' Those that impenitently live in them shall be eternally damned; where they are harboured, they leave an incapacity upon us of entering into the kingdom of God till solemnly and expressly repented of.

3. It is a sin that is contrary to the evangelical temper, as well as to the evangelical state; it is contrary to that meekness, patience, and forgiving one another, peaceableness, love, which is so frequently and expressly required of christians; for Christianity is an art of loving God and his people: 1 Cor. 16:14, 'Let all your things be done with charity;' 1 Peter 4:8, 'Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves.' Love is the chief duty we owe both to God and our neighbour. Next to our love to our Lord Jesus Christ, love to his people ought to be studied above other things; therefore certainly they should keep free of malice and hatred one of another.

4. When you live in hatred one to another, you cannot offer any acceptable sacrifice to God. When Christ had discoursed concerning rash anger and opprobrious speeches to our brother, he saith, Mat. 5:23, 24, 'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift;' and in his prayer, Mat. 6:12, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' Otherwise we cannot pray to the God of love with any confidence: 1 Tim. 2:8, 'I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.' It spoileth our access to God, 1 Peter 3:7.

5. Till you get rid of this distemper a man is strangely blinded and perverted in the course of his walking, all christian practice

obstructed: 1 John 2:11, 'But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes;' that is, he is more easily involved in sin and error, and mistaketh his way, or hath not a heart to walk in it. He wanted his true measures, love to God and his people, both which make him wise in spiritual things.

Second point. Now I come to the perniciousness and danger of this sin, 'No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.' I shall clear it by these considerations—

1. That it is a blessed thing to have eternal life abiding in us before we enter into the possession of it. This will appear sufficiently by explaining the terms, what it is to have eternal life, and then what it is to have it abiding in us.

[1.] What is it to have eternal life? It is to have a right to it by a new covenant grant: 1 John 5:12, 'He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.' He hath a stated right, and well secured, as firm as God's covenant can make it; a right pleadable before the tribunal of God: 1 John 5:10, 'He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation.'

[2.] To have it, is firmly to believe it, and hope and look for it: Heb. 11:1. 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Faith giveth to its object presence and evidence. As it is substance, so it is equal to present subsistence; as it is an evidence, so it is equal to visibility; it is present to our view and sight in point of truth, to our affections in point of worth.

[3.] To have it abiding in us is to have it begun in the spiritual life. The spiritual life is an introduction to this life of glory. There is an eternal principle in our hearts; therefore grace is called an immortal

or incorruptible seed, 1 Peter 1:23. There is an eternal principle put into them, to carry them to eternal ends. The life is begun, and is still working towards its final perfection. Nothing is perfected in heaven but what is begun here upon earth. It is an earnest to show how sure, 2 Cor. 1:22, the first-fruits, to show how good, Rom. 8:23. The comforts of the Spirit are some foretastes of the sweetness which is in heaven. It is also a disposition; it doth qualify and prepare us for glory: Col. 1:12, 'Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;' and Rom. 9:23, 'Prepared unto glory.' As their natures are more and more renewed and purified, and more dispositively fitted.

2. This is the privilege of the true believer, and none else; for it is expressly said, John 3:36, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

3. None is a true believer but he that loveth God above all, and his people for God's sake; for true faith worketh by love, Gal. 5:6, and the great commands of the gospel are faith in Christ, and love to one another: 1 John 3:23, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave commandment.'

4. Therefore those that live in the allowed hatred of their brethren are cut off from all those privileges; they have not a right to God's covenant, for they are not sound believers; they have no true faith and hope concerning the world to come, for then they would prepare more for it; for our certain and desirous expectation of the promised glory is seen in our seriousness, diligence, and watchfulness against sin. They have not the beginnings of heaven in their souls, because they have not the divine nature, which is love; yea, they cherish that

which destroyeth the power and forfeits the comforts of the spiritual life, hatred, which is the satanical nature, and utterly contrary and inconsistent with the divine and heavenly life.

SERMON XXII

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.—
1 JOHN 3:16.

THE apostle having instanced in the lowest act of love, not hating our brother, and destroying the life of another, as Cain did; now he cometh to instance in the highest act of love, laying down our own lives for the brethren. Lest by the former discourse he should seem to beat down the price of love too low in the world, he seeketh here to advance it again. A christian should be so far from destroying the life of another, that he should venture his own, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God,' &c.

In the words observe two things—(1.) An instance of God's love; (2.) The inference of duty drawn from thence.

First, The instance of God's love, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.'

1. The phrase of laying down of life imports his death was not forced, but he yielded to it by a voluntary submission; so it is explained, John 10:17, 18, 'I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and have power to take it again.'

2. For us; not only for our good, but in our place and room: John 10:15, 'I lay down my life for my sheep.'

3. Hereby perceive we the love of God. Here is love testified by some notable effect and fruit. Love lieth hidden in the breast of those that love, but it is visibly known and seen by the effects. We perceive it was a true, real, effectual love; not a well-wishing only, or a kind affection arising in the heart, and there resting, but a love breaking out into action, and evidencing itself by some act becoming such a love.

Doct. That Christ laying down his life for us was a pregnant proof and great demonstration of his love to us.

To evidence this I shall prove these things—

First, That love was the bosom-cause, spring, and rise of all that Christ did for us, and that which did set on work the whole business of our recovery to God. This is often noted in the scripture, whether you consider the act of God or Christ: John 3:16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.' So Christ: Gal. 2:20, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me;' Eph. 5:25, 'He loved the church, and gave himself for it;' Rev. 1:5, 'He hath loved us, and washed us in his blood from our sins.' Love is the inward moving cause, and our misery is the outward occasion which moved him to do so. The nature of love is *velle amati bonum*, to desire the good of the party loved. That this was the first rise is evident, because we can give reasons of other things, but we can give no reason of his love. Why did he employ so much wisdom and goodness and power, and make such a deal of do to save a company of poor forlorn creatures? He loved us. But why did he love us? Because he loved us. It was not necessity of nature, as fire burneth because it can do no otherwise. It was the error of a great philosopher to say, that the first cause did

work out of mere necessity, and that what he doth he must needs do. No; God is a free agent; he might have left us remediless, and in everlasting misery; but out of his self-inclination, and according to his own heart, he hath done us good, though he might have chosen whether he would or no. It was *opus liberi consilii*, but God would restore us, and that in the best way.

Secondly, It was God's end to carry on the way of our salvation in such a manner as might commend his love to sinners: Rom. 5:8, 'But God commended his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' There was power discovered in the creation, when God made us like himself out of the dust of the ground; but love in our redemption, when he made himself like us. He revealeth his glorious majesty in the highest heavens; in hell his fearful justice; his wise and powerful providence throughout the whole world; his gracious love and mercy to his church and people. All things in God are infinite, but the effects of his love are more wonderful than any of his attributes; there he hath gone to the uttermost. He hath no better thing to give us than himself, his Christ and his Spirit. He never showed so much of his wisdom but he can show more; but how can he show more of his love to us than he hath shown? He hath not another Christ to die for us, nor a better saviour to bestow upon us, nor a better salvation to offer to us.

Thirdly, That the course which God took doth fully suit with his end, which was a full and clear demonstration of his love, as will appear by these circumstances—

1. The person who was to work out our deliverance was the eternal Son of God. We need no other proof than this very text we have in hand, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.' He that is God did this for us; Jesus Christ, 'who is God

over all,' Rom. 9:5. Now that God, who is the absolute Lord of all things, and can do with us what he pleaseth; God, that oweth nothing to any man, that was so much offended with man; God, that stood in no need of us, as having infinite happiness and contentment within himself, that he should show so much love as to come and die for us, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God.' When we consider what Christ is, we shall most admire what he hath done for us. For creatures to be kind to one another is not so great a matter, for every one hath need of another. The world is upheld by a combination of interests, as the stones in an arch; the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee; the prince standeth in need of the peasant, as well as the peasant of the prince. But God standeth in no need of us: 'He is not worshipped with men's hands, as if he needed anything,' Acts 17:25. We need his blessing, but he doth not need our service to support his being and dignity or increase his happiness. When Christ was in the state of humiliation, he was subject to wants as we are; as when they loosed the foal whereon he was to ride up to Jerusalem, they were to answer, Mat. 21:3, 'The Lord hath need of him.' But it was otherwise with Christ as God, which we now speak of. As God, he needed not the being of man or angel; or else why did he not make the world and things therein sooner, that he might be sooner happy? Again, as man, he was to be in subjection: 'For being made of a woman, he was made under the law,' Gal. 4:4; and as mediator he had a commandment: John 10:18, 'This commandment I received of my Father.' But as the second person in the trinity, he is one God with the Father, as undivided in nature and essence; so of the same liberty, authority, and power: Phil. 2:6, 'He thought it no robbery to be equal with God.' The angels were cast out of heaven for robbery, for usurping divine honour; but Christ was not thrust down for robbery and usurpation, but came down out of love and voluntary condescension to die for us. Sometimes Christ's death is made an act of obedience, sometimes an act of love: Rom. 5:19, 'By the obedience

of one many shall be made righteous.' So Phil. 2:8, 'He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.' With respect to his Father's command, it was an high act of obedience, the like of which cannot be done by man or angel, carried on with such humility, patience, self-denial, resignation of himself to God, charity and pity toward us. But considering the dignity of his person, all was purely an act of love; and the more love because, coming in our nature, he put himself under a necessity of obedience, and doing what conduced to our salvation; so he loved me and gave himself for me.

2. Our necessity and condition, when he came to show this love to us. We were the cursed offspring of sinful Adam, in a lost and lapsed estate, and so altogether hopeless, unless some means were used for our recovery. Kindness to them that are ready to perish doth most affect us. Surely we should love Christ as men fetched up from the gates of hell, for we had lost the image of God, Rom. 3:23; sold ourselves to Satan, Isa. 52:3; sentenced to death and eternal condemnation by God's righteous law, John 3:18; ready for execution, Eph. 2:3, John 3:36; nothing but the slender thread of a frail life between us and it. Then did Christ step in by a wonderful act of love to rescue and recover us, not staying till we relented and cried for mercy. We were neither sensible of our misery nor mindful of our remedy, but lay dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. 2:1. Thus when we had cast away the mercies of our creation, and were wallowing in our blood and filthiness, Ezek. 16, then the Son of God came to die for us, Rom. 5:7, 8. Surely it was love, mere love, when we stood guilty before the tribunal of God's justice, that he should take the chastisement of our peace upon him: Isa. 53:5, 'And with his stripes we are healed.'

3. The astonishing way in which our deliverance was brought about; by the incarnation, shame, agonies, blood, and death of the Son of

God; this was the highest act of self-denial on Christ's part, considering him only as to the nature he had assumed: John 15:13, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.' If his people need his death, he will give proof to them by his death of his love to them, and will act to the highest laws of friendship; we learn more of God's love by this instance than anything else.

4. The notions by which the death of Christ is set forth to us. There are two solemn ones—a ransom and a sacrifice.

[1.] A ransom: Mat. 20:28, 'And to give his life as a ransom for many;' 1 Tim. 2:6, 'Who gave himself a ransom for all.' This was an ancient notion: Job 33:24, 'Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom;' that is, a price and recompense given in our stead. A ransom is a price given to one that hath power of life and death, to save the life of one capitally guilty, or by law bound to suffer death, or some other evil and punishment. This was our case. God was the supreme judge, before whose tribunal man standeth guilty, and liable to death; but Christ interposed that we might be spared, and the Father is content with his death as a sufficient ransom.

[2.] The other notion is that of a mediatorial sacrifice: Isa. 53:10, 'When he shall make his soul an offering for sin;' Eph. 5:2, 'As Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour.' He undertook the expiation of our sins and the propitiating of God. God's provoked justice would not end the controversy it had against us till it was appeased by a proper sacrifice of propitiation. Now herein was love: 1 John 4:10, 'Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' The sins and guilty fears of

mankind show the need of such a remedy. We are naturally sensible that the punishment of death is deserved and due to us by the law of God: Rom. 1:32, 'Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.' And also the necessity of a sin-offering. This Christ hath made, 'that our consciences, being purged from dead works, might serve the living God,' Heb. 9:14.

Fourthly, The consequent benefits.

1. Relative privileges, pardon, justification and adoption. Pardon: Eph. 1:7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' To have sin pardoned, which is the great makebate, which is the worm that eateth out the heart of all our comforts, the venom that embittereth all our crosses; surely this is the great effect of God's love to us. Justification: Rom. 5:1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' To be at present upon good terms with God, freed from fears of hell and the wrath of God, which is so deservedly terrible to all serious persons: Rom. 5:9, 'Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.' Oh, how should we love the Lord Jesus, who hath procured such privileges for us. So for adoption, to be taken into God's family: Gal. 4:5, 'When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Assured of welcome and audience in all our needs, as children are when they come to their father, to wait for present provision, and hereafter for a child's portion.

2. Positive inherent graces, to have our natures sanctified, healed, and freed from the stains of sin; all which is done by virtue of the death of Christ: Eph. 5:26, 'He gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it;' Titus 2:14, 'Who gave himself for us, that he

might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;' and so fitted for the service of God: Rev. 1:5, 6, 'Who hath loved us, and washed us in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God.' Surely to have a nature divine and heavenly, to be made like God, serviceable to God, is a mercy not easily valued according to its worth. Nay, further, to be fortified against the enemies of our salvation. The devil: Col. 2:15, 'And having spoiled principalities and powers, he hath made a show of them openly, triumphing over them.' The world: Gal. 1:4, 'He gave himself that he might redeem us from this present evil world.' The flesh: Gal. 5:24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof;' Rom. 6:6, 'Knowing that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed;' 1 Peter 2:24, 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness.' They are distempered and diseased souls that are not affected with these kind of mercies, and value worldly greatness before them; as swine take pleasure in the mire, and ravenous beasts feed on dung and carrion. Surely these greater mercies, which tend to the perfecting and ennobling our natures, should endear Christ to us.

3. Eternal blessedness and glory; this is also the fruit of his laying down his life for us; for it is said, 1 Thes. 5:10, 'He died for us, that whether we sleep or wake, we should live together with him;' and again, Heb. 9:15, 'He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressors that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.' That is the consummate benefit, when we shall be brought nigh to the throne of God, and shall be companions of the holy angels, and for ever behold our glorified Redeemer, and our nature united to the Godhead; and for our persons, we shall have the nearest intuition and fruition of God that

we are capable of, and live in the fullest love to him and delight in him, and the soul shall for ever dwell in a glorified body, which shall not be a prison, but a temple to it; and be no more troubled with infirmities, necessities, and diseases, but for ever be at rest with the Lord, and glorify his name to all eternity. Thus we see what love God hath showed us in Christ, or Christ hath showed to us in dying for us.

Fifthly, That love doth shine forth more in our redemption by Christ than in any other way whereby God hath discovered himself to the creature. That we have a good God is otherwise manifested, and there is nothing comes from him but shows forth something of his goodness: Ps. 119:68, 'Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.' He discovered love in our creation, when he gave us a reasonable nature, and made us a little lower than the angels; but he showeth more love in our restoration, when he giveth us a divine nature, and advanceth our nature in the person of Christ far above principalities and powers. He might have made us toads and serpents; he might have left us devils. He showeth love to us in his preservation and daily providence, that he maintaineth us at his own expense, though we do him so little service, yea, do so often offend him; but he shows more in pardoning our sins, and adopting us into his family, and giving us eternal life. A word made us, and his providential word keepeth us: 'For he upholdeth all things by the word of his power,' and 'Man liveth not by bread alone;' but we could not be redeemed without the death of the Son of God: 1 John 4:10, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' Therefore here is the true glass wherein to see God. Surely we had never known so much of the love of God had it not been for this great instance: 1 John 4:9, 'In this was the love of God manifested towards us, because he sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.' What was Jesus Christ but love incarnate, love born of a virgin, love

hanging on a cross, love laid in the grave, love made sin, love made a curse for us? It was love that accomplished all the wonders of our redemption.

Use 1. This glorious demonstration of God's love should fill us with admiring thoughts and praise. We owe all to love. Christ: John 3:16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' The covenant: Jer. 32:40, 41, 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and will not turn away from them, to do them good: yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.' The blessings of the covenant; conversion: Eph. 2:4, 5, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins and trespasses, he quickened us.' Pardon: Hosea 14:4, 'I will heal their backslidings, and will love them freely.' Hopes of glory: 2 Thes. 2:16, 'He hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.' Our final glorification: 1 John 3:1, 'Behold what manner of love is this!' Pardon, grace, glory, all cometh of love. Nothing should be more frequent in our hearts and mouths than the love of God. It is the study of the saints to admire this: Eph. 3:18, 'That we may comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.' To get more large and lively thoughts of it. This will most be when we have some interest in these things: 1 John 3:1, 'Behold what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!' And you find the fruits of it in your own souls: Rom. 5:5, 'But hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.' Feel the virtue of his death in heart and conscience, then glory in it: Gal. 6:14, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;' 1 John 5:10, 'He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself.' When it appeaseth your guilty fears, and

freeth you from the tyranny of worldly lusts, the saving effects of this love, a deep and intimate feeling giveth us the true sense of those things, more than a pertinent and exact discourse.

2. This glorious demonstration of God's love to us should beget love in us to God again: 1 John 4:19, 'We love him because he hath loved us first.' Shall Jesus Christ love me, and make a plaster of his blood for my poor wounded soul, and shall I not love him again? The cold wall will reverberate and beat back again the heat of the sun: 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, if one died for all, then are all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.' Our hearts should be drawn in to him, and love and thankfulness should be the life of all obedience; for all christian religion in effect is but love. Love is the spring and rise of all that Christ did for us; so it should be the rise and spring of all that we do for Christ, that we may act and suffer for him as willingly and readily as he did for us. We can hardly take comfort in any dispensation of God unless there be love in it; neither will God accept any duty of ours unless there be love in it. Oh, let love beget love!

3. Let us be content with this manifestation of the love of God; we have the fruits of his death, though God straiten us in outward things. We cannot say God doth or doth not love us, though he giveth or withholdeth a worldly portion: Eccles. 9:1, 'None can know love or hatred by these things.' Sometimes God's enemies have a large supply, when his people are kept short and bare: Ps. 17:14, 'From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose bellies thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.' But if he giveth us the saving effects of

Christ's death, it is a certain demonstration of his love, though he doth not gratify us with worldly increase. Let us look after the distinguishing effects of his love, and the favour he beareth to his people.

Secondly, I come to the duty hence inferred, 'We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'

Doct. Christians ought to be ready to lay down their lives for the brethren.

This is the use we are directed to make of God's laying down his life for us, not only that we may love him again, and be reconciled to him, but to teach us how to love one another.

Note three things from hence—

First, That our love of the brethren is inferred out of Christ's love to us. Christ's love to us hath a double respect to it—(1.) It hath the force of a cause; (2.) The use of a pattern and example.

1. The force of a cause. Out of gratitude to Christ we should love those that are Christ's, those that are his people, and bear his name and image; because he hath loved us, we should love one another: 1 John 4:11, 'If God so loved us, we should love one another,' for this reason.

2. It hath the use of a pattern and example; we must not only love others because he hath loved us, but we must love others as he hath loved us: John 15:12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you;' and John 13:34, 'This is my new commandment which I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I

have loved you, that ye also love one another.' This is the pattern propounded to our imitation.

Secondly, That in our love to the brethren, as we must imitate Christ in other things, so in laying down our lives for their good. Our love should be free as his was, sincere as his was, fruitful as his, constant as his love, superlative as his: Eph. 5:2, 'Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us.' But chiefly in his dying, to reduce men to God. Christ was willing to endure all extremity to expiate our sins and bring about our salvation. Christ's love fainted not: John 13:1, 'Christ having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end.' Therefore we should venture our lives in such a noble design to bring men to the christian faith. Christ's precious blood was more valuable than all the world, therefore we should not stick at any thing.

Thirdly, It is not left arbitrary and free to us to do or not to do, but we must or ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. So it is in the text, 'We ought also.' Christ must be obeyed whatever our inclinations be. It is such a necessary duty, that we are nothing without it: 1 Cor. 13:1–3, 'Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gifts of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I had all faith, and I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' We have not the true spirit of Christianity till this be accomplished in us.

But in what cases is a man to die for another?

I answer—This case of conscience must be decided by distinguishing —(1.) The persons; (2.) The cause; (3.) The manner; (4.) The call.

First, As to the persons for whom we must lay down our lives.

1. They may be considered as aliens or infidels, or as fellow-christians. Principally the latter are intended, for they are more properly our brethren, and this duty belongeth to brotherly love, as it is distinguished from charity. But yet the others are not wholly to be excluded, because we die or venture our lives for infidels that they may become brethren; as Christ died for us when we were enemies that we might be made friends. And therefore, though base and brutish, and opposite to us for the present, yet there should be an earnest desire of their spiritual good; and it is most like the example of Christ to run all hazards for the conversion of the world, as well as the confirmation of the faithful: Phil. 2:17, 'Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.' His blood poured out as a drink-offering, with allusion to the sacrifices of the law.

2. They may be considered as a single person or as a multitude. Now for a community, there is no question but I should venture my single life to save them. It is a constant rule that all private things must give way to public, for God's glory is more promoted and concerned in a public good than in a private; therefore a public good is better and more considerable in itself than any man's particular temporal happiness. God's glory must be preferred before the creature's profit. Heathens have chosen to die for the public good, or for their country's, though it may be suspected fame had a great influence on it. Thus Curtius went into a gulf to save his country. Yea, the creatures act against their particular nature to preserve the universe. Lawrence ran the hazard of a gridiron rather than betray the faithful.

But now the question is, whether is one single person bound to die for another? Yes, if more eminently useful, as you shall see by and by; and that is not hard, because he is as much bound to die for me as I for him; the strong to confirm the faith of the weak, and the weak to preserve the strong, that they may do more good. So where a great obligation is; as to our natural parents: we have received our lives from them. A private christian suffering for Christ should be owned, since a man cannot without it perform necessary duties in owning Christ's members: Mat. 25:43, 'I was in prison, and ye visited me not;' 2 Tim. 4:16, 'All men forsook me; I pray God it be not laid to their charge.' Though it may involve them in great trouble to own God's servants and supply their necessities, as in Queen Mary's days.

3. Others may be considered as to their capacities of promoting the glory of God, as the magistrate, or the father of the country: 2 Sam. 18:3, 'Thou art better than ten thousand of us;' 2 Sam. 21:16, 17, 'O quench not the light of Israel,' when David was in danger; or eminent ministers, such as may save many souls. Paul telleth us, Rom. 16:4, 'Who have for my life laid down their own necks, unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the gentiles;' Phil. 2:30, 'For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding life, to supply your lack of service towards me.' Persons public must be preferred before private; and among private those that excel and may be more useful, whose lives may more conduce to the glory of God. We must love a better and a more serviceable man, who hath more of God's Spirit in him, above ourselves, and an equal person equal with ourselves. Well, then, a subject is bound to preserve the life of the magistrate, as the hand will lift up itself to save the head. Nay, in some cases, though it be a private friend; for though my life and his be of an equal value, yet my duty to him and his life overwayeth, especially if the case be but hazardous, as to rescue him from an assassin.

Secondly, The cause for which we exercise this great charity to others; it is for their good. Now good is either temporal or eternal; for their eternal good chiefly we are to do this. Paul, if he might promote the glory of God, 'could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh,' Rom. 9:3; if to free others from eternal death; so did Christ die for us. Suppose temporal good, to free them from temporal evil, to clear the community; or for useful persons, or persons for whom I stand bound.

1. Certainly we ought to help one another's spiritual good by the loss of our temporal, and venture life, liberty, and estate for the propagation of the gospel. An instance we have in Paul's glorious excess of charity. Moses: Exod. 32. 'Blot me out of thy book, if thou wilt forgive their sins.' But the Lord Jesus Christ above all: 2 Cor. 8:9, 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.' A public spiritual good is more valuable than any temporal good, a necessary act of our love to God.

2. Temporal good, to save the life of public, useful, eminent persons, if their lives be more serviceable than ours.

Thirdly, The manner of exposing life to apparent hazard or to certain death; partly because in some cases we may venture our lives, though not actually lay them down, as we may expose ourselves to uncertain danger to hinder others' certain danger, as when a man is assaulted by thieves and ruffians, to prevent murder. I must contribute my help to the wronged party, though I endanger my own life: Esther 4:16, 'If I perish, I perish.' There are two grounds of that resolution—a public good preferred before a private. The case was only hazardous, though likely; for she would go with a courageous mind.

And partly because he that ventureth puts his life in his hand, is accepted with God, though he doth not actually lay down his life; for it is so interpreted, because he runneth a course of danger.

Fourthly, The call. We must not precipitate and cast ourselves needlessly on such trials. God willeth no man to be foolishly and rashly prodigal of his own life and health, yet when clearly called, none of this must be stood upon. In two cases we seem to be called. First, When we cannot without sin escape such a trial. It overtaketh us in our station wherein God hath set us, otherwise we must preserve our lives for the glory of God and the good of others. Secondly, When God findeth us out in our sin, and others are like to suffer for our sake. 2 Sam. 24:12, when David had displeased God in numbering the people, God, by the prophet Gad, offereth him three things: 'Choose one of them, that I may do it unto thee;' and Jonah 1:12, 'And he said, Take me up and cast me into the sea, for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.'

Object. It is true, I must love my neighbour as myself; but by this it seemeth I must love him above myself.

Ans. 1. I love myself when I only hazard temporal life to obtain eternal. It is not a hard law for them to keep that have an eternal life assured to them for the loss of a temporal one: John 11:25, 'He that believeth on me shall live though he die.'

Ans. 2. Natural love is to be subservient to our spiritual love. Natural love, which, is put into a man for self-preservation, no question will be stronger to itself than another; and indeed we are to prefer, and first preserve and provide for, ourselves; our neighbour is only regarded as a second self. But this is to be directed and mastered by our spiritual love. As reason taught the heathens to prefer their countries before their life, so grace teacheth christians to prefer

God's honour, Christ's kingdom, gospel church, neighbour's spiritual good, before our own life and liberty; and we ought to lay down our lives for others, when the glory of God, edification of the church, and spiritual necessity of others requireth it. Our lives must not be dearer to us than Christ's was to him.

Use 1. If we are to lay down our lives for the brethren, then we should sincerely perform all lesser offices of love to them. See the next verse, 'But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need.' If you cannot part with superfluities, can you part with life for their sake? 2 Sam. 24:17. If you will not hazard a frown or a check for them, how can you suffer death for them? If not put yourselves to the trouble of a visit, how will you travel all the world, and put yourselves to all manner of hazards to convert souls?

2. How much self-lovers and self-seekers are to be condemned. If I must not only love my neighbour as myself, but love him as Christ loved me, surely they have a temper most unsuitable to Christianity that only mind their own things, and please their own wills and desires, without seeking the welfare of others. Whether they be in a public or private capacity, they care not how it goes with the church and people of God, so their particular interests may flourish. This is against nature and grace. By nature man is a sociable creature, that cannot live by himself, therefore should not live to himself; and grace hath cast us into the mystical body, there is a great aggregated self, and that is the society to which we do belong; and that is the reason why we are so often said to be members of one another, Rom. 12:5. It is but self still, the same mystical body; and we should care one for another as for ourselves, especially the public state of Christ's church. If it be ill with them and the church too, church-sorrow swalloweth up their private grief: 1 Sam. 4:22, 'The glory is departed, for the ark of God is taken.' She doth not bewail the death of her

husband, the death of a father and brother, so much as the ark's being taken, and the glory departed from Israel. If it go well with them and the church too, it doubleth the contentment: Ps. 128:5, 'Thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.' But if things go cross and ill with the church when it goeth well with them, the state of the church is a wound to their hearts: Ps. 137:5, 6, 'They prefer Zion above their chief joy.' If it go well with the church when ill with them, it is a comfort; as Paul in prison rejoiced in the progress of the gospel, Phil. 1:15–18.

3. That christian love is a more necessary and excellent grace than usually we take it to be. First, More necessary, for Christ died to set a pattern to our love; as to teach us to love God, so with what fervour and affection to love one another. Of all duties and graces that respect our neighbour, this is most necessary; it is indeed all the sum of the law: Rom. 13:8, 'He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.' The fountain of all: 1 Cor. 16:24, 'My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.' Without it, though we have the greatest gifts, do the most pompous acts, it is nothing, 1 Cor. 13:1–3. Yea, it is the great means of making believers useful to one another. Secondly, The excellency; here is the highest pattern, viz., Christ. We cannot come up to his height and measure, yet some resemblance there must be between his love to souls and our love to the brethren. Thirdly, The highest act of his self-denial is instanced in his laying down his life, which Christ telleth us is the greatest act of friendship among men, scarce ever found, John 15:13. Now we take love for a slight thing as practised among us; but as it is taught in scripture, the law of charity is very strict, that we should forget our own highest interests for the profit of others; and few christians there are that have the due impressions of Christ's death upon them.

4. How much all that profess christianity should be above the fears of death, and in readiness to lay down their lives when God in his providence calleth them to it. Love to God calleth for it, Luke 14:26. Yea, love to man calleth for it: Acts 21:13, 'I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem.' This is no hard law, if we consider our obligation from the death of Christ, and our encouragement from the hope of eternal reward. Heathens died for their country out of natural gallantry and greatness of mind; they knew they could not have lived long, therefore chose this way. But Christianity only teaches the true grounds of contemning life and all temporal interests.

SERMON XXIII

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.—1 JOHN 3:17, 18.

IN the former verse he hath urged the example of Christ, which is both a reason and a pattern of our love to our brethren, 'We must love others because he loved us, and we must love others as he loved us.' The pattern is urged not only for the duty itself, but the degree of it. We must imitate Christ in that eminent act of self-denial, his laying down his life for us. Surely that love is best which is most like Christ's. Now Christ spared not his life, nor anything to do us good; so should our love express itself in the highest instances of love. Well, then, if we are bound to the greater, we are much more bound to the lesser; if to lay down our lives for those that are in danger, much more to give our goods to them. Surely those are not to be

accounted lovers of the brethren that will not part with a little of their substance on these occasions, and are guilty of gross hypocrisy if they should pretend either to the love of God or our neighbour, 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need,' &c.

In the words there is—

1. An argument implied, a majori ad minus; and there is expressly contained in it—(1.) A supposition of a duty neglected; (2.) A censure or charge of a heinous crime imputed to such; the 'love of God doth not dwell' in them.

2. An exhortation to sincerity.

First, In the argument we have three things—

[1.] The ability of the party to exercise charity, 'Whoso hath this world's good.'

[2.] The necessity of the party upon whom it is exercised, 'And seeth his brother have need.'

[3.] The neglect itself, 'Shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him.'

(1.) The ability of the party, 'Whoso hath this world's good;' the meaning is, wherewith to support this worldly life; as the woman is said to cast in all her living, Mark 12:44; and in other places bios is put for the support of life. Those that have but from hand to mouth are bound to distribute to them that need, Eph. 4:28; but much more the rich, that have not only to sustain and support this life, but to spare for others. What we have we are to give; out of a little, a little; out of more, more: Luke 12:33, 'Sell what you have.' So Luke 11:41,

Give alms of such things as you have, and all things shall be clean to you.' So Luke 8:3, 'They ministered to him of their substance.' So much of this world's goods as every man hath, so far his bounty must extend.

(2.) The next thing supposed is others' necessity. By our own estate God giveth us matter to exercise charity; by others' necessity he giveth us occasion: his providence furnisheth us, and straiteneth them; if they need bread to sustain life, or raiment to clothe the body; and those that need be brethren, the Lord calleth upon us for some supply.

(3.) The act omitted, 'Shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him.' Here the next inward cause is mentioned, and that is, 'bowels of compassion from him;' but the effect also is intended. If he doth not assist him in his needs, his heart must be first opened; there must be a willing and ready mind, and then his hand opened; there must be a liberal and bountiful relief. 'Bowels,' no duty in this kind is accepted with God but what is joined with bowels of compassion and sympathy. What we translate, Luke 1:78, 'Through the tender mercy of our God,' is in the margin, 'Bowels of mercy.' So 2 Cor. 7:15, 'His inward affection is more abundant towards you.' It is bowels. So Col. 3:12, 'Put on bowels of mercy.' It noteth an inward sense and sympathy with the misery of others; such an intense motion of the heart, that the very bowels are moved by it; so that it is, if he shut up his bowels, if he show himself hard-hearted and merciless, is not moved with any pity of another's wants. The meaning is fully expressed by Moses, Deut. 15:7, 'Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother.'

2dly. The censure and charge pronounced on us, 'Whosoever they be;' where mark—

(1.) The form of proposal; it is by way of question or appeal to common reason. Can any man be so absurd as to imagine that this man can-have the love of God in him?

(2.) The heinousness of the crime or matter charged, 'The love of God dwelleth not in him;' that is, is not rooted in his heart, and so he must go for a hypocrite; though not grossly dissembling christianity, yet guilty of partial obedience. Mark, it is not said, How dwelleth the love of the brethren in him? but 'How dwelleth the love of God in him?' Though they pretend to love God, yet indeed they neither love the brethren nor God.

Secondly, The exhortation to sincerity, 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' In this exhortation there is—

1. The compellation, 'My little children,' pressing love; he showeth love and tenderness towards them.

2. The matter of the exhortation, to sincerity of love, expressed—

First, Negatively, 'Not in word and in tongue.' To show love in word and tongue is not simply forbidden, but respectively; not simply, for good words are useful in two cases—

[1.] To comfort the miserable, they have their use.

[2.] To maintain their innocency. Some cannot afford their brother a good word, either of him or to him. Others, their hands are withered, have not a heart to help him. But comparatively or respectively the meaning is, when it is in word and tongue only; and real and actual doing good is neglected or excluded when we rest in good words.

Secondly, Positively, 'But in deed and in truth;' that is, so as the uprightness of our hearts may be manifested by real deeds, or doing good, when the needs of others require it. To love in 'deed and in truth,' is to love sincerely: 1 Peter 1:22. 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.' Which must be understood of ends and effects.

1. Ends, spoken of Mat. 6:1, 2, 'Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, to be seen of men.' All they did was hypocrisy, 'to be seen of men.'

2. Effects, when words are dissembled: Prov. 23:7, 'Eat and drink, saith he, but his heart is not with thee.' When not seconded and verified with suitable acts, 'Be warmed and clothed;' as here many foolishly and causelessly boasted they loved the brethren, but they would do nothing for them. They boasted of love with their mouths, but would not show it by the effects.

Doct. That want of bowels of compassion, or denying relief to the needy and indigent, is the note of a man that loveth not God.

I shall make good the point by these considerations—

1. That it is the will of God that there should be a difference among men, that some should be rich, others poor, some high, some low: Deut. 15:11, 'For the poor shall never cease out of the land: Therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to the poor and needy in the land.' Though God is able abundantly to supply all men's wants, yet he hath by his providence so appointed and ordered men's outward condition in the world, that

all should not be rich and wealthy, but some poor and of mean estate; as here in the text, one brother is supposed to have this world's goods, and the other to have want and need. So also Mark 14:7, 'Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do good to them.' God's wisdom doth appear most in the different degrees and estates of men. As it is with respect to the world, for the beauty and service of the universe, that there should be in the world hills and valleys, so in the world of mankind there are superiors and inferiors, masters and servants, rich and poor, nobles and craftsmen. First, It is for the good of human society, the more firmly to tie men together. The poor need support, succour, and relief from the rich, and the rich need the labours and industry of the poor. Different degrees fit men for different callings, for service and command; some things would be wanting to the good of mankind, if all were poor or all rich. Therefore God's way is not parity and levelling, but diversity of ranks and degrees. Secondly, Besides the necessities of man, God doth it with respect to his own government, in order to the world to come; for the trial of men's obedience is better made thereby.

[1.] The trial of the rich.

(1.) Their thankfulness to God. God might have laid them low as well as others. If they abuse their high estate to pride and oppression, they tax the wisdom of the great governor of the world, and are unthankful to him: Prov. 22:2, 'The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them both;' that is, God is the moderator and disposer of each man's estate. One by God is largely furnished with temporal good things, whether they come to him by right of inheritance, or free gift, or honest labour, it is all from God; the other is kept bare, and under pressing necessities, either by the calamities of the times, or defect of means, or miscarriage of instruments, or by

some sudden blast and disappointment of God's providence. Now these meet together in the same world, in the same kingdom, and the same town or city, and they have often business to do one with another, and have need one of another. If the rich carry it imperiously to the poor, or the poor enviously to the rich, they pervert God's government, do not observe the duties which God expecteth from them in their several conditions of life. Well, then, it is but in poor perishing riches that we differ one from another, and we must all stand before our judge to give an account how we have behaved ourselves in either state: Prov. 17:5, 'Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his maker.' He that despiseth the poor carrieth himself haughtily, contemptuously, he forgetteth who maketh him to differ, and who it is that casteth the world into this order, lifting you up and keeping down others; he might have laid you low as well as others, you might have been born of mean parents as well as rich.

(2.) To try their sympathy and humanity. Poverty and other miseries will not be wanting among the children of men, that the rich may have occasion to exercise their charity, and love, and compassion to their poor brethren; as the great veins are filled with blood to supply the lesser. And indeed human nature hath nothing better nor greater than a heart and power to help the miserable: Acts 20:35, as our Lord said, 'It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive.' Where did our Lord say so? Christ in all his sayings hath often commended giving, but never receiving. But it is blessed because it comes nearer to the nature of God, who giveth to all, but receiveth of none; it cometh nearer to the goodness of God to have a heart to give, and the happiness of God to have a power to give. Now thus will God try the duty of the rich and opulent.

[2.] For the poor, they are upon their trial too, for the trial of their patience, humility, self-denial, dependence upon God. In the

meanest station we may do service to Christ. In a concert of voices it is no matter what part a man sings, provided he sings well, treble, mean, or bass. God appointeth to every man his condition; if he carry it well, he is accepted with God. Grace puts both upon the same level: James 1:9, 10, 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low.' The poor man is not to be sad and dejected if God hath put him into a low condition; but to be well pleased with it, as it giveth him advantages of submission to and trust in God more explicit; and living by faith, which in a more plentiful condition is obscure and hard to be found. Thus God hath called him to a glorious estate of grace, though mean and low in the world; and he who hath riches and honour, and all commodities in this life, is to rejoice that he hath a humble heart, doth not lift up himself above others, being mindful of the changeableness of the things of this world; so that grace cureth the inordinacies of either condition: 'Poor in spirit,' Mat. 5:3; reconcilable to a low estate.

2. That when others' necessities are presented to us, it is a call from God to exercise our love and charity towards them. If he seeth his brother hath need. *Affirmativa non ligant ad semper*; positive duties have their proper season, and in their season they bind: 'As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men,' Gal. 6:10. Now one season is when God layeth the object before us, and their case is brought to us by sight or hearing: Isa. 58:7, 'When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.' We are to search out the hungry and needy; but more especially when God presenteth them to us, we must not turn away the face, as refusing to see or own or to take notice of him: Job 31:19, 'If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering;' ready to starve for want of meat, or perish for want of clothing. When God layeth them in our view, or bringeth the notice of them to our hearing, surely then their necessity calleth for our charity, and it is

hardness of heart and mercilessness not to be affected with it. The contrary is represented in the rich man, when the poor man lay at his gate, Luke 16:20; though he fared deliciously every day, yet the crumbs of the table were not given him. Therefore consider we live in a time of wants, and distresses are multiplied, war, fire, decay of trade; many feel the sad effects of it. If you be not ready to relieve and help them to your power, how will you answer it to God in the day of your accounts? It is made a heavy charge, Job 22:7, 'Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.' Eliphaz falsely accused Job of unmercifulness and sinful parsimony; but when God doth justly accuse of these things, what shall we answer? God doth try us by daily objects of charity and compassion. If we do not help them, we omit a duty in its season; when we meet with convenient objects, this grace must be exercised.

3. This ought the more to move us, if the necessitous be our christian brethren, for it is in the text, 'seeth his brother hath need.' We ought to do good to all sorts who are real objects of our charity. The necessitous in general should be more welcome to us than the rich who may requite us; for then we make a market of our kindness and courtesy, if kind only to the opulent and the wealthy. No; our sweetest influences should fall on the lower grounds. The fashion of the world is to be obsequious to a degree of servitude, to the mighty, the noble, the rich; as all waters run into the sea, where there is enough already. We must do good to all that need, but chiefly to the brethren our fellow-christians: Rom. 12:13, 'Distributing to the necessities of the saints.' There are *pauperes diaboli*, the devil's poor, those that have wasted their estates by luxury and prodigality; and *pauperes mundi*, the world's poor, those that are reduced to poverty by the accidents of the present life; and *pauperes Christi*, such as fear God, who are in a straitened condition. The rule is, Gal. 6:10, 'Do good to all, especially to the household of faith.' To all the wicked,

our enemies not excepted, in their necessities. But then the members of God's family and household are in an especial manner obliged to love one another, and to be beneficial to one another under their necessities and straits, into which God doth often suffer those of his family to fall for their good, if they profess the same faith with us, and do evidence the reality of the same faith by a holy life and conversation; for this is a closer relation than to be fellow-citizens of the world, fellow-servants, or brethren in the family.

4. That we should show bowels of compassion and tenderness towards others in their distress, for in the text it is, 'If he shut up his bowels of compassion from him.' There must be an inward affection and disposition accompanying and going along with the outward act of beneficence, and whatsoever is done must be done cordially and compassionately, that the heart may ever accompany the gift: Ps. 37:21, 'The righteous showeth mercy and giveth.' To be spectators of the miseries of others, and not to be affected with them, argueth a marble heart and iron sinews: Isa. 58:10, 'If thou draw out thy heart to the hungry.' It must be done freely, liberally, and compassionately: Eph. 4:32, 'Be kind to one another, tender-hearted.' Tender-heartedness, that is, commiseration, must go along with our kindness, as really pitying their misery as if it were our own.

5. Though charity begin in the heart, it must not cease there. God requireth the heart, but not for the heart, that it may terminate there. But with respect to these acts of mercy wherewith God is delighted, three things are required—(1.) Love and pity on their wants; that must be in the heart; (2.) Kind expressions on the tongue; (3.) Then bountiful acts for their relief. So that there are these three things, the motion of the heart, the expression by the words, and effectual performance. Without the last all else is but counterfeit. The root of charity is a proneness or good-will to help others, but that lieth

underground and out of sight. Unless it appear in visible fruits, we cannot tell whether we have it, yea or no. Suppose it appear in good words, they are but as leaves, and we count that a barren tree that bringeth forth nothing but leaves. Not in word and tongue only, but the fruit abounding to our account is the work itself. Therefore though God expecteth bowels, yet bowels must put us upon some further act, but that act is not words. God will not be paid with words instead of things; but God expecteth that we should freely impart what we have and can do for our neighbours' good, as well as wish well and speak well to them. Love must show itself forth, and that not in speech only but in deed; otherwise we only seek to cover a false heart.

6. To withhold and deny this relief argueth a defect and want, not only of love to our neighbour, but to God, 'How dwelleth the love of God in him?'

[1.] Because the love of God and his children are inseparable, they are necessary branches of the same law: Mat. 22:38, 39, 'This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' 1 John 5:1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.' Therefore we cannot love God if we do not love our brother. The same law that requireth the one requireth the other; the same grace that inclineth to the one inclineth to the other; the same reason that enforceth the one enforces the other. God for his own sake, and his children for God's sake, because somewhat of the divine nature and excellency of God is in them; they are 'the excellent of the earth,' Ps. 16:3. A deep sense of God's love to us begets love in us to God again; therefore we love God, and everything that belongeth to God.

[2.] It must needs be so, for love to God doth formally contain or naturally produce this love to our brethren.

(1.) It doth formally contain it; for our love to God is not a fond affection or fellow-like familiarity, but is seen in our profession of real respect; which is manifested in imitation, obedience and esteem.

(1st.) Imitation; for love doth imply such a value and esteem of God, that we count it our happiness to be like him, and the truest respect and affection which we can have to him is to write after his copy, and to study to resemble our Father. Surely they cannot be said to love God who do not imitate him, are not merciful as their heavenly Father is merciful, Luke 6:36. Now God openeth his hand, and satisfieth the wants and desires of the needy and indigent. Do we love God, and count this a perfection in God? Surely then the impression of it should be on our hearts. I would not have you pass over this lightly, that the truest love of God lieth in imitation of him. If the great demonstration of God's love to us be to make us like himself, surely then the more like him the more we love him, 1 John 3:2; for our love answereth his love to us, as the impression doth the stamp or seal. Or if the greatest aim of the creature and the highest expression of our love to God be conformity to him now, so it is when love is most perfect; it doth most delight itself in likeness to God: Ps. 17:15, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.'

(2d.) Obedience to him, for his love is a love of bounty, ours is a love of duty: 1 John 5:3, 'This is love, that we keep his commandments;' John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' Surely he doth not love God that doth not obey him, and acteth so contrary to his commands, which call everywhere for charity and mercy to the bodies and souls of men, which is so

pleasing to God: Heb. 13:16, 'But to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'

(3d.) Love is seen in an esteem or transcendental respect of God, a respect to God above all other things. Now he that shutteth up his bowels from his brother in necessity doth not love God above all, for there is something he valueth above him, and is loath to part with for his sake, and that is this world's goods: 1 John 2:19, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' Now it is gross love of the world not to part with this world's goods when God calleth for them. Whosoever loves God valueth God's favour above all other things, and counts himself happy enough in the enjoyment of God, whatever he loseth for it or parts with for it: Ps. 4:6, 7, 'Who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance. Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine increased;' Ps. 73:25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.' He that will not, at God's instance and command, part with these things, the poor inconsiderable trifles of this world, he preferreth the world before the enjoyment of God and the favour of God.

(2.) It doth naturally produce it, partly by looking to what is past, and partly to what is to come. The one is gratitude, the other is trust.

(1st.) Thankfulness for what is past; he hath done so much for us, that we should be willing to part with anything for his sake. Therefore when the apostle would have them prove the sincerity of their love, 2 Cor. 8:9, he argueth, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that when he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty you may be rich.' If we have a grateful sense of his wonderful mercy, we will be ready to make some return of

affection to God. But you will say, How is charity to the poor any return of love to God? Ans. What you do at his instance and command, you do to God and for God's sake. Now God commandeth this, and he hath devolved our respects to him on the poor and indigent. God taketh it as done to himself if done to them: Mat. 25:40, 45, 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.' And the apostle teacheth us that we show love to his name when we minister to the saints, Heb. 6:10. He taketh it as an expression of kindness and thankfulness to himself, which is given to his servants.

(2d.) Trust. Love looketh to what is to come. Surely he that loveth God trusts him, for the graces are connected. Now none trust God that count their estates safer in their own hands than God's, that will venture nothing on his promises: Prov. 19:17, 'He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him back again.' God will be our paymaster: Eccles. 11:1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and after many days thou shalt receive it;' Ps. 37:26, 'He is merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed.' God will return it to us or ours, in this life or the next. We have a friendly confidence and good opinion of God; we dare take his word, being persuaded that he is able and willing to requite us; but they that shut up their bowels show they have little value for God's word, and do suspect his goodness and truth, which is not consistent with love. You will adventure nothing in his hands, and then can you say you love him?

Use 1. Information.

1. That if we would get readiness of mind to help and relieve others in their necessities, we should increase our love to God; for the shutting up of our bowels is made not so much a defect or want of love to our

neighbour, as want of love to God. If you did love God more, you would love the poorest of God's children, and the meanest of your brethren for his sake; and love will easily persuade you to do them good. If there were less of the love of the world, and more of the love of God, then it were no great matter to part with this world's goods for another's benefit and relief. We have lessening thoughts of God, and too high thoughts of the world, when we shut up our bowels from the necessities of our poor brethren.

2. That we should not reckon our love to God by deceitful evidences, not by bare outward profession of the true religion: James 1:27, 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' All other religion hath an evil that is in it, a spot of the world on it; but Christ's religion is purity and charity, not by gifts and utterance: 2 Cor. 8:7, 'Therefore as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.' Again, you must not only mind acts of piety, but charity: Mat. 9:13, 'Go learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' To sacrifice is to serve God, but to show mercy is to be like God. Now conformity to God is more than any particular act of external obedience to him; as mercy is preferred before sacrifice, so before the external observation of the sabbath. Yea, mercy not only to the souls, but bodies of men; yea, not to men only, but to beasts, as to help a beast out of the pit: Mat. 12:11, 12, 'What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-day.' It is more than gospel externals of worship, as hearing the word and prayer, comparing external acts with external acts: Luke 13:26, 'We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and have

been taught in our streets; but he shall say unto you, I know you not.' More excellent than gifts of the gospel; the gifts of tongues and healing were glorious things: 1 Cor. 12:28–31, 'After that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all prophets? are all workers? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts; but I show you a more excellent way.' I cannot say it is above the graces of the gospel, faith, and hope, and love to God, yet these are but pretended without it: 1 John 4:20, 'If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' 1 Tim. 5:8, 'If any man provide not for his own, especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.'

3. It showeth us the compassionate nature of God, since he so strictly enforceth compassion in others. We know God's nature by his laws as well as his works. Now when he that placed so much weight on this, that he will not own any love in them to himself without it, surely our God will not shut up his bowels in our destitute and low condition. It is one of his names, 2 Cor. 7:6, 'God that comforteth those that are cast down.'

Use 2. Is to exhort us—

1. To show compassion to those in necessity.

2. To show it not in word or tongue only, but in real kindness.

1. To persuade you to mercifulness and charity. A cheap profession of the name of Christ will do you no good; that which costs nothing is worth nothing. To quicken you—

[1.] Without it you cannot show your thankfulness to God. Alms is your thank-offering: Heb. 13:16, 'But to do good and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' God showeth his love to us in the great sin-offering, we to God in this thank-offering.

[2.] Consider the many promises made to it: Mat. 5:7, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Compassion to others giveth us hope and confidence of the Lord's mercy to us, which is a great encouragement; for we stand in need of the daily mercy of God: Prov. 21:18, 'Whoso stoppeth his ear at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, and shall not be heard;' if not by men, not by God.

[3.] Consider what mercy Christ hath showed to you. Christ's kindness should enkindle the bowels of compassion in us; he showed compassion to you at the dearest rates, and loved us unto death; and will you not be at some expense in your love to the brethren?

[4.] How comfortable it is for the present: Prov. 11:17, 'The merciful man doeth good to his own soul; he also refresheth the souls of others.' See the verse next the text, 'And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' This will yield you a great deal of comfort, as any other fruit of faith or act of piety.

[5.] This will make your reckoning more comfortable hereafter: Luke 11:41, 'Give alms of such things as you have, and behold all things shall be clean;' Mat. 25:35–40, 'For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in

prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' These will be the inquiries at the day of judgment; acts of self-denying obedience must justify and evidence our qualification when it cometh to be judged.

2. To press you to real kindness. To quicken you consider—

[1.] God's love towards christians is a hearty real love; he not only loved us, but gave us the proof in the fruits and effects of it: Rom. 5:8, 'Herein God commended his love, in that, when we were sinners, Christ died for us.'

[2.] At the last day we shall be judged, not for our words only, but by our works: Rev. 20:12, 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' These will be the questions at the last day, Have you visited? have you fed? have you clothed?

[3.] Lip-love will neither do thee good, nor thy brother good. Not thee good; in no other grace and duty are words taken for performance, so not in this. Not in the general: many say they have a love to the brethren, but when it cometh to the trial wherein it is evidenced, there is no such thing. There is a great deal of tongue-kindness abroad; men seem to be all made up of love; they boast they love the brethren, but never demonstrate it by any real effect; like the carbuncle, which at a distance seemeth to be all afire, but come to touch it, and it is key-cold. In this particular expression of love, mouth-mercy, or giving good words to him that needeth, The Lord help you, without actual relief, is nothing worth; so doth not thy brother any good: James 2:15, 16, 'If a brother or a sister be naked,

and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and be you filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?'

[4.] To dissemble in anything maketh our sincerity in the main questionable; the man that contents himself with words in charity will content himself with a cold dead assent in point of faith, and a cold profession instead of thorough obedience; with the talk of virtue and godliness when he hath it not. A fruitless love and a cold assent that produce no obedience are near akin, and both are little worth. Many would not dissemble with God, but do they love men, not in word or tongue only, but in deed and in truth?

SERMON XXIV

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.—1 JOHN 3:19.

THE words contain a motive to quicken us to love the brethren, not in word or tongue only, but in deed and in truth. The motive is taken from the fruit and benefit, which is—(1.) Propounded; (2.) Amplified.

First, Propounded, 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth.' To be of the truth hath a double notion in scripture.

1. To profess the true religion: John 18:37, 'Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice;' that is, owneth the true religion; he rightly understands and believes the truth of the gospel.

2. To be sincere and true in that religion, and to live accordingly. There are some christians that are only so in show and semblance, or count themselves christians, but are not; but these are truly born of God, and such as they profess themselves to be, 'disciples indeed,' John 8:31; sincere, and not hypocrites.

Secondly, Amplified, 'And shall assure our hearts before him.' Where —

1. The effect and fruit of knowing that we are of the truth; we 'shall assure our hearts.'

2. The strength of this confidence, 'Before him.'

1. For the effect itself, 'persuade our hearts;' so the margin and other translations. By confidence in God we shall quiet and still our

consciences; so that the notion here is, we shall have our hearts secure and confident. A soul conscious of sin raiseth doubts and fears, that when our qualification is evident, we are perfect as to the conscience, Heb. 9:9. The word is so taken elsewhere: Mat. 28:14, 'We will persuade him, and secure you;' that is, pacify the governor, and keep you from punishment. So here it signifieth to render our hearts peaceable and quiet.

2. The strength of this confidence, 'Before him.' We are said to be before him three ways—

[1.] In our ordinary conversation: Gen. 17:1, 'Walk before me, and be thou upright.' In this sense it signifieth our walking before him in a holy peace and security, by being good and doing good; for this is the evidence whereby we assure ourselves that we are the true children of God: Mat. 5:45, 'That ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven.'

[2.] When we come before him in prayer and other holy duties: ver. 21, 22, 'We have confidence towards God, and whatsoever we ask in his name shall be given us.' Which signifieth a confidence in our prayer to him.

[3.] We come before him at the day of judgment; when we stand before his tribunal, our hope will not leave us ashamed. We are not afraid of being convinced of any hypocrisy, or not observing or breaking the conditions of the new covenant: 1 John 2:28, 'That we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him;' 1 John 4:17, 'That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.' So that hereby appeareth the strength of that confidence which we have by the exercise of a holy charity, or love to God and his people; and though the thoughts of the just and holy God stirreth up all our fears, yet we may walk comfortably with him, and draw nigh to him in holy duties

with more cheerfulness, and finally appear before him with boldness in the day of our accounts.

Doct. That graces really and soundly exercised breed in us assurance of our good condition before God.

The point will be made good by these considerations.

1. That none are in a good condition but those who are adopted and taken into God's family, and made heirs of eternal life and happiness. Our minds cannot be quieted by anything but a persuasion that God loveth us as his children; this is the whole business of the context: ver. 1, 2, and 9, 10, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Whosoever is born of God sinneth not, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that hateth his brother.' Get that persuasion, and all the controversy between God and us is at an end. And the reason is clear; he that taketh God for a judge can never be soundly satisfied and live in peace; but he that taketh God for a Father needeth not fear to come into his presence. There is no safety but in God's family, and no security there but by being God's children. The great business of the Spirit with our consciences is to clear up this to us: Rom. 8:15, 26, 'For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered;' Gal. 4:6,

'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;' Eph. 1:13, 14, 'In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.' The great business of our Redeemer was to purchase this privilege for us: Gal. 4:5, 'To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;' John 8:36, 'If the Son therefore shall make you free, then are you free indeed.' The great privilege we have by baptism as a sign, by faith as giving us the reality: Gal. 3:26, 27, 'For ye are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.' The church of the new testament, as to her outward estate, is an estate of sonship or adoption, and the truly godly have the real effect of it; they have the dignity, privilege and right which does belong to the children of God: John 1:12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.'

2. We must cherish no confidence of our adoption but what will hold good before God; for it is said, we must assure our hearts before him. The law which we have broken, and which condemneth us, is the law of God; the wrath and punishment which we fear and have deserved is the wrath of God; that which is the true proper matter of our joy, peace, and comfort is the favour of God; and the family into which we are admitted is the family of God, and the presence into which we come is the presence of God, and the glory which we expect is the glory of God; the punishment which we must undergo, and must determine our final estate, is the judgment of God. He is the supreme judge, at whose sentence we must stand or fall; therefore to him we must approve ourselves, and before him must be able to defend our claim, and maintain our confidence. It is easy to make good our plea

before men, but not so before God. Take all the senses before explicated. We are before him in our ordinary conversation. Sincere though imperfect sanctification is a righteousness that will hold out before God, and will be graciously accepted by him: Luke 1:74, 75, 'That we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' A christian should cheerfully serve God in a faithful discharge of all duties towards God and towards men, as remembering that he is always in his sight, as the witness, judge, and observer of all his actions; therefore we must still 'labour that, whether present or absent, we approve ourselves to him, and be accepted of him,' 2 Cor. 5:9. This will be matter of comfort to us: 2 Cor. 1:12, 'But our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversations in the world.' And partly in your prayers. Our legal fears are revived by the presence of God. Cain had his guilty fears; so shall we unless we be sincere; so the righteous are as bold as a lion: 1 John 3:21, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' When our hearts do not condemn us of any insincere walking, then we have confidence; otherwise we are shy of the presence of God, as David when he had sinned hung off from the throne of grace: Ps. 32:3, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old.' And Adam when he had sinned ran to the bushes. They that walk crookedly crack and break their own confidence, and cannot look God in the face with any comfort; whereas others can come to him as children to their father. And partly as it importeth our appearance before him in the day of our accounts. The sincere have a confidence that will hold out then, as appeareth by their constant and steady cheerfulness, when they most mind his judgment: 'The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrite,' Isa. 33:14. Pinching weather maketh the unsound feel their aches and bruises, so a time of eminent judgments is grievous to them; but it is otherwise with the upright, who are emboldened by a good conscience, and a sense of their own

integrity: Ps. 112:4, 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness.' Not only after, but in darkness; they have great comfort in their greatest perplexities; yea, when God summoneth them into his immediate presence: 2 Kings 20:3, 'Lord, thou knowest that I have walked before thee with a true and perfect heart.' Hezekiah was then arrested with the sentence of death. A christian can look death in the face with cheerfulness, and comfortably review his past life, when hypocrites vomit up their own shame. Yet the sincere, though conscious to themselves of many infirmities, have made it their business to honour and please God.

3. Before God no confidence will hold good but what is founded in the double righteousness of justification and sanctification; they are inseparable, and go together in the dispensation of the new covenant: 1 Cor. 6:11, 'And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;' 1 Cor. 1:30, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.' Both are necessary, and have an influence upon our comfort and peace, and confidence towards God. The necessity of them appeareth with respect to both covenants. The first covenant, the confidence which we would cherish is checked and choked by this objection, Thou art a sinner, and God will not respect sinners. We answer it from the righteousness of justification; Christ died to reconcile sinners to God. Or thus, Thou art not a sincere disciple of Christ; to this we oppose the testimony of our conscience, 'The Holy Ghost bearing witness therewith concerning our sincerity.' The first is the primary righteousness, and necessary for the appeasing of God's wrath; the other is secondary and subordinate, for the clearing up of our right and claim. The righteousness of Christ or of justification procureth the blessings of the new covenant for us; the other assureth them to us. The first is the ground of our

favourable acceptance with God, the second is the secondary condition and evidence of it. The ground and foundation of our favourable acceptance with God is Christ's merit, mediation, and righteousness, apprehended by faith; but the evidence is our sincere walking, otherwise no certainty. In short, there having been a breach between us and God, our atonement must be made. So 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,' 2 Cor. 5:19. There was the foundation laid for our acceptance with God; as in ver. 21, 'He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Now it is not enough that the atonement be made, but the atonement must be received; that breedeth solid peace, Rom. 5:11; and it is conveyed and applied by the Spirit on God's part, by faith on ours, Rom. 5:1; then the atonement is received. There need also sure signs to persuade the conscience of the reality of the application, and to make our right more full and certain, and that we are in favour with God, which cannot be otherwise than by the sincerity of our love to God and men, Gal. 5:6. Clear that once, and you may persuade and assure your hearts before him. To conclude, both the righteousness of justification and sanctification is a righteousness before him. Of justification there is no doubt but it is a righteousness before him, there is no appearing before God without it: Phil. 3:9, 'And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith;' Ps. 143:2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' It is true also in its use and office, of the righteousness of sanctification. If it be sincere, though imperfect, it is a righteousness that will hold out before God, and will be graciously accepted by him: Luke 1:6, 'They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments blameless.' Though our guilty fears are mainly allayed by the application of the blood of Jesus Christ, as the ground and meritorious cause of our

acceptance with God, and the only plea that we have against the charge produced from the first covenant, yet the righteousness of sanctification is at least an evidence, and confirmeth our justification by faith, and strengthened our plea according to the second covenant.

4. The righteousness of sanctification, which will stand before God, consisteth in our sincerity: 'If we be of the truth, we may assure our hearts before him;' so it is in the text, 'We are of the truth, and assure our hearts before him.' What is it to be of the truth? The truth is the gospel, called 'the word of truth,' Eph. 1:13, John 17:17. He is of the truth that understandeth and believeth this doctrine, called knowing the truth and acknowledging the truth, often spoken of in the scripture, 2 John 1, 2, 2 Tim. 2:25; and feeleth the force and efficacy of it in his own heart: James 1:18, 'Of his own will begat he us, of the word of truth;' John 8:32, 'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' And then expreseth the fruits of it in the course of his life, called 'walking in the truth,' 2 John 4, and 3 John 3, 4, 'I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth which is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth;' namely, as they follow the right way, and are true disciples of Christ. Well, then, sincerity of obedience is our grand evidence and qualification. The first covenant required innocency or unsinning obedience, the second uprightness or sincere obedience: Gen. 17:1, 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect;' Ps. 32:1, 2, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' The covenant which granteth and alloweth pardon of sins alloweth also sincerity as our qualification. The old covenant bringeth all things to the balance, the new to the touchstone; there our graces were weighed, here tried. Now if the best of us were put into the balance of

the sanctuary, we should be found wanting as to matter or manner and principle or aim, and then who could be saved? But now all the blessings of God's family are entitled to the upright: Ps. 84:11, 'God is a sun and a shield, and grace and glory will he give; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' This scripture containeth an epitome or abridgment of the covenant of grace; the good things there are expressed metaphorically and literally. Metaphorically he is a sun and a shield; blessings privative and positive; a sun, the fountain of all good; a shield to keep off all evil or danger; provision and protection. The one term is more verified in this life, the other in the world to come. Literally all spiritual good things come under the name of grace, eternal good things under the name of glory; no temporal good thing will he withhold: Ps. 34:9, 'There is no want to them that fear him.' But here who are the qualified parties? The sincere, who are the Lord's delight; the sincere in faith, the sincere in love, the sincere in obedience; those who are what they seem to be, and profess to be; these are the capable subjects of grace and glory, to whom God will be a sun and a shield, and to whom God will deny no good thing.

5. It is no easy matter to make out our sincerity, or to establish a solid peace and comfort in the soul. This I gather from the word 'assure,' or 'shall persuade.' There needeth much arguing and debating the matter in the court of conscience, and we need sure signs to persuade us; the conscience of sin is not easily laid aside. Shyness and stupidity may quiet us for a while, but a solid and durable joy needeth a good evidence and warrant. When we have no sense of sin and danger on our hearts, it is easy to leap into a false peace, but an awakened and sensible sinner is not so easily nor so soon established; for the upright are prone to self-accusings, for their rule is exact, and grace and love would fain do more for God; and grace in the best is but weak and small, and the remainders of sin so

great, active, and troublesome, and the operations of man's soul so various, confused, and dark, and they see so many mistakes, and the children of the devil so often entitle themselves to God, John 8:44. And frequent afflictions do also very often awaken in them a sense of sin, and all the reasonings of their minds will not still and quiet their consciences, so that the Lord is forced to come in by powerful and authoritative acts of grace, and in an imperial and Godlike manner to silence those doubts, and secure and settle a sense of his love upon our hearts: Ps. 42:7, 8, 'Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.' Ordinarily we have a good measure of grace before we can discern the truth of it. A working faith, a laborious and fervent love, and a lively hope cannot lie idle.

6. Though it be difficult to make out our sincerity, yet graces really, constantly, and self-denyingly exercised, will or may evidence it to us, or that the heart is sound in God's statutes, Ps. 119:80. Surely where grace is deeply rooted, and hath a predominant influence over our actions, so as it can countermand contrary desires and inclinations, there the heart is sound and upright with God. Now where this is found, which the context speaketh of, it makes us to assure our hearts before him.

[1.] A real exercise of grace. Compare this with the verse before the text, 'Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' A man may talk well from his convictions, nay, from a mere disciplinary knowledge; but to do well needs a living principle of grace. The scripture still setteth forth graces by their lively operation, for a dead and sleepy habit is worth nothing; it speaketh of the working faith as carrying away the prize of justification, Gal. 5:6. As

honouring Christ: 2 Thes. 1:11, 12, 'Wherefore we pray also for you, that God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified.' The laborious love is that which God will regard and reward: Heb. 6:10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work of faith and labour of love.' So the lively hope is the fruit of regeneration: 1 Peter 1:3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' That which sets us a-doing: Acts. 24:16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men;' and Acts 26:7, 8, 'Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.' Grace otherwise cannot appear in the view of conscience: causes are known by their effects; apples appear when the sap is not seen. It is the operative and active graces that will discover themselves. A man may think well or speak well, but that grace which governeth the conversation showeth itself to have a deep rooting in the heart.

[2.] It must be constantly exercised. A man may force himself into an act or two; Saul in a fit may be among the prophets. A man is judged of by his course and walk. A child of God may be under a strange appearance for one act or two; you can no more judge of them by those acts than you can of a bunch of grapes by two or three rotten ones, or of the glory of a street by the sink or kennels. So, on the other side, men may take on religion at set times, as men in an ague have their well days; the fit of lust and sin is not always upon them. A man is judged *perpetua factorum serie*, but God's works are best seen together, Gen. 1:31. Surely that breedeth peace of conscience and assurance of salvation: Ps. 106:3, 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.' When a

man's conversation is all of a piece, his course is to please God at all times, not by fits and starts, and in good moods only. This is the mark of the context, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; but his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' An act of sin is as monstrous in him as for a hen to produce the egg of a crow. In an unsound heart there are very uneven and transient motions; their lives speak contradictions. Saul at one time puts all the witches to death, at another time he himself hath recourse to one, namely, the witch of Endor. Jehu was zealous against Ahab's idolatry, against Baal, but not against Jereboam's idolatry, the calves in Dan and Bethel.

[3.] Self-denyingly acted. Good words are not dear, 'Be warmed, be clothed.' The apostle speaketh of laying down our life for the brethren, of opening our hands and bowels for refreshing the hungry and clothing the naked. So proportionably when we take pains to instruct the ignorant, exhort the obstinate, confirm the weak, comfort the afflicted. Love of the brethren is the mark in hand, and produced here as the fruit of a sincere faith; for this showeth a hearty receiving of God's love, when it hath made some impression upon us, when we love the brethren sincerely and heartily, and can deny ourselves for God. Do you think that religion lieth only in hearing a few sermons, in a few drowsy prayers, in singing psalms, or reading a chapter, or some cursory devotions? These are the means, but where is the fruit? No; it lieth in self-denying obedience. These are the acts about which we shall be questioned at the day of judgment, Mat. 25. Have you visited? have you clothed? do you own the servants of God when the times frown upon them? do you relieve them and comfort them in their distresses? 'Hereby we know we are of the truth.' Lip-labour and tongue-service is a cheap thing; and that religion is worth nothing which costs nothing: 2 Sam. 24:24, 'And the king said unto Araunah, Nay, but I will surely buy it of thee at a price; neither will I

offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.' When we deny ourselves, and apparently value God's interest above our own, then our sincerity is most evidenced. And every one of us is to consider what interest God calleth him to deny upon the hopes of glory, and whatever it costeth us to be faithful to God. A cheap course of serving God bringeth you none or little comfort. And certainly a man cannot be thorough in religion, but he will be put upon many occasions of denying his ease, profit, honour, and acting contrary to his natural inclination or worldly interests. Those that only regard the safe, cheap, and easy part, do not set up Christ's religion, but their own: Mat. 16:24, 'Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' Without this it is but a Christianity of our own making.

1. That graces thus really, constantly, and self-denyingly exercised leave their notice and impression upon the conscience. The context speaketh of the value of the testimony of conscience. Certainly a man should or may know the acts of grace which he putteth forth. It is hard to think that a soul should be a stranger to its own operations: 1 Cor. 2:11, 'There is a spirit in man that knoweth the things of a man;' a privy spy in our bosoms, which is conscious to all that we do, and can reflect upon it, and judge whether it be good or evil; it knoweth what we understand, or will, or purpose, or resolve, or do, much more when we do thus uniformly and self-denyingly act for God; and that upon a fourfold reason—

[1.] Because the acts of grace are the more serious and important actions of our lives. Many acts may escape us for want of advertency, they not being of such moment; but when a man is to settle his eternal interest upon a sure bottom and foundation, and to establish his soul in the comfort and hope of the gospel, he would go advisedly

to work, and consider upon what grounds and in what manner this work is carried on. He is serious in his faith: 2 Tim. 1:12, 'For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.' Diligence in his attendance upon this business: Phil. 2:12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.' A man that acteth for eternity should mind what he doth.

[2.] All acts of grace are put forth with difficulty, and with some strife and wrestling. In the work of faith a humble sinner hath much ado to bring his soul to a resolution, and to venture all in Christ's hand, and to settle itself in the belief of God's power, and mercy, and word, and promises made to us in Christ; to live upon the hopes of an unknown and unseen world. For if it were an easy thing, such a power were not needful, as is spoken of, Eph. 1:19, 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power.' We should not find such a necessity of complaining of unbelief, Mark 9:24, of calling upon God to increase our faith. It would not so often fail as it doth upon every temptation, Luke 22:32. And what is said of faith is true proportionably of all other graces. Self-love and carnal prepossessions hinder the love of God. Like a choice flower among weeds, so is love to the brethren, 'Master, spare thyself.' Now things difficult, and planted with much opposition, must needs leave a notice and an impression of themselves upon the soul.

[3.] There is a special delight that accompanieth acts of grace, because of the excellency of the objects they are conversant about; and the excellency of the power they are assisted withal; and the excellency and nobleness of the faculties they are acted by. Can a man be seriously dealing with God about pardon of sin, and eternal life, and not find sweetness in his work? Heb. 6:4, 5, 'Who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were partakers

of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.' Take a view of the promised hope, and not be affected with it? Heb. 3:6 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of our hope firm to the end.' There is a peace and joy in believing, Rom. 15:13, excited in us by some impression of the comforting Spirit. Three words are used to express that delightful sense which the soul hath in the exercise or review of good actions—comfort, peace, joy. Comfort, the nature of which is, that it doth not altogether remove the evil, but so alleviates it and assuages it that we are able to bear it. The trouble that ariseth from the sense of sin and the fear of God's justice is not altogether removed and taken away; yet so mitigated and allayed, that we are enabled to wait upon God: 2 Cor. 1:4, 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God;' and to go about our duties with some alacrity. Peace implieth comfort, but withal a more full degree of it; for peace doth so calm and settle the consciences of God's children, that they are assaulted either with none, or very little fears. We call that peace in a nation when they are not troubled with foreign war, or intestine tumults, or confusions, for some long space of time: Phil. 4:7, 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.' The next notion is joy: as peace exceeds consolation, so doth joy exceed peace, and begets a more notable sense of itself in the soul. In peace all things are quiet, but joy addeth a notable pleasure and delight of mind. In peace the soul is in such a condition as the body when nothing paineth it; but in joy the senses are recreated by something pleasing to them: so the soul is feasted with spiritual suavities: 1 Peter 1:8, 'Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Now all these make the work of grace more notorious to the soul.

[4.] This serious, constant, uniform, self-denying course of obedience will evidence itself; for though conscience be unobservant of particular actions, yet the course, drift, and tenor of our lives cannot be hidden from it: he that in a journey doth not count his steps, yet observeth his way; when a man mindeth the business of going to heaven, Phil. 3:20; of approving himself to God: 2 Cor. 1:12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience;' 2 Cor. 5:9 'Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.'

Object. Why then do so many good people want assurance?

Ans 1. There need two witnesses, because the heart of man is so deceitful, and the operations thereof are so various, dark, and confused: Jer. 17:9, 'The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and who can know it?' There needeth a double testimony, as in the mouth of two or three witnesses everything is established. Now these two witnesses are our consciences and God's Holy Spirit: Rom. 8:16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God;' Rom. 9:1, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' The testimony of the Spirit with our own heart, soul, and conscience, they both concur to establish the same conclusion in the same act of witnessing; for it is jointly ascribed to the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. The Spirit of God doth not bear any such witness apart from the spirit of man; or when this doth not witness also, it doth fortify and strengthen the witness of a man's own spirit. The heart, soul, and conscience of a man doth testify to him that he desireth and endeavoureth every day to serve, please, honour, and glorify God. Hereby the Spirit assureth him that he is a child of God. Conscience will not give this witness, unless we do indeed labour to be complete in all the will of God. And

the Spirit witnesseth with conscience, to give vigour and certainty to this testimony, 'My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' As when the waters of a land-flood mingle themselves with a river, they make one and the same stream, but then it is more rapid and violent; so this conjunction of testimonies maketh in effect one testimony, but such as more powerfully beareth down our fears, and doubts, and jealousies. A christian is thoroughly settled as to his gracious estate, and his confidence is made more firm and strong.

2. So few know their spiritual condition through their own default; for otherwise the Spirit is ready to witness, if we be ready to receive his testimony. What is the fault of christians? A fourfold fault—

[1.] Either they do not exercise grace to the life, in the mortifying of sin, or the perfecting of holiness; and therefore the remainders of sin are active and troublesome, and grace is weak and small, and doth little discover itself in any costly and self-denying acts, that they want the sweetness whereby they should be noted and observed. Surely great things are more liable to sense and feeling than little: a staff is sooner found than a needle. And they that row against the stream of flesh and blood, and cross the inclinations of nature, can sooner discern a divine spirit and a power working in them than others, who have not so perfect a conquest over the carnal nature; as the valour of a soldier that boldly encountereth his enemy in the face of dangers and oppositions, than one that fighteth not indeed, but lieth hid in the throng.

[2.] Or they do not examine their state, and heed their soul affairs as they ought. 'Know thyself' is a lesson worthy to be often practised. The scripture biddeth us examine ourselves, 1 Cor. 11:28, and 2 Cor. 13:5, 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.' But few return upon their hearts, and look inward. The soul hath its experience, or a

thing that may be called sense, as well as the body, but most regard it not. There is light, peace, joy, or trouble and doubtfulness, which we might easily find out if men would reflect upon themselves.

[3.] Or if they examine their state, they do it in a wrong way; as sometimes they make those to be marks to try by, which are only marks to aim at; and so by consequence that is often made matter of doubting, which should only be matter of humiliation; or else they look so much to what they should be, as not to observe what they have already, or may forget what is behind to quicken their diligence, Phil. 3:13. But we must not forget, in judging our condition, to own the grace we have, for we must not 'despise the day of small things,' Zech. 4:10. The spouse owneth grace in the midst of infirmities: Cant. 5:2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.' We come short of what we should have, but have we anything of God in our souls? We observe our diseases more than our healths; so doth a gracious heart his sins and infirmities, but not the good things found in him.

[4.] In the general, laziness is the cause: 2 Peter 1:10, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' Heb. 6:11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end;' 2 Peter 3:14, 'Be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.' The comforts of the Spirit never drop into the lazy soul. When you have it, so far as you neglect your duty, so far the sense may abate. God in wisdom withdraweth his comforts to awaken and quicken his children to their duty.

Use 1. To inform us, that the grounds of a well-tempered assurance are clear and positive: 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' Foolish presumption costs nothing; like mushrooms, it groweth up in a night, or as Jonah's

gourd; we did not labour for it; it cometh upon them they know not how or why. The less such men exercise themselves to godliness, the more confident; but exercise would discover their unsoundness; a peace that groweth upon us we know not how, and is better kept by negligence than diligence, is not right: 'Hereby we know, and this is my rejoicing, the testimony of my conscience.' Premature persuasions are very rife; how comest thou by it so soon, my son?

2. That to languish after comforts, and neglect duty, is a foolish course; many bestow their time in foolish complaints, better be hard at work; complaining will not bring it to you so soon as active diligence. Oh, that we were sure of heaven and happiness! Oh, that we knew what shall become of us to all eternity! Lazy wishes will do no good, up and be doing; it will not come by a cold velleity, a slight prayer, a customary sigh, or a faint and lazy pursuit, but by an indefatigable diligence, and unwearied watchfulness.

3. It informeth us that not only trying of grace, but exercising of grace, is necessary to our comfort and peace. Many are taken up in trying and inquiring whether they have saving grace or no, whilst they neglect the exercise of grace in a self-denying way. I would not discourage self-reflection. Oh, that we could gain the world more to this! but this I must say, that doing good to the household of faith, and to all as we find occasion, is a more evident and explicit way; and that in general it is a more excellent spirit to consider what we must be, to lie under the conscience of that, than to consider what we are and what we have been. Working will discover it sooner than bare trying, duty rather than comfort.

4. That the popish doctrine is false, that asserts that it is impossible to have the certainty of salvation: 'Hereby we know we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.'

Use 2. To exhort us, if we would live in a holy security and peace, let us not only be good, but do good; let us not only love God, but his people, not only 'in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth,' &c.

SERMON XXV

For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.—1 JOHN 3:20.

THE apostle had spoken in the former verse of assuring our hearts before him; now we cannot assure our hearts before God, against all fears of his wrath, or persuade ourselves that we are his children, if we be conscious to ourselves of any insincerity, or unworthy dealing in point of love to God or men; much dependeth upon the testimony and verdict of conscience, either as to our condemnation or absolution and acquitment. He beginneth with the condemning conscience in the text, and then showeth the privilege of an absolving conscience, ver. 21. The voice of conscience is the voice of God; if our hearts condemn or acquit, so will God for the most part. We are now upon the condemning act of conscience; if our hearts condemn us, God will much more. By the heart is meant conscience; as 1 Sam. 24:5, 'David's heart smote him,' that is, his conscience; so Job when he would not quit his claim of being an upright man, chap 27:6, saith, 'My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.' The heart hath a reproaching, a condemning power, and judgeth against a man when he is not right with God. In short, heart-smitings and heart-reproachings are nothing else but checks of conscience. 'If our hearts condemn us,' &c.

In the words take notice of a comparison between the judgment of God and the judgment of conscience; they agree and disagree in many things.

1. They agree in that both are privy to all our actions: there is a secret spy within us, that observeth all that we speak, or think, or do: 'The spirit of a man within him knoweth the things of a man,' 1 Cor. 2:11. So doth God know all things: Heb. 4:12, 'For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' And where the matter requireth it, they both condemn; conscience condemneth the sinner, or the partial obedience of hypocrites; so doth God, he ratifieth the sentence.

2. They disagree or differ in two things—(1.) Greatness; (2.) Knowledge.

[1.] Greatness. 'God is greater than our hearts.' The same expression is used, Job 33:12, 'God is greater than man;' it is a reason of submission to God's providence. God judgeth more exactly of things than we do; his authority is greater. God is the supreme judge, conscience is but his deputy. God's sentence is decisive, whence there is no appeal: 1 Cor. 4:4, 'For I know nothing by myself, yet I am not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.' The cause must be reviewed and judged in a higher court. Greater in point of purity and holiness; we have but a drop of indignation against sin, God an ocean. His displacency against sin is greater: Hab. 1:13, 'He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;' Isa. 3:8, 'Their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory.' Greater in point of power; conscience leaveth an impression suitable to the evidence it giveth: Prov. 18:13, 'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a

wounded spirit who can bear?' But it is a dreadful thing to be condemned of God, who hath such power to execute his sentence: Heb. 10:31, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

[2.] In point of knowledge. Conscience in many things is blind, partial, inattentive, insensible, but none of these things can be imagined in God, he knoweth all things. Therefore since the business is to be transacted before him, and not before man, we had need look to it, that we may assure our hearts before him.

(1.) He seeth more clearly; he not only knoweth all things that we can know of ourselves, but knoweth more things against us than our hearts know, and so God cannot be deceived: Ps. 19:12, 'Who can understand his errors? Lord cleanse thou me from secret sins.' No man knoweth a man so well as his conscience, but the conscience doth not so well know him as God knoweth him; his knowledge is infinite, and pierceth to our very thoughts and the secret motions of the heart.

(2.) He heareth more exactly. There is a partiality in our knowledge, we overlook the evil, being blinded by self-love, but the Lord weigheth the spirits, Prov. 16:2, puts them into the balance of the sanctuary, and considereth all the circumstances.

(3.) He judgeth more impartially; we mistake sins for graces, and so bring in a false verdict: Luke 16:15, 'Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed amongst men is an abomination in the sight of God.' We are deceived with a false show; we take a brier for a rose, yea, many times a toad for a lark; but God cannot be thus deceived, but judgeth according to the nature of things.

Doct. That a man's unsound estate is much discovered to himself, or determined by the judgment of his own conscience.

If our heart condemn us; that is, our conscience; and every man by his own heart and conscience is generally acquitted or condemned.

Here I shall demonstrate to you—

1. That there is such a faculty as conscience, whose office it is to judge of our estate.

2. The value of this judgment, that it ought to be well weighed, when our hearts condemn us of insincere dealings in point of duty towards God or man.

- I. The nature and office of conscience; certainly there is such a faculty as conscience. Science is one thing, and conscience is another: science is a knowledge of other things, conscience is the knowledge of ourselves. Conscience is the knowledge of a man's state and ways; to know what we are to do, and what we have done, that is conscience. It is the judgment of a man concerning himself with respect to reward and punishment. God, that is our Lord, is also our proper judge; but it pleaseth him to erect a tribunal within a man in his own bosom, and to make him his own judge: conscience is a judge, yet but a deputy-judge accountable to God. This much conduceth—(1.) To the glory of God; (2.) To the safety of man.

1. To the glory of God, and that in two regards, as an evidence of his being, and a vindication of the righteousness of his judicial proceedings.

[1.] As an evidence of his being, for his law is the ground of all conscience, and it is before his tribunal that it doth accuse and acquit

us, and his sentence that we wait for or dread, and stand in fear of. Why should we scruple this or that, if there be not a God, by whose will good and evil are distinguished? To whom doth it accuse us but to God? Why is conscience sometimes afraid, sometimes comforted, if there were no God to mind things here below? We find conscience appalleth the stoutest sinners, after the commitment of some offences, though they be secret, and beyond the cognisance and vengeance of man: Ps. 53:5 'They feared where no fear was;' that is, no outward cause of fear, where none sought to hurt them; accusing themselves where none else could accuse them; as Joseph's brethren, Gen. 42:21; or where none had power to reach them; as many worldly potentates feel the stings of conscience as well as others. Felix trembled who was the judge, when Paul the prisoner preached to him, Acts 24:25. What is the reason of this, but that they know there is a supreme judge and avenger?

[2.] To vindicate the righteousness of his judicial proceedings. Self-accusers and self-condemners have no reason to quarrel with God, and impeach his justice. Man hath principles and sentiments graven upon his heart, which justify all God's dealings with him: Luke 19:22, 'Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked and slothful servant;' Ps. 51:4, 'That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.' Surely self-condemners, Titus 3:11, are without excuse, Rom. 1:20, and have no reason to murmur at God's proceedings with them. Hence there are frequent appeals to conscience in scripture: Isa. 5:3, 4, 'Judge between me and my vineyard, what could have been done more to my vineyard which I have not done?' So that by conscience man is better induced to give a testimony to God concerning his judicial proceedings, and the righteousness of all his dealings with men.

2. The safety and benefit of man, that he may have an oracle in his own bosom to direct him to his duty, and to warn him of his danger. In scripture we shall find two offices of conscience, to direct and censure, to judge by order of law and right; *de jure*, what we ought to do, and *de facto*, what you have done, or what you are: and if it fail in the one part, it is a blind and erring conscience; and if it fail in the other, it is a dead and sleepy conscience. You shall see conscience is spoken of in scripture both ways. As instructing us in our duty: Ps. 16:7, 'My reins instruct me in the night season;' that is, showed him his duty, and how he was concerned in the law of God, or the rule which he had given to his creatures. And as it showeth us what to do, so it reflecteth upon what we have done: if evil, it smiteth us for it, as David's heart smote him for numbering the people, 2 Sam. 24:10. If good, it cheereth us with it: 2 Cor. 1:12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.' It smiteth us as it exciteth fear of punishment; it cheereth us as it stirreth up hope of reward: and hereby we do very much understand how God standeth affected towards us. In short, conscience, as to the censuring part, judgeth either of act or state; particular acts whether good or evil; so it doth accuse or excuse by turns, Rom. 2:15. As to our state, if it be good: Heb. 13:18, 'We trust we have a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly.' The drift and course was for God, and the performance of their duty to him. Bad or evil: Rom. 1:32, 'They that do such things, count themselves worthy of death;' that is, not only as deserving it, but as liable to it. Now it is for our benefit, that we should have such a faculty to direct, and mind us of our duty, which we are too apt to forget. So also to censure our acts, that we may be humbled for them if they be evil, or continue them if they be good. Our estate, that we may enjoy the comfort of it, before we enjoy the full reward of it, if it be good; or may remedy it, and break off our sinful course if it be evil, while we are capable of a remedy.

II. The value of this judgment, and how much it should be regarded by us.

1. In respect of ourselves, because it is so intimate to us. Conscience is God's spy in our bosoms, and man's overseer; it being so well acquainted with us, it can give a better judgment of us than anything else can. The judgment of the world, either by way of applause or censure, is not so much to be regarded by us. The apostle calleth it the spirit of a man within him, 1 Cor. 2:11. Though our life be never so fair that no man can condemn us, and our words and deeds do not betray us, yet if our hearts condemn us of secret hypocrisy, and want of love to God, God will much more, who knoweth more of us than we do of ourselves. Besides, this judge cannot be suspected of rigour, partiality, and ill-will; for what is dearer to ourselves than ourselves? and therefore, if our own hearts condemn us, what shall be said for us?

2. Its relation to God; it is God's deputy-judge, and in the place of God to us; called 'the candle of the Lord,' Prov. 20:27. And therefore if it convince us, and accuse us, and condemn us, especially when we profess and pretend to sincerity; have we not cause to suspect ourselves? for it is God's vicegerent, and sitteth in the throne of God; and we may know much of his mind by the voice and report of conscience. Next to the judgment and sentence of God, a man should reverence the judgment and sentence of his own heart. Doth conscience acquit or condemn? so usually doth God: conscience doth all with respect to God, and in the name of God. The inferior court is not to be slighted, the sentence there is given out in God's name, and by virtue of God's authority. To slight the officer or subordinate magistrate in the duty of his place is to slight the supreme power: Judges 3:20, 'And Ehud said unto him, I have a message from God unto thee; and he arose off his seat.'

3. The rule it goeth by, which is the revealed will of God, either by the light of nature or the light of scripture; his will revealed in his law, or in the gospel: according to the dispensation men are under, so have they a conscience, this makes us a light to ourselves: Prov. 6:22, 'When thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, when thou wakest it shall talk with thee;' that is, the law of God will direct thee upon all occasions. Conscience worketh by virtue of that light which God hath put into us. Now to slight conscience, is to rebel against the light of nature, Rom. 2:14, 15, and the light of scripture, Heb. 8:10. Conscience will tell you what you are loath to hear, yet hear it; it will be heard once, better hear it now, while you may correct your errors; it doth but repeat over the law of God to you.

But now some objections may arise.

Object. 1. May we not be deceived in our judgment concerning ourselves?

Ans. 1. Not ordinarily; in condemnation man is over-prone to love himself, and therefore unless compelled by the manifest force and evidence of the truth, he would not condemn himself, especially when affecting the show and reputation of sincerity. Surely, if there were ground for it, he would not let go his integrity (it is true, some melancholy mournful souls may write bitter things against themselves, and mistake in spiritual things), as Prov. 16:2, 'All the ways of a man are right in his own eyes;' Rev. 3:17, 18, 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not

appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.' There is a false presumption of our good estate. Now then, when our hearts reproach us, and condemn us for want of love to and neglect of God, and unmindfulness of heavenly things, it concerneth us to weigh the matter. We can better trust it condemning than acquitting: 1 Cor. 4:4, 'If I know nothing by myself, I am not thereby justified, but every one's judgment is of the Lord.'

2. The apostle speaketh of what is rightly done, and according to rule. Look, as in acquitting we must distinguish between a dead sleepy conscience, and a tender waking conscience, so in condemning, between the judgment when under a heat, and passion, and distemper, and the judgment of conscience in our calm and sedate moods. Surely if it then condemn us, or give us no good assurance before God, we have need to look to ourselves. A stupid conscience, and on the other side a stormy conscience, are not capable of passing a right judgment.

3. It is all one as to our peace, if our hearts judge us wrongfully, either as to acts or state. Acts: Rom. 14:22, 23, 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' A man may do an action lawful, and yet his heart may accuse or condemn him in it, as if it were unlawful. It is a damning sin to act against conscience though it err. So as to state; he cannot think God acquitteth him whose heart condemneth him, for he cannot believe against his conscience. There is indeed a self-condemning as to merit, which entitleth to mercy; but a self-condemning as to our actual state must needs breed trouble and grief of heart, though it be upon false grounds.

Object. 2. But what relief is there for one whose heart condemneth him? Must he sit down, and despair, and die? I answer—

1. In some cases there is an appeal from court to court. In what court doth conscience condemn you? In the court of the law? You ought to subscribe to the condemnation as just, and to own the desert of sin; and if God should bring it upon you, he is righteous: Neh. 3:33, 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.' But there is a liberty of appeal from court to court. You may take sanctuary at the Lord's grace, and humbly claim the benefit of the new covenant: Ps. 130:3, 4, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Deprecate the first court, and beg the favour of the second.

2. In other cases there is an appeal from judge to judge. Suppose conscience condemn you in the gospel court, that you are not sound believers, the case must not be lightly passed over, but you must examine whether there be a sincere bent of heart in you, yea or no, appeal to the higher judge; as when others question your sincerity: 'My witness is in heaven,' saith Job, chap. 16:19. So when your own hearts question it, doth conscience write bitter things against you? See if the judgment of conscience be the judgment of God. It is a judge, but not a supreme judge; it may err in acquitting, as when from a judge it becometh an advocate, excusing the partialities of our obedience; so in condemning, when from a judge it becometh an accuser, and exaggerateth incident failings beyond measure. Go to the higher judge, whose act is authoritative and powerful: Job 33:23, 'If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness,' Who can interpret your righteousness to you but his Spirit, when you cannot see it yourselves, and may sometimes speak peace in the sentence of the

word, when not in the feeling of conscience, and the lively impressions of his comforting Spirit?

3. Suppose the worst; there is a passing from state to state: John 5:24, 'He shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' You are in a state of condemnation now, but get out of it as fast as you can: Mat. 3:7, 'Flee from wrath to come;' and carry yourselves accordingly, till your condition be altered; the door of grace is always open: Heb. 6:18, 'Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.'

4. If the heart do neither condemn nor acquit, make your qualification more explicit, and take the same course a condemned man would do, sue out your pardon more earnestly: Rom. 8:33, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.' Many times an old litigious title may cost as much in clearing as the purchase of a new; therefore mind the way of fleeing from wrath to come, and be more serious in it.

Use 1. Is information. To show the bad condition of wicked men, who have within themselves an accusing conscience, and above themselves a condemning judge; so that a man that doeth evil can never have a sound peace and quiet within himself, nor have any quietness. Their disease is the benumbing lethargy of a stupid conscience, they do not always feel the stings of conscience, but are always subject to it. Death reviveth them, it may surprise them in an instant. All their pleasures are but 'stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret,' Prov. 9:17, poor delights taken by stealth when they get conscience asleep, as servants that feast themselves in a corner when they can get out of their master's sight. They are not open and avowed delights. Why? Because their hearts condemn them, and God is ready to ratify and execute the sentence; everything puts them in a

fright: Job 15:21, 'A dreadful sound is in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.' Surely wicked and impenitent men have no sound peace; they dare not look inward or upward with any comfort.

2. How far they are from the temper of religion that live even a moment without all conscience or against conscience. A good man looketh to his heart, whether it condemneth or acquitteth; but some live without all conscience, do all things rashly and inconsiderately, never considering whether they be pleasing or displeasing to God, whether they tend to the honour or dishonour of God; live at haphazard; if they do good, it is by accident; perform the duties of christianity so far as the interest of the flesh will give them leave, yea, so far as the flesh itself will command them to do well, or forbid sin, that it may not disgrace them in the world, or bring some inconveniency upon them. These consult not with conscience in their actions, but are guided by their lusts and sudden passions: others live against conscience, omitting duties when conscience loudly calleth for it: James 4:17, 'Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' They will find it with a witness one day; committing evil against the apparent checks of conscience, these kick against the pricks; these do not only break the law of God, but offer violence to their own consciences, and in effect resist the Holy Ghost, who exciteth them to good, Acts 7:51, and so are under a great crime.

Use 2. Carry it so that conscience may not condemn you; the sentence may be, and usually is, ratified by God. To enforce it, consider these things—

1. Conscience is the best friend and the worst enemy; partly for its comfort; it is 'a continual feast,' Prov. 15:15; 'our rejoicing,' 2 Cor.

1:12. No bird sings so sweetly as the bird in the bosom. Partly for its nearness; it is always with us in health and sickness, in life and death. Husbands and wives, who are most together, yet, because they live by a distinct life, they are often apart, and at length death cometh and looseth the band and knot; but a good conscience is a sweet companion, that always remaineth with us. So it is the worst enemy, partly for its nearness, for a man to be at odds with himself, to fall out with his own heart. It is a domestic tribunal which we cannot suppress or get rid of. Let any be your enemy rather than your own conscience. Job could bear the reproaches of others, but his own 'heart should not reproach him all his days,' Job 27:6. Partly because of the grievousness of the wound: Prov. 18:14, 'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?' It is no less than the fear of the wrath of the eternal God. Judas found no relief from his new friends when his conscience wakened upon him, Mat. 27:3–5. In short, a man cannot run away from his conscience, no more than he can run away from himself. Therefore what folly is it to please others and offend his own conscience, or to please his lusts and wrong his conscience, and for the satisfaction of a vain appetite to incur such horror and trouble! The satisfying of a lust is a poor vanishing pleasure, but the keeping a good conscience breedeth a solid joy, which will stick by thee to the last. When thou comest to die, it will be a support to thee: Isa. 38:3, 'Lord, thou knowest that I have walked before thee with a perfect heart.' When thou must leave riches, and honours, and pleasures, which are the baits of thy lust, this will stick by thee: 1 John 2:17, 'The world passeth away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'

2. It is either the beginning of heaven or hell; a good conscience is the beginning of heaven, and peace and joy in believing is a foretaste of that fulness of joy and pleasure which you shall have when you come into God's immediate presence. The glorified spirits carry a

good conscience with them to heaven: 'Their works follow them,' Rev. 14:13; and an awakened conscience is a hell upon earth. The damned carry these stings and convictions into hell along with them: Mark 9:44, 'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.' Oh, think of this, the joys of the Spirit are the antepast of glory, called often an 'earnest:' 2 Cor. 1:22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit.' Horrors of conscience are the suburbs of hell. Therefore be sure to keep all quiet within, and do not give conscience occasion to condemn you.

3. It is easily offended, but not easily appeased. As the eye is offended with the least dust and mote, which soon gets in, but is hardly to be gotten out again, so you may violate conscience, but to appease it costs a great deal of trouble; therefore there needs much tenderness and watchfulness, that you make it your daily work, Acts 24:16, 'To have always a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men.' By the commission of deliberate and wilful sins you may raise a tempest that will not be soon laid again. David felt broken bones after his foul fall, Ps. 51. Joseph's brethren could not put it out of their minds but that he would avenge the old quarrel, Gen. 50. When the mists of passion are over, guilt maketh your heart sit uneasy within you. Therefore do not go like an ox to the slaughter.

4. If conscience speaketh not, it writeth; for it is not only a witness, but a register, and a book of record: Jer. 17:1, 'The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond.' We know not what conscience writeth, being occupied and taken up with carnal vanities, but we shall know hereafter when the books are open, Rev. 20:12. Conscience keepeth a diary, and sets down everything. This book, though it be in the sinner's keeping, cannot be razed and blotted out. Well, then, a sleepy conscience will not always sleep; if we suffer it not to awaken here, it will awaken in hell; for the present

it sleepeth in many, in regard of motion, check, or smiting, but not in regard of notice and observation.

5. If conscience speak not to you, we must speak to it. Call yourselves to an account for the expense of your time and employment. The course of your life is a sure evidence of your everlasting estate: Ps. 77:6, 'I communed with my heart, and made a diligent search.' How do matters stand between God and you? take some time to parley with yourselves. Quotidie apud me causam dico, could a heathen say—I still implead myself before myself; and if a heathen did so, should not christians much more?

6. If the stings of an evil conscience are not always felt, yet they are soon revived and forced upon us by serious thoughts of death and judgment to come. This fire that smothereth in our bosoms is soon blown up into a flame. By the word sometimes: Acts 24:25, 'Felix trembled.' Belshazzar's edge was taken off in the midst of his carousings, Dan. 5:5, 6. By some great troubles; in a tempest, that which is at bottom cometh at top: Isa. 59:12, 'For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them.' Or by death: 1 Cor. 15:56, 'The sting of death is sin.' In the confines of eternity men are wiser, and near things do most affect us, and the baits of the flesh have lost their allurements. Things overlooked before are then seriously considered, and the deluded sinner forced to see what he would not take notice of before.

7. Sound peace will never be had by smothering checks of conscience, but making a holy use of them. To smother them breedeth hardness of heart, but to improve them is the way to a holy peace. What is the way to improve them? I shall instance in two ways—

[1.] When the particular conscience condemneth, we must look to it that the general conscience may acquit us. The particular conscience referreth to acts, the general to conversation. As to particular acts, he whose heart doth not condemn him of sin. But how is it as to the drift and course of our lives? 2 Cor. 1:12, 'But our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversations in the world.'

[2.] When the legal conscience condemneth us, we must seek our peace in the evangelical conscience. Now the evangelical conscience reflecteth on what Christ hath done for us, and wrought in us. Christ hath shed his blood for sinners: Heb. 9:14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?' and Heb. 12:24, 'And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.' But that is not all, there is something also wrought in us, and is 'the answer of a good conscience towards God,' 1 Peter 3:21.

SERMON XXVI

And knoweth all things.—1 JOHN 3:20.

DOCT. That God exactly and perfectly knoweth all things that are in the world, and is more especially privy to the hearts and ways of men.

Of this the context speaketh. God hath a greater and more certain knowledge of what we do than our own consciences.

Let me inquire here into—(1.) The properties of God's knowledge; (2.) The reasons; (3.) How this doctrine is entertained by men; (4.) What use we should make of it ourselves.

First, What God's knowledge is. Exactly to state it is above the reach of man; this knowledge is too wonderful for us, Ps. 139:6, far above our capacity to understand the nature of it. But for our profit, somewhat of it is revealed to us in the scripture; therefore I shall give you the properties of it.

1. For the object to which it is extended, it is universal; the text saith 'all things' are known by him. But especially it relateth to man, all things in man.

Let us a little consider the modifications of this object.

[1.] Things good and evil: Prov. 15:3, 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' For good things there is no doubt, for he is the author of them; for evil things, God is not the author of them, but the judge and punisher, and therefore knoweth them also. Take another distinction of the object; things great and small. It was the corrupt theology of the gentiles, *Dii magna curant, parva negligunt*. One of the wisest heathens compareth him to the Persian monarchs, who minded the great affairs of the provinces, but left other things to the satraps or vicegerents. But we are taught better divinity in the scriptures, that small things are put under the providence of God as well as great; that a sparrow (though two of them are sold for a farthing) falleth not to the ground without our heavenly Father, Mat. 10:30. It was no dishonour to God to make them, nor is it so to preserve them and look after them. Again, God knoweth not only things necessary, but contingent; things necessary, or such as depend upon the stated courses of nature, as the succession of winter and summer, day and night, the revolutions of

the heavens; he hath appointed to them a law and a decree beyond which they cannot pass, Ps. 148:7. But also things contingent, as depend upon the will of man, or the casual fortuitous motion of the creature. Christ could foretell they should meet a man in the city, and bids them to follow him, and keep the passover in his house, Luke 22:10. And he told Nathanael what he said, and where, John 1:48. And often told the Jews and his disciples what they thought: Mat. 9:4, 'Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why think ye evil in your hearts?' He knew what Paul did in such a city, such a street, such a house, at such a time, Acts 9:11. In short, nothing more casual than a lot: Prov. 16:33, 'The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it is of the Lord;' he knows how the lot will fall. Once more, he knows things past, present, and to come. Past; no oblivion can fall upon God; a thousand years are to him as one day, Ps. 90:4. We forget many of our actions, but God forgets them not. All things present are known to him, for he sustaineth and guideth them in their motions, and they subsist no longer than he pleaseth: 2 Chron. 16:9, 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth.' The sun is an emblem and representation of his knowledge: Ps. 19:6, 'There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.' If the sun were an eye, it would see all things it shineth upon; only the sun cannot pierce through dark and thick bodies. But God is over all, and through all, and in all, the great eye of the world. Man's knowledge is limited and confined to a few things, that fall within the cognisance of the time and place wherein he liveth; but God seeth and knoweth all things. Things to come, which are wholly out of the reach of man's discovery: Jer. 1:5, 'Before thou wert framed in the womb, I knew thee.' God's foresight is more clear than our sight, and the substance of things does not give us a better knowledge of them than God's prescience doth to him: Isa. 41:23, 'Show the things to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.' He challengeth all the world to be able to foretell future contingencies. Once more, God

knoweth all things that shall be, and might have been. All things that shall be: Acts 15:18, 'All his works are known to God from the beginning of the world.' Past, present, and to come, make no difference in the understanding of God; for from the mount of eternity he hath a prospect of all things, as if they were now in being. That place is brought to prove that God did not begin then to take to himself a people from among the gentiles, but had from all eternity determined to do so. God, that doth all things in time, knew all these things before all time, otherwise his knowledge were neither eternal nor infinite. Things are because he willeth them, and he willeth them from all eternity. God also knoweth all things that might have been. He knew that Abimelech would have defiled himself and Sarah, if he had not withheld him, Gen. 20:6; that the men of Keilah would have betrayed David into the hands of Saul, if he had stayed among them, 1 Sam. 23:12. There is many a man kept bare and low, God knoweth what he would do if he had power in his hands. Many die young; God knoweth, if they had lived forty or fifty years, it would have been worse for them, they might have dishonoured God more, grieved their relations more, or been exposed to temptations, which he saw not fit to let loose upon them. Thus for the universality of God's knowledge, he knoweth all all things.

[2.] The particularity of God's knowledge. His knowledge is not only universal, but particular; he knoweth every individual thing and person. Our persons are known to him by head and poll: 2 Tim. 2:18, 'The Lord knoweth those that are his;' and 'the good shepherd calleth his own sheep by name,' John 10:3. There is not a single man liveth in the world, but God taketh notice of him; he doth certainly know that there is such a creature as thou art, such a man or woman in the world. His decree passed on thee; he knew thee in the mass and lump of mankind, and took notice of thee by name when his creating power passed on thee; for he knoweth all that he hath made; and he

is to judge thee, and will set thy life in order before thee, Ps. 50:21. And therefore certainly knoweth thee, or else he were not an omniscient judge. There could be no process against thee if the Lord were ignorant of thy person; and his actual providence about thee implieth it. Thou canst not uphold thyself one moment without him, and therefore he is as verily with thee as thou art with thyself. Suppose that God had never a creature to look to in all the world but thee, wouldst thou not believe then that he doth know thee and regard thee? Why not now? Is there any weakness in God? is his mind distracted with variety of objects, that he would not regard thy person, heart, word, and ways? is he not sufficient for thee, and as really present with thee as if he had no other creature else?

(2.) As our persons, so our ways: Ps. 1:6, 'The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.' Doth not God distinguish between his obedient and rebellious subjects, and know who they are, and how many are of the one sort and the other? To deny this were to strike at the root of all piety and obedience. If he hath not a particular inspection of human affairs, and did not know the good and evil, what need we take care whether we be good or evil?

(3.) As of our way and scope in general, so of every step; he knoweth all the particularities of our lives: Job 31:4, 'doth not he see all my ways, and count all my steps?' By our way is meant our general conversation, and by our steps our particular actions. God seeth us in all postures, when we laugh, and when we weep, when we are proud, and when we are angry, toying and praying, when in company or alone, when buying or selling, and when worshipping and hearing: Ps. 139:2, 'Thou knowest my uprising and down-lying;' how ye go to bed at night, and rise in the morning. And he knoweth not only thy actions, but thy heart. It is a mighty awe upon us that he knoweth

our words and actions: Ps. 139:4, 'Lo, there is not a word in my mouth, but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.' God knoweth it, whether it be savoury and gracious or vain and idle. But this is not all; he knoweth our hearts and our very thoughts: Prov. 15:11, 'Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more the hearts of the children of men?' He setteth forth the knowledge of God by those things which are most unknown to us, the state of the dead and the hearts of men. He knoweth all those that are in the state of the dead, though unknown or forgotten by the most of men; what is become of the bodies and souls of men; the damned spirits in hell, he keepeth an exact account of all the prisoners; the bodies in the grave, he knoweth what is become of their dust, and how to restore to every one his own flesh and his own body; and what are the thoughts and hearts of men now alive. The thoughts of the heart are most hidden from man till they be revealed by word or action. Who can know our thoughts? what more swift and sudden, what more various and more hidden than a thought? and this he knoweth not by guess and interpretation, by running up our actions into their proper thought and principle wherein they are founded, but by immediate inspection, and knoweth them before they are manifested by the event, or any overt act of word or deed; what consultations and deliberations we are about before we conclude anything; with what hopes, and aims, and consciences we are carried on; in whose name we act, and with what principles and ends: which is of double use to us, partly to breed a holy fear, and partly a hope in us. An awe, how should we compose our minds and passions, and the very thoughts of our hearts! God seeth all, how should we use our words and order our behaviour! We do all in his sight, and speak all in his hearing: he finds out the thought, word, and deed that is not done in his presence or conceived in his presence, and then allow yourselves to be vain and frivolous if you can. And partly to breed a hope in us. God knoweth what is hatched in hell, or Rome, or elsewhere against

us; and therefore let us do our duty, and rest in the wisdom of God for protection.

3. God's knowledge is most exact and accurate; it is good to see how it is expressed to us in scripture: Heb. 4:13, 'All things are naked and open before him;' cut down by the chine-bone. When a beast is dissected and opened, every part is seen, the soundness or unsoundness of it presently appears. Heathen soothsayers were wont to look to the inwards of the beasts, and to observe the colour, shape, and all the defects or perfections of the sacrifice: the prophet alludeth to it when he saith, Ezek 21:21, 'He looked into the liver.' Thus are all things said to be laid open before God. Sometimes by searching: 1 Chron. 29:11, 'He searcheth the heart, and trieth the imaginations of the sons of men.' Sometimes it is search as with candles, Zeph. 1:12, as one for what is hid or lost. Luke 15:8, when the woman had lost her groat, 'She lighteth the candle, sweepeth the house, seeketh diligently till she findeth it.' We think our sins will never be heard of more, but he findeth them out, and they find us out: Num. 32:23, 'Your iniquities shall find you out.' Sometimes by keeping reckoning: Job 31:4, 'Doth not he count all my steps?' God hath a book where all is put to account: Mal. 3:18, 'A book of remembrance was written before him; and Ps. 16:3, 'Thou tellest all my wanderings; put thou my tears in thy bottle, are they not in thy book?' Words, thoughts, actions, all upon record. What neglects of grace, omission of duties, violating principles of conscience, God counteth them all: Jer. 14:16, 'Thou numberest my steps, and watchest over my sin.' Sometimes by weighing and pondering: Prov. 16:2, 'But the Lord weigheth the spirits;' Prov. 15:21, 'All my ways are before him, and he pondereth my goings.' Whether full weight or too light, he knoweth the number, the proportion, the weight of every one of thy sins; the person who, the place where, the time when committed; what means, warnings, methods of grace, helps to the

contrary, these are brought into the reckoning. Thus by many metaphors does the scripture set out the exact and certain knowledge that God hath of persons, and circumstances, and all their actions; nothing can escape God, and he cannot be deceived, because he goeth on sound evidence.

4. It is an infinite, perfect, distinct manner of knowing things: Ps. 147:5, 'His understanding is infinite: Of his understanding there is no search;' Isa. 40:28; it is beyond the reach of man's shallow capacity to conceive of it. I add this, because it is hard for us to understand how God should at once know all things that are done by so many several men, in so many several parts of the world, and hearken to all their prayers. Lucian scoffed at the heathen gods, as if they were forced to run hither and thither, to hear the prayers made in the eastern and western parts of the world, and the disorders that fell out in Greece while the gods were banqueting in Ethiopia. An infinite understanding can see all things at once, for he understandeth all things in a way different from man; not successively, and by discourse one after another. A man cannot read a book in a moment, but must go from line to line, and page to page; but God knoweth all things in an instant, and that by one act of understanding, as if a man could read a book through by once looking on it. His knowledge is not confounded with multiplicity of objects; as God had a prospect of the whole creation at once, Gen. 1:31, 'He saw all that he had made.' It is all one to him to know all things, and know but one thing. When two or three speak together, we are not able to take in their sense and meaning, our senses and understandings are finite. Now when many speak to God at the same time, it is but as if one spake; an infinite eye seeth all, and an infinite ear heareth all, and that clearly and distinctly, without confusion.

II. The reasons which the scripture giveth for the belief of this knowledge.

1. The immensity and greatness of God; God is in all, and above all, and beyond all, nowhere included, and nowhere excluded. And so his omnipresence doth establish the belief of his omniscience: Jer. 23:23, 24, 'Am I a God at hand, and not afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth? can any hide himself in secret places, that I should not see him?' God is everywhere, not only with respect to his powerful and efficacious providence, but with respect to his essential presence. God is there wherever you are. Now if he be with us, surely he knoweth us. He is present with all the world, and therefore he doth regard and observe all the world: you may take liberty to sin when God is gone or absent from you, and you can get behind his back; but that can never be, and therefore we must do all things as in his presence.

2. From creation. God hath made our hearts, given us the power to affect, think, purpose, and do, and therefore knoweth what is in us: Ps. 94:9, 10, 'He that planted the ear, shall not he hear? he that formed the eye, shall not he see?' God knoweth how the creature will act, for he gave it power to act. Surely he that made man knoweth what is in man; his knowledge is answerable to his power. He that made the heart of man observeth what they do, what counsels they have in hand. This argument is again used, Ps. 139:13, 'Thou hast possessed my reins; for thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.' He that made our heart, knoweth our words, works, thoughts, and all. Once more: Ps. 33:13–15, 'The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike, he considereth all their works.' He that formed their souls as well as their bodies is able to judge particularly the

operations of their hearts. Every wise agent knoweth what he doeth, and to what end he maketh anything, and how it may be used or employed. The same argument is urged by the prophet Isaiah, chap. 29:16, 'Shall the thing formed say of him that formed it, He hath no understanding?' This is brought to confute them that say, Who seeth us, who knoweth us? or thought they could hide their counsels, so as God should not see them. Alas! all lieth open to God's eye, as the fashion of the pot of clay doth to the potter: God cannot be ignorant of anything that is in his own work. You cannot imagine he knoweth not what you think and do; when he made you, if he had so much wisdom to give you the power, he knoweth the act.

3. From God's government. There is a twofold government of God, and both infer the truth in hand—

[1.] Powerful, and by his effectual providence, as he governeth all creatures.

[2.] Moral, by his laws, as he governeth the reasonable creature.

[1.] The government of his effectual providence, which is necessary to all our actions: 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being,' Acts 17:28. All things move as he moveth them in their natural agency. The creature can do nothing without him, and actually doth nothing but by him: his wisdom guideth, his will intendeth and commandeth, his power moveth and disposeth all. He is more intimately present with us than we are with ourselves, governing and sustaining all things: 'His hand leadeth us, and his right hand doth still uphold us,' Ps. 139:10. We cannot do anything, go anywhere, without his gracious supportation. Now doth God support a creature whom he knoweth not, and in any action which he understandeth not? Christ knew that virtue passed from him when the multitude thronged him, Luke 8:45, 46. In the great throng of creatures God

knoweth who is sustained by him, and to whom the influence of his providence reacheth. Now then, since he is as verily with thee in every place as thou art there thyself, is he present with thee, and regardless of thee, of thy thoughts and words and ways? It cannot be.

[2.] His moral government. All persons and causes of men are to be judged by him, and therefore are most eminently and fully discovered to him. Surely be that is to be judged of God must be clearly known to him, both as to his actions and thoughts; how else can he judge righteously either now or hereafter? Job 34:21, 23, 'His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. Therefore he will not lay upon man more than is right, that he should enter into judgment with God;' that is, will not excessively and unjustly afflict man: Ps. 94:10, 'He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?'

III. How this truth is entertained by men.

1. Some atheistically deny it: Job 22:13, 14, 'And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the thick cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.' Atheists have carnal and gross thoughts of God, as if he were confined within the heavens, and had no sense and care of what was done below, or had other business to mind than to look after the sons of men: Ps. 73:11, 'How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?' Many that dare not simply deny a deity, yet deny a providence: they measure God by themselves, their own shallow conceptions; whereas God is infinitely exalted above what we can comprehend.

2. Some question it, if they do not deny it: Isa. 29:15, 'Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?'

Ezek. 8:12, 'They say, Who seeth us? the Lord hath forsaken the earth.'

3. Some forget it: he is not far from us, but we are often far from him; they acknowledge this truth in the general, but they forget it in particular, in the course of their conversations: Ps. 36:4, 'The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before their eyes.' What could he do worse, if no God to take notice of him? Profaneness is practical atheism; they do not deny, but forget; or they deny not in words, but in works. We should often revive this thought, God knoweth, and taketh notice of what we do: Ps. 119:168, 'I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies; for all my ways are before thee.'

4. Some slight it through impudence and obduration in sin: Zeph. 1:12, 'The Lord will do neither good nor evil.' They acknowledge there is a God, and that he is omniscient, holy, and just, yet dare sin against him: Ps. 10:17, 'He hath said in his heart, The Lord will not require it.'

5. Most carry themselves as too unmindful of it, as appeareth by these evidences.

[1.] In the general; men would be other manner of persons, in all holy conversation and godliness, if they did always set God before them. The all-seeing eye of a holy God would make them more circumspect and watchful. But because men live without God in the world, therefore are their conversations so full of vanity and sin: Gen. 17:1, 'I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect.'

[2.] More particularly; men would make more conscience of their thoughts, if they did remember that God knoweth their thoughts afar off, Ps. 139:2. Would they indulge themselves in such a liberty of

lustful, covetous, envious, malicious, and unbelieving thoughts, and feed their minds with these things, if they did well consider that God knoweth all things?

[3.] The disproportion of our respects to God's eye and man's: they can fancy a matter in the dark, and not be troubled about it. We are usually more awed with the presence of a man than with the presence of God. You will do that which God knoweth, which you would not do when man knoweth it. He knoweth your fraud, your uncleanness, your licentiousness: Jer. 22:26, 'The thief is ashamed when he is found.' Job 24:17, 'If a man know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.' If a man know anything amiss by them, they are full of anguish and shame. Why should not conscience be awakened more by thoughts of God's knowledge? It would trouble us to have a window into our hearts; is not all open and naked to God's eye? In short, how watchful are we not to incur the penalty of man's law! but offences against God are lightly passed over.

[4.] The best have not such a sound and serious belief of this truth, nor do not improve it as they ought to do, as appears partly because we are more troubled with this or that branch of corruption which breaks out to our disgrace, than about the body of death, or indwelling sin, which is the cause of all; the root should be more grievous to us than the branches. Partly by this; in company, what lofty expressions and flowing eloquence will men enlarge themselves in prayer! but how slight and overly in closet duties, if not too commonly neglectful of them! What is this but in effect to say that our Father doth not see in secret? Partly, also, what will you say if we are troubled more with brokenness of expression than unbrokenness of heart? the one layeth us open to shame and disgrace with men, the other is more offensive and displeasing to God.

IV. What use shall we make of it?

1. Terror to the wicked. God seeth them here and hereafter, and will call them to an account; there is no escaping his sight here, nor shifting his tribunal hereafter. Adam, by running to the bushes, did not hide himself from the Lord, neither did he hide the Lord from himself. God seeth, and God seeth as a judge: Jer. 32:19, 'Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to his doings.' God is not a bare spectator of what is done in the world, but a judge, an avenger of what is evil: and his solemn judgment at the last day will most discover his omniscency, 'When the hidden things of darkness are made manifest, and the counsels of the heart are brought to light,' 1 Cor. 4:5. In that, as you cannot evade his knowledge, you cannot escape his power.

2. Comfort to the godly.

[1.] God knoweth their persons: Exod. 33:12, 'I know thee by name:' he taketh special notice of them. All things are under a providence, but they are under a special providence; a father cannot forget how many children he hath, though in a large and numerous family he cannot presently reckon up all his servants.

[2.] God knoweth their conditions, wants, and necessities: Mat. 6:32, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that you need these things;' Exod. 3:7, 'I have seen the afflictions of my people, and known their sorrows.' God is so well acquainted with our wants, that he cannot forget us nor neglect us.

[3.] Our prayers are heard, not lost in the darkness of secrecy: Mat. 6:6, 'Thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.' He that knoweth thy heart, will give thee the desire of thy heart.

[4.] Thy duties are rewarded, and rightly understood. First, Certainly rewarded: 2 Chron. 16:9, 'For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose hearts are perfect with him;' Heb. 6:10, 'God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love.' Secondly, Rightly understood. Men may be ignorant of what we do, but God is not; as Potiphar was ignorant of Joseph's faithfulness; he put him in prison for his integrity, Gen. 39:19, 20; the butler forgot him, Gen. 40:43. Some will not own it, but God knoweth: 1 Cor. 4:3, 'But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment.'

Use. Is to awaken all to a greater mindfulness of this truth.

First, Let it be believed, and the faith of it more settled in your hearts. Besides creation and providence, and God's immensity or omnipresence and government, the arguments mentioned before, there are evidences of it—

1. In the human nature of Christ; he discovered himself God while he was in the flesh, and this perfection of his Godhead did shine forth through the human nature, that he knew men's hearts, and their inward thoughts. He turneth out the very inside of their minds in the story of his life often: John 2:25, 'He knew what was in man.'

2. By the light of the prophetic spirit: 2 Kings 5:26, 'Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?' As if he had said, I saw him light out of his chariot, and what he gave thee, and where thou laidst it. God had bestowed upon him an extraordinary spirit, whereby he could discern things done in his absence. So another prophet, Ahijah, when Jeroboam's wife thought to have put a cheat upon him, his eyes being dim by reason of age: 1

Kings 14:6, 'Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, why feignest thou thyself to be another?'

3. The gift of discerning spirits bestowed on the apostles, 1 Cor. 12:10, whether church-gifts, or sincerity of men's hearts, in order to discipline: Acts 5:9, 'How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?' that is, the prophetic spirit.

4. Another instance is God's finding us out in our secret sins by his word, searching the heart: Heb. 4:12, 'The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;' 1 Cor. 14:25, 'And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest.' By his Spirit enforcing the sense of our secret sins upon us: Job 13:26, 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.' Old sins, long since forgotten, come into fresh remembrance, and we know not how to get rid of the horrors of them. By his providence: Num. 32:23, 'Behold, ye have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out;' Gen. 42:21, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear him: therefore is this distress come upon us.' The man was rough and untractable to them, as they had been to their brother: afflictions open the eyes, they are God's rack.

Secondly, Remember it often in your whole conversation; you are always before God, therefore serve him 'in holiness and righteousness all the days of thy life,' Luke 1:75; Prov. 15:21, 'The ways of a man are before the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.' He weigheth every circumstance of thy life. If this were better thought of, there would be less disorder in the world. Heathens gave

this advice, that in the presence of a Cato, or severe reprovor, there needs no fiction or supposition in the case; and a greater than Cato is here. God is really present everywhere, but we do not think of it. He seeth, and 'is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.' We should inure ourselves to these thoughts.

Thirdly, We must actually revive this thought in solemn duties, when we come to act the part of angels, and to behold the face of our heavenly Father. In every duty God knoweth the frame of our hearts and affections; and wilt thou be cold and careless in the sight of God? There God immediately is the party with whom we have to do, in hearing and praying: Heb. 4:13, 'Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are open and naked unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;' Acts 10:33, 'Now therefore we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' He knoweth what thoughts and affections are stirring in your hearts; God is everywhere with us, but we are not always and everywhere with God.

Fourthly, In a time of temptation. When sin assaults with the advantage of secrecy, and other inviting circumstances to commit it, Gen. 39:9, say, 'How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God?' We must check it by this consideration, God seeth, God knoweth: Esther 7:8, 'Will he force the queen before me in the house?' Shall we break God's laws before his face?

Fifthly, To make you faithful in your stations. God invests us with them, that we may improve them for his glory. Magistrates: 2 Chron. 19:1, 'The Lord is with you in the judgment;' Ps. 92:1, 'God standeth in the congregation of the mighty.' Diodorus Siculus telleth us of some heathens who had some empty chairs of state advanced above their tribunals as for their gods, to show they were present, and had

an inspection over all acts of judicature: Ezek. 5:8, 'If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.' Ministers: 2 Cor. 2:17, 'But as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ;' 1 Thes. 2:4, 'Even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God,' who trieth our hearts. Masters of families are to walk in their houses with a perfect heart: Ps. 101:2, 'I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.' Though shut up in their families from the observation of others, yet God seeth them; therefore behave yourselves wisely and prudently there. Servants: Col. 3:22, 23, 'Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God; and whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.'

SERMON XXVII

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.—1 JOHN 3:21.

HERE is the effect of a good conscience. In the words we have—(1.) A condition supposed, 'If our hearts condemn us not;' (2.) A privilege asserted, 'Then have we confidence towards God.'

First, The condition supposed. There are three functions and offices of conscience: there is, first, a knowledge, remembrance, or keeping up of principles, according to which our state and actions must be interpreted; secondly, a sense of our actions, or what is done, or left undone, in conformity or contrariety to those principles; thirdly, a judging or applying to ourselves those rules which concern our fact or state. As to the first act and office, conscience hath the force of a

law and rule, informing us of good or evil. With respect to the second act, it is a witness, testifying what we have been or done. With respect to the last act, it is a judge, to condemn or acquit as the matter shall require. As, for instance, in that copulate axiom which you have, Rom. 8:13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' Take the first part; he that 'liveth after the flesh shall die,' meaning the second death; there conscience interposeth as a law or rule. But I 'live after the flesh;' there conscience interposeth as a witness: therefore I shall die the second death; there it condemneth as a judge. Take the second clause, and you will have an instance of conscience not condemning or acquitting: 'They that by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body shall live;' but I mortify the deeds of the body, therefore I shall live. Now if conscience goeth upon a right principle, and beareth true evidence, the sentence and judgment remaineth firm, or in full force, be it by way of condemnation or absolution. As in the first reasoning, the conclusion must needs breed sorrow, trouble, and dejection of heart, which must not be put off till God put it away; that is, till we break off our fleshly course of living, and obtain our pardon and peace by Jesus Christ. In the second reasoning the sentence of absolution is a ground of comfort, and giveth boldness in our approaches to God. Once more, conscience may condemn us two ways—in part or in whole; according to the strictness of the first covenant, requiring unsinning obedience; on the equitable terms of the second, accepting our sincere obedience. Our hearts may accuse us of imperfection, but not of insincerity and hypocrisy, or partial dealing with God. In this latter sense is the text taken.

Secondly, The privilege, 'Then have we confidence towards God.'

1. What is this confidence?

[1.] It is sometimes put for boldness, or not fearing any danger or evil from one: 1 John 2:28, 'That when he shall appear we may have boldness, and not be ashamed at his coming.' And so the sense will be, You need not fear any danger from him; for God will not be wanting to them that walk sincerely before him. So it is said the 'righteous are bold as a lion,' Prov. 28:1. So Phil. 1:20, 'According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that, with all boldness, as always, so now, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death.' That he should boldly avow the truth, as fearless of any danger; living and dying, he should glorify Christ. A christian feareth nothing that is established upon sound terms: Ps. 23:4, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.' They are not discouraged and disquieted, as others, with the apprehensions of danger; as not from men, so not from God, to whom they look chiefly. Fear and dread of God's displeasure followeth the consciousness of sin, but expectation and hope of reward and good countenance from God is the natural result of righteousness and holiness. This is the first notion of the word 'confidence,' and not to be excluded here.

[2.] It signifieth liberty in prayer, a telling God all our mind, and so it signifieth praying freely to God, and asking of him whatever we stand in need of; a freedom to speak our hearts and open our minds to God in all necessities: Eph. 3:12, 'In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, through the faith of him;' and Heb. 4:16, 'Let us come boldly to the throne of grace.' We may present ourselves and our requests before him with confidence. Only let me note, that this confidence noteth liberty of heart rather than liberty of speech; not a flowing of words so much as a holy confidence of audience and acceptance whenever we draw nigh unto him.

2. In what sense we may be said to have it. It may be understood de facto or de jure. It is not meant of the first only, for two reasons—(1.) Because otherwise it were not an argument of the value of the testimony of conscience if we have confidence towards God, and he doth not allow it or approve it; for though he doth not say, If our hearts condemn us not, God will not condemn us, as in the former verse, 'God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things;' yet it must be understood, or else the apostle's reasoning were impertinent. (2.) Because de facto all that are sincere have not this confidence; they have a right to it, though they enjoy it not; for there needeth another witness: Rom. 8:16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.'

Doct. That a good conscience is one means to open an effectual door to us for free and full communion with God.

I shall prove two things to you—

1. That it is a great privilege to have free and full communion with God in his worship.

2. That a good conscience hath a great influence on this.

I. For the first, that free and full communion with God in his worship, expressed here by boldness, or 'confidence towards God,' is a great privilege. This will appear if you consider—

1. Man's forfeiture by sin; God's image, favour, and fellowship lost all at once. All sweet commerce between us and God was cut off, as is evident by the story of the fall, where you will find man first a fugitive, and then an exile. First he ran away from God, and then God banished him out of his presence, Gen. 3:8. When God came walking in the garden in the cool of the day, Adam and his wife hid

themselves, as being afraid of the presence of the Lord; they shuffled out of the way, and ran among the trees of the garden; and afterwards we read again, ver. 23, 24, that God sent him forth, and drove him out of his presence, and set a guard of cherubims, and a flaming sword turning every way upon paradise, which was a figure of his wrath. As it was thus with Adam, so it was with all his posterity; sin is the wall of partition between us and God: Isa. 59:2, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.'

2. The estrangement of the heart that grows upon this forfeiture, as appeareth by that legal bondage and those guilty fears which are natural to us. Sinners fear God, and fly from him: 'I was afraid, and hid myself,' saith Adam, Gen. 3:10; and all his posterity have the same disposition: Isa. 33:14, 'Who among us can dwell with devouring burnings?' Yea, it appeareth by the bashfulness and inconfidence that befalleth the children of God by reason of sin. The fears of a guilty child make him shun his father's presence, as David kept silence when he had sinned, Ps. 32:3. Strangeness and distance groweth between God and us while sin lieth on the conscience.

3. The majesty of God, and the state which he kept during the old testament dispensation. In the whole frame of that worship, God would show them how unworthy sinners were to approach and draw nigh to him and his holy things. When they were married to him in the covenant on Mount Sinai, there was a rail between him and the people, and they were not to go up into the holy mount, or touch the border of it, under penalty of being put to death, Exod. 19:12, 13. In their passage to Canaan, the common Israelite was not to come near the ark lest he died, Num. 1:53, but the Levites were to interpose between God and them. The Levites also were not to be too bold; some of them were chosen out to touch the staves of the altar, and

perform other ministries, but not to see the holy things when covered, lest they died, Num. 19:20. Sinful man must not come too near the great God. The priests were to minister at the altar of burnt-offerings, but not without solemn washings, Exod. 30:20. The high priest (Lev. 16:2, 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not') was not to be too familiar with God; and if any of these orders were broken, judgments were executed, and they were struck dead in the place. The people were sensible of these restraints: Num. 17:17, 18, 'And the children of Israel said unto Moses, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?' Some were killed with the sword, the earth swallowed up others, some died with pestilence, and all for making too bold with God in his holy things.

4. The many failings which the best are conscious of. When we consider the exact inspection of God, and the many infirmities of the best christians, it is a wonder they can have any confidence towards God, when our own conscience condemneth us of many things; but the Lord layeth not them to our charge where the heart is sincere for the main; and he could observe many more things against us than our consciences do, yet such is his mercy and fatherly love, that he will pardon and reverse all these failings, and will delight in our converse with him: Prov. 15:8, 'The prayer of the upright is his delight.' God looketh more to their good than their ill; though he knoweth more by them than all the world, or they themselves do, yet if our hearts do not reprove us of partial dealings, we may plead, 2 Kings 20:3, 'I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.'

5. The thing itself is very valuable. This confidence towards God, what is there in it?

[1.] A readiness to converse with God and come into his presence; whereas otherwise the heart is shy of him, and hangeth off from him; as Israel, when they had sinned in the matter of the calf, they durst not come near the sanctuary, but worshipped every man afar off at his tent-door, *Exod. 33:8*, as looking what success Moses' mediation would have with the Lord about reconciling him to his people, when he was angry and ready to depart. Now when we can cheerfully come into God's presence, and converse with him, we have boldness to enter into the holiest, *Heb. 10:9*; we have leave to come, and a heart to come: to have both is a very great privilege. Liberty of access, with assurance of welcome and audience, surely is a great favour and privilege; the soul cannot keep away from God.

[2.] A free familiarity. When we come, we unbosom ourselves to him as a man would unto his friend, and tell God all our mind, acquaint him with all our griefs, sorrows, fears, hopes, desires, temptations, conflicts; tell him plainly how it is with our souls. This is that free spirit David begs for, and had lost some degree of it by his sin, *Ps. 51:12*, and is set forth by *Ps. 119:26*, 'I declared my ways, and thou heardest me.' We keep back nothing from him: *Ps. 62:8*, 'Trust in him at all times, pour out your hearts before him.' We lay down our burden at his feet; we deal openly and plainly with him.

[3.] A childlike trust, that he will pity and help us, that our persons and duties are accepted with him; for much of the disposition of children lieth in owning him as a Father. The spirit of adoption was given us to this end and purpose: *Rom. 8:15*, 'But we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;' and *Gal. 4:16*, 'He hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we

cry, Abba, Father.' Oh, what a mercy is this, to come to him, not as our judge, but as our Father, not with a spirit of fear, but love! It is not a tribunal of justice we stand before, but a throne of grace. Surely to have a merciful reconciled Father to go to, and make our moan for relief in all our distresses and wants, is a very comfortable privilege, that we cannot sufficiently value. Whosoever scorneth and slights him, a christian knoweth where he may be welcome: 'My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears to God,' Job 16:20. Though slighted elsewhere, he will not be refused there. Surely God will deal kindly with his children; his fatherly love will not suffer him neglect them, or any of their concernments.

[4.] The rich treasure that we have an interest in and free access unto. God's all-sufficiency is our storehouse; he hath grace enough to pardon our sins, to pity and relieve our miseries, to heal our natures, supply our necessities, to help us in our straits, and finally to save us with an everlasting salvation. This confidence implieth a dependence on God's all-sufficiency, Gen. 17:1. Cast all your care upon him, 1 Peter 5:7. Earthly parents, their affections and power are limited. Now to come to such a God every day, and to know that as often as we come we are welcome to him, in and through Christ, our persons and prayers are pleasing to him, and that he will give us all the things we ask of him according to his will, what a mercy is this!

II. What influence hath a good conscience upon it?

1. The door of access to God is opened by Christ It was first opened by the merit of his passion, and is still kept open by his intercession; therefore it is said, Heb. 4:15, 16, 'For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find

grace to help in a time of need;' Heb. 10:19, 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' Our peace and atonement was made with God by Christ's passion, represented and pleaded by his intercession.

2. It supposeth our justification by faith, for otherwise we are not entered into the evangelical state: Rom 5:1, 2, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith.' Till we are accepted in the Beloved, we have a charge lying against us: Acts 13:38, 39, 'Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.' This is a ground of rejoicing: Rom. 8:33, 34, 'Who then shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?'

3. Our justification is evident to us when conscience witnesseth on good grounds that we do not allow ourselves in the omission of any known duty, nor in the commission of any known sin: Heb. 10:22, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.' When we are justified and sanctified, and our consciences, which were unquiet by reason of sin, are purged and purified, then we may cheerfully come to God for all things. Particularly—(1.) To remove terror; (2.) To establish boldness and confidence.

[1.] To remove terror. There are two things obstruct our soul's access to God—our own guiltiness and God's terror.

(1.) Our own guiltiness, that straitens the heart, and stoppeth the mouth, and breedeth bondage in us. All the world naturally is become guilty before God, Rom. 3:19; but they who are renewed and

pardoned, they come out of this guilty and wretched estate, and by little and little are settled and established as to their consciences, as their pardon and sanctification is made more evident to them by a holy conversation: Rom. 6:14, 'For sin shall have no dominion over you.' Where sin reigneth not, they come to understand their estate by grace, and so vanquish their legal fears. Where worldly and fleshly lusts bear sway, a man is under the law, not under grace. The law is alive or dead according to the state a man is in, either of sin or holiness. He that liveth in a state of sin still carrieth his sting and wound about him, and is always under doubts and fears, or hath the matter and ground of them. Certainly they have not the true courage and boldness of the saints. Not only their flesh and spirit is at war in their hearts, but law and grace. As the Spirit prevaieth against the flesh, so doth grace prevail against our law-fears: 'For they that are led by the Spirit, are not under the law,' Gal. 5:18; that is, not under its condemning power. So Rom. 8:14, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' If we live in obedience to the motions of the sanctifying Spirit, he doth as a Spirit of adoption overcome our legal fears.

(2.) God's terror. God is our friend and Father in Christ; not a terrible judge, but a reconciled Father; and his throne is not a judgment-seat, but a mercy-seat. He is terrible to those that lie in their sins; they look upon him as a malefactor doth upon his judge, a rigid lawgiver or severe avenger; as a condemning God, not as a pardoning God. But not so to those that are adopted and taken into his family; he maketh the renewed and sanctified his children, and is pleased to own them as a Father: 'That we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children,' Eph. 1:4–6. Surely when God is our Father, the chief cause of all our fear and trouble is gone. We have no cause to

fear the flames of hell, or sting of death, and the terror of the judgment, any further than to make ready for the day of judgment. Surely then we can not only draw nigh to God, and behold his face with comfort and confidence now, and rejoice in his presence with us in the ordinances, but also look and long for his appearance, when he shall come in his glory: 2 Tim. 4:8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing;' Rev. 22:20, 'He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly, Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus.'

[2.] To establish boldness and confidence; for—

(1.) There is an everlasting merit to depend upon, and that is the blood of Christ, quieting the conscience: Heb. 9:14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God?' Heb. 12:24, 'And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.' We are admitted for Christ's sake, and have only his righteousness to plead against the first covenant.

(2.) Here is a blessed covenant, wherein God hath showed his willingness to accept us, and hath given us his warrant for the discharge of the sincere and upright: Rom. 8:1, 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Therefore, if our consciences do not charge us with a doubling with God, what should disquiet our minds?

(3.) There is a sure claim, and that is sincerity, when our hearts condemn us not, nor reproach us for any voluntary wilful neglect of or disobedience to the laws of Christ, or living in any wilful and

allowed sin; yea, rather acquit us, assure us of such sincerity to God and Christ, that we can appeal to his all-seeing eye: John 21:17, 'And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' Now surely all this will breed boldness, and be matter of joy and confidence to us: 2 Cor 1:12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.'

Object. Will not this strengthen the security of the wicked, to leave all upon the judgment of conscience? Jer. 17:9, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' Many men's consciences do not condemn them; they absolve themselves with great confidence, which is not to be imputed to the strength of their faith, but the hardness of their hearts.

Ans. 1. Wicked men are never perfect as appertaining to the conscience; they have not a true sound peace; it is but a truce, as appeareth because it is so soon disturbed by the seriousness of their own thoughts, their troubles, the agonies of death. A dead stupid conscience they have, but not the rejoicing of faith and liberty towards God. It is not the lively sense of God's love; their hearts reproach them, though they regard it not.

Ans. 2. It doth suppose that conscience doth its office rightly, and that all things concur which are necessary to a good conscience. As—

[1.] Some competent knowledge of the gospel, the privileges and duties thereof. Carnal men are bold through ignorance. Now, 'without knowledge the heart is not good,' Prov. 19:2; as in outward courts, through ignorance of law or false evidence, wrong sentence may be given. Therefore the apostle supposeth them to be persons whose hearts and consciences are in some measure enlightened in

the things of God, and are still inquiring what is his holy, good, and acceptable will.

[2.] One that hath heartily consented to the new covenant so understood: 1 Peter 3:21, 'Baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.' When they answer to the Lord's offers and demands in the gospel, thankfully accepting the offered benefits, faithfully resolving, by the strength of the Lord's grace, to perform the required duties, this is the covenant made with God in baptism.

[3.] Those that set their hearts to fulfil their covenant-vow: ver. 22, 'Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight.' Now those, if their hearts do not condemn them of doubling, and dealing insincerely with God, they have liberty and confidence: Gal. 6:16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, as upon the whole Israel of God.' On the contrary: Ps. 66:18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' In short, then, those that allow no sin, complain of it, fight against it, and study to please God in all things, and abound therein more and more; those are declared to be sincere that seek to be without offence, Phil. 1:10. If men walk crookedly, they break their confidence, and cannot look God in the face with any comfort.

[4.] That the case be well studied and weighed before conscience pronounceth and passeth the doom, for the heart is very deceitful: 1 Cor. 11:29, 'Let a man examine himself;' 2 Cor. 13:5, 'Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove yourselves;' when a man well knowing his duty doth often search and examine himself, his conformity and inconformity thereunto, to see if any of these be wanting. Blind men cannot judge of colours. If no hearty consent to

the covenant of grace, founded in the blood of Christ, he hath not taken the course to pacify conscience. If it be not his hearty and daily endeavour to please God, it is impudence, not confidence; if there be slightness before the matter be debated, and doth undergo a full trial and hearing, it is rashness and presumption, hypocrisy and senseless overweening.

Use 1. That liberty in prayer is so great a mercy, that we should not easily sin it away, and make our sincerity questionable; the heavenly trade is then interrupted, and comfortable commerce between God and us broken off. Before we come into God's glorious presence, he first traineth us up by inviting us into his gracious presence, and the throne of grace is the porch of heaven. God taketh this course, not only to settle our affections, that we may begin that acquaintance here which there shall be perfected and consummated, but to try our confidence. If we cannot come to God in prayer, how shall we come to God in heaven, and in a dying hour cheerfully set sail for eternity, and launch into the other world? Now whilst we are insincere, serious prayer is irksome; we can have no delight in God's company, or comfortable thoughts of him; while we indulge any secret sin, every duty is a penance to us. Therefore do not lose your liberty and openness of heart to God, but preserve the friendship settled in the covenant of grace inviolable and entire.

2. That God's presence, which is the comfort of the faithful, is the burden of the carnal and the guilty. The presence of God is terrible to sinners; they think they are never better than when farthest off from God and most forget God. The devil and the wicked sympathise: Mat. 8:29, 'What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?' Job 21:14, 'They say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' God's presence and company is a burden to them. Now into what a

miserable condition hath sin brought men! It hath changed their joy and content into the greatest terror. Wicked men can neither fly from God's presence, nor yet well endure it.

Use 2. To press christians to keep a good conscience. If you would maintain your liberty and confidence towards God, carry yourselves so that conscience may not condemn you. There are so many blessed fruits accompany it, that we should value it the more. If you have it not, you want liberty in prayer, here mentioned; no hope of glory, no sweetness in the word, no readiness in duty, nor strength to resist sin, nor comfort in distresses and afflictions. But if you have it, you cannot conceive the joy that accompanies it: Rev. 2:17, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a name written, which no man knows but he that receives it.' It makes the thoughts of God sweeter, for he is your Father; his mercy, for it is your portion. His justice is not your terror, but support. His wrath you have escaped; as the Israelites looked back on the Red Sea, and saw their enemies drowned and they escaped. His world of creatures are for your use and service; heaven is your Father's palace; Christ is your Redeemer and Saviour; the word is your charter; ordinances and prayer the porch of heaven; the Lord's supper the table God keepeth for his children.

SERMON XXVIII

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.—1 JOHN 3:22.

IN the context the apostle is speaking of the benefit of a good conscience. It is double—

1. Confidence towards God.

2. Acceptance with God; or, if you will, access to God, and success in prayer. Of confidence to make the prayer we spake in the former verse; acceptance of it, when it is once made, of this in the text, 'And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him,' &c.

In the words there are two things—

1. The privilege of a good conscience, 'Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.'

2. The character and property of a good conscience, 'Because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.'

1. For the privilege; and here note—

[1.] The universality and extent of it, 'Whatsoever we ask.'

[2.] The certainty, 'We receive;' not, we shall receive; we are as certain to receive it as if we had it already.

2. The character, evidence, and property of a good conscience, 'Because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.' This is fit to be added, because he had only described conscience by its act of absolving or not condemning. Now he showeth this must be understood of conscience rightly proceeding. It is usually and truly observed that there is a fourfold conscience—

[1.] Quiet and not good: Luke 11:21, 'When the strong man keepeth the house, all that he possesseth is in peace.' There must needs be a calm when wind and tide goeth together.

[2.] Good and not quiet; as when David thought he was utterly cut off, and cast out of God's sight: Ps. 22:31, 'I said in my heart, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.'

[3.] Such as is neither good nor quiet; such was Judas' conscience: Mat. 27:3, 4, 'Judas repented, saying, I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.'

[4.] A conscience both good and quiet. It is good, for 'we keep his commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight.' As it is good, so it is also quiet; for in the former verse he saith, 'It condemneth not.' This good and quiet conscience is set forth by two expressions, one relating to the matter, the other to the aim of our obedience.

(1.) The matter, 'Because we keep his commandments;' meaning both moral and evangelical; faith in Christ, and love to God and man, as he explaineth himself, ver. 23; and this done evangelically, by the Spirit of Christ and love of God: 1 John 2:5, 'Whoso keepeth his word, in him is the love of God perfected.'

(2.) For the aim, 'And do those things which are pleasing in his sight.' Those things only please God which he hath commanded; as you please a man when you do what is according to his will. Now this is the aim of the sincere heart, to please God in all things; and if we set ourselves to do so, God will not be a stranger to us: John 8:29, 'He that sent me is with me; for I do always the things that please him.'

There is nothing of difficulty remaineth, but only the connection between the two clauses, which seemeth to be causal, 'Because we keep his commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight.'

Ans. It is a condition, not of merit, but order. By obeying him we are qualified to have our prayers heard by him; but yet not for our merit, but his merciful promise to hear us: Dan. 9:18, 'Not for our righteousness, O Lord, but for thy great mercies.'

Doct. Such as make conscience of obedience may obtain of God whatsoever, in reason and righteousness, they ask of him.

I shall handle the point in this method.

1. I shall show you in what large terms God hath invited and encouraged us to prayer.
2. I shall state the case, how we may ask so as to be sure to speed.
3. I shall speak of God's answer, and the success of our prayers.

I. In what large terms God hath invited and encouraged prayer. Here in the text, 'Whatsoever we ask of him we receive.'

1. In some places there are indefinite promises of audience; as Ps. 50:15, 'Call upon me, and I will hear thee.' So Job 22:27, 'Thou shalt make thy prayer unto God, and he shall hear thee;' Ps. 37:14, 'Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall grant thee the desire of thy heart;' and Isa. 45:19, 'I said not unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me in vain;' Mat. 7:7, 8, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.' Now though these places do not tell us how much God will grant, or how far he will hear the prayers of his people, yet they show us that it is not labour in vain to seek God; and we have all the encouragements in the world to come and acquaint him with all our desires, griefs, fears, wants, and requests; for what

cannot God do? and what will not prayer do with a good God, who is able to do what he pleaseth, and hath promised to do what we desire?

2. There are promises that have universal particles annexed; as John 14:13, 14, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.' So John 15:7, 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.' So John 15:16, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he shall give it you.' The same is repeated, John 16:23, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' And many more such expressions there are in the word of God. Not that men have a lawless liberty allowed them, to give vent to all their desires, how unjust and unreasonable soever they be, and that God's power shall lackey upon their vain fancies and appetites. No; these large and universal offers admit of limitations propounded in scripture, which must be regarded, that we may not make promises to ourselves, and set God a task by our self-conceitedness and vain fancies, and think him engaged beyond what he is pleased to bind himself unto. And the use of these universal particles is to encourage us against the straits and diffidence of our own hearts: though we ask things so great for their worth, difficult to compass, and which we are so unworthy to receive, yet none of these things should discourage us, and straiten our expectations, that when we come to God, if our requests be just and equal, he will grant them for Christ's sake.

II. To state the case; how must we ask, that we may be sure to speed?

1. The first thing to be observed is the qualification of the person; for unless you put yourselves into a receiving posture, according to the

terms of the promise, you cannot expect to speed. Now none are in a receiving posture but such as are in grace and favour with God, such as are justified and sanctified, and live in obedience to him: Prov. 15:8, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight;' John 9:31, 'God heareth not sinners; but if any be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth;' James 5:16, 'The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much;' Ps. 66:18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me.' These and many other places show that if we would have our prayers heard and accepted with God, we must be righteous, not live in the open practice of any known sin, nor secretly foster it in our hearts. And therefore though prayer should be made with the greatest earnestness and confidence, yet if the consciences of men reprove them of any looseness and lightness of spirit, that they have served God by halves, and are off and on with him in their practice, if they be not heard in the evil day, they cannot challenge God for breach of promise, but themselves of neglect of duty; for if they will not hear God, why should God hear them? This reason is given, Prov. 20:9, 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.' Not only his vile practices, but his prayers. Therefore, if you would have God's ear, obey him and hearken to his voice; and then for the asking you may obtain anything which a good conscience will permit you to ask of him; and upon other terms you must not deal with God. Keep close to God's will, and he will give you your will. Surely it is a profitable thing to obey God. Do you do that which God requireth of you, and God will do that which you ask of him.

2. The next thing to be regarded is the matter of our prayers and requests, and there we have the limitation: 1 John 5:14, 15, 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us,

whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.' All the business is, what is the meaning of that, 'According to his will?'

[1.] With conformity to his revealed will.

[2.] With due submission and reservation of his secret will.

[1.] Surely with conformity to his revealed and commanding will, that we ask nothing that is sinful or unjust; as if we would seek to entice God to our lure, and to avenge our quarrels; as Balaam built altars and offered sacrifices to draw God to curse his people; or when we would have God to bless us in some unlawful undertaking or purpose, or are biassed by envy, revenge, or any corrupt and carnal affection, and to ask things contrary to charity, or that meek spirit that should be in christians. Unlawful desires put into prayer are a double evil, as contrary to God's law, and as presented in prayer. The wills of God's children are limited by his word and will. The Spirit in them maketh intercession according to the will of God, Rom. 8:27. When we mingle our lusts with our prayers, we make this pure stream muddy, and would put dross into Christ's golden censer, as if he should mediate that our lusts should be fulfilled, and sins accomplished.

[2.] With a due reservation of and submission to his secret and decreeing will. Many things are lawful, yea, commanded, yet we must ask them with submission to the will of God; that is, we must use the means, and refer the success to God. As, for instance, when parents ask the conversion of their children, and children the lives of their parents; but God disposeth of the event as it pleaseth him. Again, many things may be good in themselves, but are not good for us; as Moses desired to enter into the land of Canaan, which God saw not good for him. So thou art sick, and wouldst fain have thy life

prolonged, and therefore in the bitterness of thy heart makest thy moan to God, as Hezekiah did; it may be the Lord will take thee from the evil to come, and translate thee to glory, which is much better for thee; as David fasted and prayed for the life of the child: 2 Sam. 12:22. 'Who can tell whether the Lords will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' In this reservation of God's will we have two exceptions—if it be for God's glory and our good.

(1.) God's glory: John 14:13, 'Whatever ye ask the Father in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.' Whatever belongeth to our duty we must do; but for the event, how he will be glorified, we must submit it to God.

(2.) For our good. Grace layeth this restraint upon the will of a renewed man, but of this good, God will be judge, and not we. It may be good for us to be afflicted, Ps. 119:71. Temporal things being but accessory to our happiness, and belonging to our comfortable condition in the world, but not of absolute necessity to our salvation, should not be peremptorily asked, but in submission and limitation of God's will: Mat. 26:39, 'Yet not my will, but thine be done;' so far as God seeth them good for us. The short is, that in things necessary to salvation, we shall not be refused; in other things, we should not ask of God anything that agreeth not with his will, or is against his glory, or may be hurtful to ourselves. Till we learn to acquiesce in the will of God, and seek the most necessary things of God, we do not pray aright.

3. The next limitation is as to the manner.

[1.] Fervently, and with that life and seriousness which such requests call for: Mat. 7:7, 'Ask, seek, knock.' Prayer is not answered if the spirit of prayer be wanting, or those lively affections which are necessary to constitute a prayer: James 5:16, 'The effectual fervent

prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' Afterwards he instanceth in Elias, ver. 17. If a cold prayer meets with a denial, we have no cause to complain. The ardency of holy desires is wanting; we are not in earnest, which is the soul of prayer, though the form and fashion of it be kept up: Dan. 9:3, 'I set myself to seek the Lord;' Jer. 29:12, 13, 'And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts.' When God hath a mind to work, he sets the spirit of prayer a-work.

[2.] Christ hath put faith among the conditions required to prayer: Mat. 21:22, 'All things that ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;' or, as it is in Mark 11:24, 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' There must be a confidence of that power that we would set a-work, and of God's will and goodness to pity and relieve us. As things are tendered to us in the promise, so are we bound to believe and pray for them, and no otherwise; for the word of promise is the measure, ground, and foundation of prayer. And as to the promise of temporal things, it is either personal or common. Personal; so God absolutely promised to some of his servants to give them temporal blessings, so absolutely to be believed and prayed for. So he promised to Abraham to multiply his seed as the sand on the seashore, Gen. 22:17; and this promise Abraham was to believe with an absolute faith, whatever difficulties there were to the contrary, Rom. 4:18–21. God promised David the kingdom, and anointed him by Samuel, but for a long time he was kept in a private and perplexed condition, yet bound to be confident. So God promised Paul the life of all that were with him in the ship, Acts 27:25, therefore in the greatest difficulties he encouraged his companions: 'Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.' But the common promise of the blessings of this life is not absolute, but shall be dispensed to us as it shall be for God's glory and our good, and

therefore are not to be absolutely asked nor absolutely expected from God. So the saints express themselves about these things: Joel 2:14, 'Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat-offering and a drink-offering unto the Lord?' God will hold us in suspense about these things, and try our godliness and submission. But yet though there be uncertainty about particular blessings, we must always pray in faith. It is one thing to believe for certain that God will grant our petition with this condition, if the grant be for his glory and our good, and another thing to believe absolutely that he will not deny the particular thing we ask of him, without such exception and reservation. Of the former, we must be persuaded in all our petitions; of the latter, we cannot be confident; there we can only say, Who knoweth but that God may do it for us? for it is not for us to determine what is most conducing to the glory of God, or profitable for us; all must be left to our heavenly Father, upon whose good pleasure all our happiness dependeth. We must be persuaded of his all-sufficiency, refer it to his goodness, as not to be troubled about it.

[3.] To the manner the end also belongeth, that the prayer be directed to his glory: James 4:3, 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.'

III. I shall speak of God's answer, and the success of our prayers; and there are several distinctions and considerations.

1. Sometimes God giveth an answer presently, at other times after some competent space of time; as Cornelius at the time of prayer, Acts 10:3, and while the duty is a-doing, an angel was sent to him at the ninth hour to assure him his prayers were heard. The ninth hour was the usual time of prayer: Acts 3:1, 'Now Peter and John went up to pray at the ninth hour.' So Daniel, chap. 9:20, 21, 'And while I was

speaking and praying and confessing my sin, yea, whilst I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.' The Lord is ready to answer the prayers of his servants in the very instant of praying. So Acts 4:31, 'While they prayed they were filled with the Holy Ghost.' The cases were singular and extraordinary as to the token and manner of assurance; but as to the substance of the blessing, it is the common practice of God's free grace: Isa. 58:10, 'When they call, I will answer; when they pray, I will say, Here am I;' Isa. 65:24, 'While they are speaking, I will hear.' The company that was met to pray while Peter was in prison were heard at the time, Acts 12:12, 13; God sent Peter to them.

2. Sometimes a good while after. The prayers are upon record in God's book: Mal. 3:16, 'A book of remembrance was written before him.' This God doth to exercise our faith, to believe what we see not. Nay, God will hear them, though they know not the way how nor time when: Micah 7:7, 'Therefore I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me.' And to try our patience; for he saith, 'I will wait for the God of my salvation.' Though he doth not grant as soon as the prayer is made, yet we must believe what we see not, and wait for what we have not. Paul prayed thrice, 2 Cor. 12:8. God taketh his own time for despatch. Abraham prayed for a child, but many years he goeth childless.

2dly. Consider the several ways how God giveth answer to his people's prayers.

1. Extraordinarily; so in ancient time, as an angel was sent to Cornelius, to Daniel, to Abel by fire, Heb. 11:4, to Abraham by vision, to Saul by oracle.

2. Ordinarily, and so several ways.

[1.] By granting the mercy prayed for; as to Hannah: 1 Sam. 1:27, 'For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me the petition that I asked of him.' So to David: Ps. 21:2, 'Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withheld the requests of his lips.' So often to his people, when they have humbly sought to him, he giveth them the very blessing they ask.

[2.] By giving in spiritual manifestations of his grace to the soul, though he doth not give the particular mercy prayed for; as when upon prayer he reviveth the soul of him that prayeth: Job 33:26, 'He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy;' Ps. 138:3, 'In the day when I cried unto thee, thou answeredst me, and didst strengthen me with strength in my soul.' Comfort is an answer; support is an answer: such an answer had Paul, when God told him his 'grace was sufficient for him,' 2 Cor. 12:9; when the heart is quieted, though we do not know what God will do with our requests. Hannah, when she had prayed, her heart was no more sad, 1 Sam. 1:18.

[3.] Sometimes by way of commutation and exchange. So God doth answer the prayer though he doth not give the mercy prayed for, when he giveth another thing that is as good or better for the party that prayeth; though not in kind, yet the same in weight and value. This commutation may be three ways—

(1.) In regard of the persons. David fasteth and prayeth, and humbleth his soul for his persecutors, Ps. 35:13, but it returned into his own bosom, that is, it was converted to his own benefit. His fasting had no effect upon them, but his charity did not lose its reward. David prayeth for his first child by Bathsheba, but God giveth him Solomon instead thereof, 2 Sam. 12:15. In that

supposition, 'Noah, Daniel, and Job shall save their own souls,' Ezek. 14:18. They that wished peace to a house, 'if the house was not worthy, their peace returned to them,' Luke 10:5, 6. They should have the comfort of discharging their duty.

(2.) In regard of the matter. Carnal things are begged, spiritual given; not a pompous kingdom to Israel, but the promise of the Spirit, Acts 1:6, 7. Moses would fain enter into Canaan, but God saith, Deut. 3:27, 'Let it suffice thee; speak to me no more of this matter;' would fain have a Pisgah sight, and be eased of the trouble of the wars. We would have a speedy riddance of troubles, but God thinketh it not fit; they go off by degrees. Showers that come by drops soak into the earth better than those that come by a tempest or hurricane. We ask for deliverance from troubles, and God will give courage in troubles: Lam. 3:55–57, 'I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice; hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. Thou drewest near in the day I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.' His gracious and powerful presence in trouble was enough. Christ himself 'was heard in that he feared,' Heb. 5:7; not saved from that hour, but supported and strengthened in it. Job prayed, sacrificed for his children when they were feasting, Job 1:5. God gave him patience, that he charged not God foolishly when they were destroyed, ver. 20.

(3.) In regard of means. We pray such means may not miscarry; God will use other; as Abraham would fain have Ishmael the child of promise, but the Lord intended Isaac: 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!' Gen. 17:18. God may give us our will in anger, when the thing begged turneth to our hurt. Therefore the way or kind of God's answer must be referred to his own will in all things, for which we are not to pray absolutely. And when we have discharged our duty,

and endeavoured to approve our hearts to God, take what answer he will give.

Use 1. To show us with what confidence we must pray. You must be persuaded that God will hear you according to your will or need, when you ask things agreeable to his will, and fit for you to receive in your station, and with a due subordination to his glory and the interest of his kingdom; upon other terms you should not ask anything of God. To support you, that you shall have what you ask, there are three things—(1.) God's nature; (2.) Christ's merits; (3.) The promises of the gospel.

1. God's nature. We conceive of God as wise, and powerful, and good: all encourage prayer. God's wisdom and providence: Mat. 6:8, 'Your Father knoweth what things you have need of before you ask him.' His almighty power: Eph. 3:20, 'He is able to do beyond what we can ask or think;' Mark 14:36, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee.' With these thoughts should we come into God's presence. And lastly, his goodness and love; that must not be left out: John 16:27, 'The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God.' Christ's intercession made way for us, but the Father's love prevented that. We have wrong thoughts of God if we do not think of his self-inclination to do good. His readiness to hear and forgive doth encourage poor creatures to come to him. All these things make him a God hearing prayer. And to encourage poor suppliants—

2. There is the merits and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ: Heb. 12:2, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of God;' Rom. 8:3, 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,

condemned sin in the flesh;' Heb. 9:24, 'For Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' We have a friend in court, who will join with us in the requests we make to God, whose intercession answereth to the motions of his Spirit in our hearts.

3. There are the gracious promises of the gospel, by which all necessary things are secured to us. And though the dispensation of particular blessings are reserved to God's good pleasure, yet there are certain general promises which concern us for the present, of which we may be confident; as that God will never utterly fail his people: Heb. 13:5, 'He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;' that he will dispose of all things for the best to them that love God, Rom. 8:28; that he will not leave us to insupportable difficulties, 1 Cor. 10:13. This should satisfy us.

Use 2. It teacheth us that we should look after the answers of prayer. Certainly a man that is serious and sincere in prayer will be earnest for an answer: Ps. 85:8, 'I will hear what the Lord will speak.' A gracious heart dareth not take God's name in vain, nor make prayer a vain babbling or empty prattle, but will be listening and hearkening after news from heaven: Ps. 5:3, 'I will pray and look up.' Watch to see what cometh. Foolish boys, that knock at a door in wantonness, will not stay till somebody cometh to open to them; but a man that hath business will knock, and knock again, till he gets his answer. To people that consider not what they do, whose prayers are the sacrifices of fools, they throw away their prayers, and never look after them, what cometh of it? but they that are in earnest, and are persuaded God heareth them, will wait for an answer. We should the rather do this—

1. Because answers of prayer are notable confirmations of faith concerning the truth of God's being and promises: Ps. 65:2, 'Oh, thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come;' Ps. 18:30, 'The word of the Lord is a tried word; he is a buckler to all that trust in him;' Ps. 138:2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' They see this is the God to be prayed unto, these promises to be trusted in; that this God will not fail those that seek him, and depend upon him. Now we should seek confirmation from experience, as a rebuke and check to that atheism that still remaineth in us.

2. Excitements to love and obedience. Nothing increaseth our love to God as to see he is mindful of us upon all occasions, especially in our deep necessities: Ps. 116:1, 'I will love the Lord, for he hath heard the voice of my supplications.' Every answer of prayer is a special instance of God's love to us, and so it begets love to God again; it is as new fuel to increase the fire.

3. Encouragements to pray again: Ps. 116:2, 'Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' The throne of grace will not be neglected by them that have found good success there; they see there is mercy and help to be found. As one adventure in point of traffic succeeding well encourageth another, so is the success of duty: Ps. 32:6, 'For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.' From David's ready audience and despatch.

4. God will lose much honour, praise, and thanksgiving, if we do not regard his answers: Ps. 50:15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me;' Col. 4:2, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.' We are to gather matter of praise to God; as the intercourse between heaven and earth is maintained by vapours and showers, so is commerce between God

and us carried on by donatives and duties, by holy prayers and God's gracious answers.

SERMON XXIX

Because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.—1 JOHN 3:22.

I COME now to the second thing, the character and property of a good conscience. Here are two expressions, one relating to the matter of our obedience, the other to the end.

1. The matter, 'Because we keep his commandments.'
2. The end and aim, 'And do those things which are pleasing in his sight.'

Doct. That those have a gospel good conscience who keep God's commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight.

Here I shall inquire—

1. What it is to keep God's commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.
2. How this is a gospel conscience; what could the law require more?
3. How this doth constitute a good and quiet conscience, free us from fears of being rejected, and give us hopes of being accepted with God.

I. What it is. The first expression is to keep the commandments of God. Here we must open two things—

- (1.) Commandments; (2.) Keep; the object, and the act.

First, The commandments that must be kept; and they are of several sorts.

1. Moral and evangelical; so it is explained in the next verse, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.' Love is our primitive holiness, faith belongeth to our recovery. Not only the moral law is the rule of our duty, but the gospel also; faith is commanded: John 6:29, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' Sin is not our work at all; the affairs of the world are our by work. Particular duties are subordinate to the great duty of the gospel, not our main work, nor must be gone about. So repentance is commanded: Acts 17:30, 'He hath commanded all men everywhere to repent.' At your peril will it be if you refuse this grace. Gospel obedience falleth under a command; it is not an indifferent thing, whether we will accept the remedy, yea or no. Moral duties are evident by natural light. Remedial and gospel duties depend upon a positive institution, though highly reconcilable to natural light.

2. First-table and second-table duties; as faith in Jesus Christ, and love to one another. We must make conscience of all duties we owe to God and men: Acts 24:16, 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.' There is a first table and a second; some are very punctual in dealing with men, but neglectful of God. But both tables are owned from heaven, Rom. 1:18. Some will not wrong men of a farthing, but stick not to rob God of all that fear, love, trust, delight, which is due to him. They will not defile their bodies with open uncleanness, but commit it in their hearts; they condemn the rebellion of Absalom, yet disobey their heavenly Father. No murderers, but strike at the being of God; are tender of men's good name and reputations, but dishonour and take the name of God in vain. Others are much in worship, but

unconscionable in their dealings with men; will not swear an oath, but are very uncharitable, censuring their brethren without pity and remorse. This is the fashion of the world, to be in with one duty and out with another. The commandments are introduced by this preface, 'God spake all these words,' Exod. 20:1. He that hath enjoined the one hath enjoined the other; but as the echo rendereth but part of the speech, so do we in our returns of obedience. God spake all, and we return but a part.

3. Smaller as well as greater duties: Mat. 5:19, 'Whosoever shall break the least of these commandments, and teach men so to do, shall be least in the kingdom of heaven.' God counteth his authority despised, and the commandments and obligatory power of his law to be made void by him that shall either in doctrine or practice count any transgression of his law so light and venial as not to be stood upon, or as if it were a trifle to be so nice and exact as not to make conscience of petty things, such as vain thoughts, light words, or passionate speeches. Deceit of heart is found on both sides. Some are apt to say, 'It is but a little one, and my soul shall live,' as Lot of Zoar. No sin is little that is committed against the great God; and it argueth the more wickedness to break with God upon every trifling occasion. A little force will make a heavy body move downward, because it is its natural motion. Others are apt to stand much upon lesser things. John 18:28, the Jews would not enter into the judgment-hall lest they should be defiled, yet at that very time they sought the life of the Lord of glory. Hypocrites make a great business about small matters, wherein the flesh and self have some special interest, when the weighty common duties are little valued, relished, or insisted on; by-matters, and the more uncertain points which self hath espoused, are contended for with all zeal and earnestness: Mat. 23:23. They reject the weighty things of the law, such as faith and love; judgment and mercy are omitted, while they tithe mint, anise, and cummin; like

one that cometh into a shop to buy a pennyworth, and stealeth a pound's worth, or pays a small debt, that he may run deeper into the creditor's books, and so deceive him of a greater sum.

4. Commandments that require public and private duties; to fail in either consists not with sincerity. In times of trouble many content themselves if their hearts be right: 2 Cor. 7:1, 'Cleanse yourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit.' The libertines in Corinth did so. It is no matter whether they own God publicly, or, if they will, yet, to gratify their neighbours, go to an idol-feast; as if a wife should prostitute her body, and pretend that she keepeth her heart loyal to her husband. Others make a fair show to the world, but in their family converse are loose and careless. David saith, Ps. 101:2, 'I will walk in my house with a perfect heart.' If a man be truly holy, he will show it at home as well as abroad, in his family where his constant converse is; yea, in his closet and secret retirements. A christian is alike everywhere, because God is alike everywhere. We strain ourselves to make our best appearance in public, God will be served with our uttermost in private also.

5. There are commands concerning the government both of the inward and outward man. We must make conscience of both, or else our conscience is not a good conscience: Isa. 55:7, 'Let the sinner forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.' Not only make conscience of our way or our outward actions, but also of our thoughts, and the secret operations of our hearts: James 4:8, 'Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.' As we should not do evil before men, so not think evil before the holy God; for those things fall under a law as well as the overt acts.

6. There are some commandments we have no great temptation to break, others that lie more cross to our humours and interests; therefore not some or many must be kept, but all. A sanctified judgment must approve all, a sanctified will choose all, as justly good, necessary, and profitable for us; and in our endeavours we must obey all: Rom. 7:12, 'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good.' The law in general, and that commandment which had wrought such tragical effects in his heart, it is all good, how contrary soever to our natural or perverse inclinations. If we set up a toleration in our hearts, we are not sincere: Ps. 66:18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me;' that is, if he did cherish it, and secretly foster it. There is something wherein you would be excused by God, and expect favour from him. A man that would keep out the cold in winter shutteth all his doors and windows, yet the wind will creep in, though he doth not leave any open hole for it. We must reserve no sin; some will remain after the best care and caution. Therefore we must not obey God in some things, and break with him in others, 'Nor trust to our own righteousness and commit iniquity,' Ezek. 33:13. If the bosom sin be not weakened, your whole righteousness is called in question: Ps. 18:23, 'I was upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity.' There are some sins most incident to us by temper of body, course of life, or carnal interests. Now we should mainly cross that sin which is most pleasing, and dry up that unclean issue that runneth upon us. Thus for the object.

Secondly, The act, 'Keep;' that noteth two things—(1.) The inward respect which we have to God's laws; (2.) The outward action or course of life which results from this.

1. The inward respect which we have to God's laws in our memories, consciences, and affections: Prov. 3:1, 'Let thine heart keep my

commandments.' The heart keepeth them when we keep them in mind so as to understand them; in memory, so as not to neglect them, but have them ready at every turn; in heart and affection, so as to stand in awe of them: Prov. 13:13, 'Whosoever feareth the commandment, shall be rewarded;' Ps. 119:161, 'My heart standeth in awe of thy word.' I dare not do anything against it, yea, do delight in it: Ps. 119:14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies more than in all riches;' Ps. 40:8, 'I delight to do thy will, O God; thy law is in my heart.' The great new covenant blessing is to write the law in the heart and mind: Heb. 8:10, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them upon their hearts.' Not only a simple approbation, but a delight, or a ready inclination to do them. Now if we shall rise up in rebellion against our convictions, and offer violence to inclination and conscience, we grossly break God's law, as in all heinous sins we do: 2 Sam. 12:9, 'Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?' An inward contempt or disrespect of the commandment maketh the sin more heinous.

2. The outward observance of them: Ps. 119:5, 'Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!' It is the business of our lives to live according to this direction: John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them;' where keeping is distinguished from having. The commands of God were not given us to talk of or think on, but to do them: Deut. 12:32, 'Whatsoever I command you, observe to do it.' Do not gaze on it, think it an excellent thing to do so, but set about the practice.

Secondly, The next notion whereby the good conscience is expressed is this, 'And do those things which are pleasing in his sight.' This implieth many things.

1. That it be our design and scope to approve ourselves to God: 2 Cor. 5:9, 'Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' This is the end that we propound to ourselves, what is your mind principally set upon? The end which you design and endeavour, the pleasing and glorifying of God, and the everlasting fruition of him, or the pleasing of your fleshly minds in the fruition of any inferior things? That is your end which you love most, which pleases you best, and would do most for, and can least want. The people of God are described to be those that 'choose the things which please him, and take hold of his covenant,' Isa. 56:4. They do not live at random without an aim, nor do good by chance, but by choice. He that is false at first setting out can never hold out with God.

2. This is not only their choice, but the tenor and course of their lives. Enoch, that walked with God, is said to have this testimony, that he pleased God, Heb. 11:5, with Gen. 5:24. The Septuagint read it, they are sincere and uniform in their obedience to him. Every day you must reckon with yourselves, Have you complied with your great end? What have I done, or what have I been doing? have I pleased or displeased God?

3. It is not in a few things, but in all: Col. 1:10, 'Walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing;' not in with one duty and out with another, for that is to please ourselves, not to please God; or to please men, not to obey our rule.

4. We must every day be more exact in our walking and care to please God, and that no offence or breach may arise between him and us: 1 Thes. 4:1, 'As you have received of us how to walk and to please God, so you would abound therein more and more.' You never please God so much but you may please him better, and he expecteth more from

you the more you are acquainted with him. One that is newly put to service is raw at first, but afterwards he groweth more handy and fit for his work; so you must first outgrow your weaknesses if you think to please God, and grow more exact in the spiritual life.

5. If there be anything more pleasing to God than another, your main care must be about those things; as, for instance, it is mighty pleasing to God that you should seek grace rather than greatness, and direction in your duty rather than worldly honour: 1 Kings 3:10, the speech 'pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.' Surely it is more pleasing to God that we should pray from the spirit than from the flesh, not seeking great things for ourselves, but that we may have grace to discharge our duties to God. So that in our duty we should mind the substantials of religion rather than rituals: Rom. 14:17, 18, 'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; for he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.' That in the substantials of religion we should not leave out the duties of the second table, as faithfulness in our relations. The scripture instanceth in the duties of parents and children; of children's duty to parents: Col. 3:20, 'For this is well-pleasing unto God.' Duties of liberality and mercy to all men: Heb. 13:16, 'For to do good and to communicate forget; not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' Not only careful of justice, but also of mercy. Now it is a shame that, when christians hear these things are so pleasing to God, they should not set about them. Esau took his bow to seek savoury meat for his father when he desired it.

II. But how is this a gospel conscience? What could the law require more?

Ans. 1. We consider this with respect to fallen man, who entereth upon this course of new obedience as one delivered and recovered by Christ, and put into a capacity again to obey and please God: Luke 1:74, 75, 'That being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life;' and Eph. 4:24, 'The new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness.' We suppose him as redeemed by Christ, and renewed by his Holy Spirit. Take either expression; the first, 'because we keep his commandments.' We receive these commandments out of the hand of a mediator, whose power and right to command is not destructive of our former duty, but accumulative; the debt of duty ceased not by man's sin, but will remain while there is a relation between the Creator and the creature; but this is a power superadded to the former, and is more comfortable and beneficial to us, that Christ would set us in joint again, and put us into a capacity of obeying God. It is a blessed thing to take a law of duty out of the hand of a mediator; for he hath not only obliged us by his great love in dying for us, but provided both for our assistance and acceptance, whilst by the Spirit of Christ we have Christ to help us, and work all our works for us and in us, and give 'Grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,' Heb. 12:28. And the more we use this grace, the more it is increased upon us; but we have also his righteousness, by virtue of which we are accepted with God: Eph. 1:6, 'Who hath accepted us in the Beloved.' God will help us in our duty, and will accept of it as we can perform it. For the second expression, 'And do the things that please him.' God is first placandus then placendus, first appeased towards us and then pleased with us; appeased by the satisfaction of Christ, which is imputed to none but those that are converted and justified by faith: Rom. 5:8, 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God.' Till we have an interest in the great sin-offering which was offered for the whole congregation of the elect, God will not accept of a thank—

offering at our hands, nor be pleased with anything we do in particular duties, while we neglect the general duty of returning to God by Christ: Heb. 11:6, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' None can please God, then, but those that are regenerated by the Spirit, and reconciled to him by Christ.

2. These duties are done in a gospel-like manner, out of love to God, or a sense of that wonderful grace which is showed us in Christ: 2 Cor. 5:14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' They are done as out of thankfulness and that great love which we owe to God; the cord which binds our duty upon us is not terror but love. It is said, 1 John 2:5, 'Whoso keepeth his commandments, in him verily is the love of God perfected;' that is, hath produced its proper effect. Faith is the means, love is the end; and obedience is the proper fruit and effect of love. Faith is physic, love is health, and the more perfect it is the sounder christians we are. Now the perfection and strength of love is seen in new obedience; so that here is a gospel spirit, and a gospel good conscience, when we study and endeavour to please God.

3. This keeping the commandments and pleasing of God is accepted where there is a cordial and hearty endeavour to do so, though our success in every point be not answerable. It is not unsinning obedience only which the new covenant accepteth, but sincere obedience; by sin we are disabled from an exact keeping of the commandments, but by grace we are accepted, if there be an upright heart unfeignedly bent and heartily endeavouring to please God in all things. Grace doth not perfectly produce its acts, yet it doth produce them, and that in such a degree as hypocrites cannot attain to. It is their constant care to avoid all known sin, and allow themselves in the neglect of no duty; now such are pardoned and accepted with God: Ps. 32:1, 2, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord

imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' And have all manner of blessings bestowed upon them: Prov. 11:20, 'Such as are upright in their way are his delight;' Ps. 18:25, 'With an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.'

III. The reasons why this doth constitute a good and quiet conscience.

1. Because then our hearts will not disprove our confidence grounded on the new covenant, which accepteth the upright. Certainly the upright are within the compass of the blessing of the covenant. That is so obvious a truth, that it needeth not much confirmation. When God came to covenant with Abraham, Gen. 17:1, he saith to him, 'I am God all-sufficient; walk thou before me and be thou perfect;' that is, upright and sincere, as the word also signifieth, and is noted in the margin. That was the condition required of him. An absolute perfection human frailty doth not admit, and an impossible condition maketh the covenant void in the making, and so the transaction would be to no purpose. So elsewhere all the blessings of the covenant are entailed upon the upright: Ps. 84:11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Once more, eternal happiness shall be their portion: Ps. 140:13, 'The upright shall dwell in thy presence.' Besides all the testimonies of God's love granted to the believer, he shall have everlasting fellowship with God in the world to come. David asketh the question, Ps. 15:1, 2, 'Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart;' that is, if I should take the boldness to interrogate thee, who art the Lord of heaven and earth, who shall be rewarded with eternal bliss hereafter? the answer certainly will be this, He that walketh uprightly, he, and none but he, that goeth on in

a course of uniform and steady obedience, that doeth all things sincerely and in the sight of God; he it is that shall be accepted and admitted, not out of any worthiness in himself, but from. God's love and promise to dwell everlastingly with him.

2. This walking uprightly comprehendeth true faith, and cheerful obedience to God's commandments; that is to be righteous and upright: 'To walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,' Luke 1:6; for a care to avoid all known sin, and make conscience of all known duty, is certainly uprightness. It doth not imply a total exemption from sin, but an allowance of none; they mourn for it, strive against it, and prevail so far that the contrary principle groweth, and doth mostly and generally command and influence their conversations. Grace getteth the upper hand, not for a fit, but habitually; therefore such may with comfort come to God, and have no reason to question their acceptance with him, for they are conscious to themselves of their faithfulness to God, and sincere desire to walk in his ways; their own hearts do not reproach them, and God will not refuse them: Ps. 119:6, 'Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.' No cause to be afraid or ashamed to come to him; there is enough to humble, but not to discourage them, for their hearts do acquit them of any allowance of sin or breach of God's law.

3. It is the true trial and proof of our sincere love to Christ, and therefore we may have confidence towards God, and this confidence, 'That what we ask we shall receive of him,' under the cautions and restrictions forementioned. I shall prove this argument by these considerations.

[1.] That true faith in Christ breedeth sincere love to God: Gal. 4:6, 'Faith worketh by love.' The true office of faith is to persuade the soul

of the astonishing wonders of God's love shown in the redemption by Christ: 'We have known and believed the love that God hath to us,' 1 John 4:16. And why? Not only that we may gaze on it with amazement, but 'that we may love him again who loved us first,' ver. 19. That this love may make a due impression upon us, and melt us into all love and respect to God, who pitied us in our lost estate, and provided so full and costly a remedy for us. The gospel is an art or science to teach us to love God.

[2.] That the true proof of our love to God is our keeping his commandments, and doing the things which are pleasing in his sight. For God's love is a love of bounty, ours a love of duty, a studying to please God according to his will: 1 John 5:3, 'This is love, to keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous;' John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' That is the love of Christ. It is a lazy love that only talketh of the great things he hath done for us, but doeth nothing for God again, or languisheth in complaints after sensible consolations. No; do your duty; love must be laborious, not idle, and one cannot be better employed than in doing those things which he hath given us in charge.

[3.] Obedience, as it is an evidence of our love to Christ, so it is a means of keeping up the sense and assurance of his love to us: John 15:10, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, as I kept the Father's commandments, and abode in his love.' It is holy walking is a means that will not delude us, but give us a large share in his heart and love. God delighteth to vouchsafe the testimonies of his love and well-pleas'dness with us: John 14:15, 'Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.' There is a double-tried friend, actively, passively. Actively, you show yourselves friends to Christ when to the uttermost of your power you set yourselves to do what he

hath commanded. Passively, he will show himself a friend to you; ye shall be dealt with as friends; I will reckon you as friends; all the world shall see I love you; I will bountifully reward and gratify you: John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be beloved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him;' ver. 23, '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.' God delights to manifest himself to such, to own them, to bestow peculiar marks of favour upon them.

[4.] Among other rewards of love and faithful obedience, this is one, the audience and acceptance of their prayer. In his providential government, internal or external, God doth many ways own them, by his gracious presence, counselling, directing, quickening them: John 8:29, 'And he that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him.' By mollifying the hearts of enemies: Prov. 8:17, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.' By the comforts of his Spirit, and shedding abroad his love in their hearts that love Christ: Prov. 16:7, 'I love them that love me.' By peace of conscience; for the fruit of righteousness is peace. By entertainment of them in all their approaches to God: Isa. 64:5, 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.' God showeth abundance of kindness to them in the course of his providential government, but chiefly in assisting and accepting their prayers; so that 'whatever we ask we receive, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.' All the rest tend to this, and this is often promised in the word, and the contrary threatened to those who pretend love to God, but do not keep his commandments: Ps. 37:4, 'Delight thyself also in the Lord,

and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart;' Prov. 10:24, 'The desire of the righteous shall be granted.'

Use 1. Is information, to show us the necessity of obedience, if we would keep a good conscience and be accepted with God. All the prayers of men that continue in their sins are but like bribes; the gifts of enemies are giftless: Prov. 21:27, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he bringeth it with an evil mind?' However he bringeth it, there is some perverse aim in his worship, that God should prosper him in his sins.

2. That in the christian religion there is true genuine holiness, because it is derived from the highest fountain, the Spirit of Christ; and it is carried on in conformity to the highest rule and pattern, the will of God; and designed to the noblest end, the pleasing, glorifying, and enjoying of God; all this must needs breed peace. So is the gospel good conscience described in the text. First, The highest fountain; for we obey as redeemed and renewed: Titus 3:5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' As changed in our natures, and made like God: John 3:6, 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;' 2 Peter 1:4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.' Secondly, The highest rule, the will of God or his commandments. He doth not only do what he commandeth, but because he commandeth, intuitu voluntatis: 1 Thes. 4:3, 'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification;' 1 Peter 2:15, 'For so is the will of God;' 1 Thes. 5:18, 'For this is the will of God concerning you.' We have the best warrant for peace and assurance, the command and will of the most high God. And, thirdly, the highest end, the pleasing God, glorifying and

enjoying God: 1 Cor. 10:31, 'Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.'

Use 2. To persuade you to holiness in keeping the commandments and pleasing of God; we have many arguments.

1. From the authority of God: Ps. 119:4, 'Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.' It is a course imposed upon us by the sovereign Lawgiver, upon whom you depend every moment; and he will not be baffled and affronted.

2. The equity of the precepts: Rom. 7:12, 'The commandments are holy, just, and good.' They carry a great evidence and suitableness to the reasonable nature; so that if man were well in his wits, he would choose obedience to these laws rather than liberty.

3. The possibility of keeping these commandments, and of pleasing God, by the grace purchased by Christ: Heb. 13:21, 'Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight.' The rule is the will of God. This will is observed when we do every good work; this done is pleasing unto God.

4. Consider the profitableness of obedience, and how much it conduceth to our good: Deut. 13:10, 'To keep the commandments of God and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good.' Our labour is not lost or misspent. A godly course is refreshed by many sweet experiences for the present, and will bring in a full reward for the future: Ps. 119:56, 'This I had because I kept thy precepts.'

SERMON XXX

And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.—1 JOHN 3:23.

THE apostle instanceth what commandments we should observe if we would keep a good conscience. Two are mentioned—faith in Christ, and an unfeigned love to the brethren; both are introduced by a preface suitable to the occasion. Therefore I shall first explain the preface; secondly, the particular duties mentioned.

First, In the preface take notice—

1. Of the unity, agreement, and fair accord between these duties; though two duties are mentioned, yet but one commandment.

2. The excellency of them, 'His commandment.'

1. The unity and agreement between gospel duties. He had said 'commandments' in the former verse; and here are two duties specified, yet these are not 'his commandments,' but 'his commandment,' a change of numbers often used by the sacred writers. The whole gospel is but one commandment: 1 Tim. 1:5, 'The end of the commandment is charity;' that is, of the gospel institution.

2. The excellency; this is the commandment which is signalled by Christ's authority, and expressly charged on us, and to which other duties are reduced. It is such an expression as you have, John 6:29, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' The context there standeth thus; thousands being fed by a miracle, many followed him for the loaves, therefore Christ telleth them of spiritual bread. He came down from heaven, not to supply hungry stomachs, but to comfort hungry consciences: 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth for ever, which

the Son of man shall give you; for him hath the Father sent.' That direction occasioned a question, What shall we do that we may labour or work the works of God? Christ answereth them, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' There is a meiosis in the expression; you talk of works, this is the work. As if a man should come to a charitable physician, Sir, I am grievously tormented with such a disease, what shall I give you for the cure? and his answer should be, This is that you shall give me, to be confident of my skill and fidelity to help you, and use the means which I prescribe for your recovery: 'This is the work of God.' So here; this is the commandment.

Secondly, The particular duties mentioned are faith in Christ and love to the brethren.

1. Faith in Jesus Christ, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. The name of Christ is Christ himself, or Christ considered as revealed in the gospel; then we believe in the name of Jesus Christ when we believe all that is revealed in the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, i.e., assent with an affiance to the doctrine concerning his person, offices, benefits, and the way how we come to attain them according to the covenant of grace. This is to believe in his name, to assent to what is said concerning his person and offices, and to consent to deal with him upon these terms, depending upon him to obtain these benefits in the appointed way. The same expression is used, John 3:18, 'Because he believeth not in the name of the Son of God.' So Acts 10:43, 'Through his name whosoever believeth on him shall receive the remission of sins.' So John 20:31, 'These things are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that, believing, ye may have life through his name;' that is, obtain salvation according to the way appointed in the scriptures or the new covenant.

2. For love: 'And love one another, as he gave commandment.' By 'one another,' he meaneth principally that christians should love one another. Christians are bound to love all men, even their enemies, Mat. 5:44. Yet seeing God is to be loved chiefly, and others in subordination to him, as Mat. 22:38, 39, it followeth that those ought to have most of our love who love God most, and are most beloved of him, and are made partakers of the divine nature, and resemble God most. But not only the duty, but the manner is here enforced: 'As he hath given us commandment;' and that is, that when the case requireth it, we must lay down our lives for the brethren: John 13:34, 'A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another.' There is the substance of the duty, and then it followeth, 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' There is the manner again: John 15:12, 13, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you: greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;' meaning thereby, not only to commend his own love to us, to heighten our gratitude, but also to commend his example to us, and to heighten our charity and love to the brethren.

Doct. That faith in Christ and brotherly love are things intimately conjoined, and must always go together.

1. I shall speak of the nature of these two graces or duties apart.

2. Show how intimately they are and must be conjoined; and there speak—(1.) Of the inseparable connection between faith and love; (2.) The order, how the one groweth out of the other, as the effect out of the cause; first faith, then love.

I. I shall speak distinctly of the graces and duties; and there—

First, Of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. A subject necessary to be treated of, because the scripture is so full in assuring pardon and life to believers, and because christians do so often ask us what that saving faith is by which they may assure their title and interest; and because a mistake in this point is of a dangerous nature. Therefore to open to you the faith by which the just do live cannot be displeasing to you. I shall do it in these considerations or propositions.

1. That faith in Christ and in his word is reckoned distinct from believing in God: John 14:1, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' We believe in God as an all—sufficient fountain of grace, and in Christ as an all—sufficient mediator, whom he hath sent to recover the lost world: John 17:3, 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' To know God as the only supreme being to be worshipped, obeyed and enjoyed, and the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as our guide, to bring us home to God, and to procure for us the benefits of pardon, and life, which life is to be begun here and perfected in heaven.

2. That Christ executeth the office of mediator as king, priest, and prophet; for he is not only said to be sent, but anointed: Acts 10:38, 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power.' As priests, prophets, and kings were used to be anointed, so was Jesus Christ anointed, thence called both Christ and Messiah, which signifieth anointed: John 20:31, 'That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;' and Acts 2:36, 'God hath made that Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ.' Now one of these offices concerneth his mediation with God, the other his mediation with men. His priesthood implieth all that good which he procureth for us by his mediation with the Father. His prophetic and kingly office concerns his mediation with us, to bring us to be partakers, and

interested in these things; both must be considered by faith: Heb. 3:1, 'Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Jesus Christ.' Though his prophetic office be there only mentioned, yet his regal must not be excluded; for all truths are not laid down in one place. Both are mentioned, Isa. 55:4, 'Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people,' i.e., prophet and king. Now we must not so reflect upon his mediation with God as to overlook his mediation with men; for a mediator is not of one, but must deal with both parties; and therefore Jesus is a saviour, not only as our ransom and surety, but also as our teacher and king. Therefore they deceive you, and understand not the nature of faith, that make it conversant about one office only, as those do that confine it to the death and righteousness of Christ, and pardon of sin, and promise of pardon; as if faith only served to comfort them with the assurance of God's love, and were but a claim and application of privileges: this is to mangle Christ and the gospel, to reflect upon his mediation with God only, and not with man. Or if there be any consideration of his mediation with man, they rend his prophetic office from his kingly, while they look only to the privileges of the covenant, do not receive Christ Jesus as the Lord, that they may be ruled by his authority, and live by his laws. Nay, in his prophetic, they abstract privileges from duties, and promises from precepts, and so do not follow the order prescribed in his word and teaching, but take up a Christ according to their own fancy, and mistake a dream for faith. No; the Christ represented to us as an object of faith is a priest who died for us, and represented his death and merit by his constant intercession, and, as the great prophet of the church, hath taught us the way of life, and as a king hath required obedience at our hands, under the promise of eternal life and the punishment of eternal death, binding us to do all that he hath required, that we may obtain the effect of his promises.

3. That the great business of the Mediator in the discharge of these offices is to recover us to God, which is done both by redemption and salvation. By redemption: 1 Peter 3:18, 'For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' Salvation: John 14:6, 'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me.' Now this is either begun or perfected; begun by regeneration and reconciliation. By regeneration: Titus 3:5, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' By reconciliation: 2 Cor. 5:19, 'To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.' And perfected in heaven, which is our complete salvation, or salvation to the uttermost: 1 Tim. 1:15, 16, 'This is a true and faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life.' Then a full and mutual complacence: we delight in God, and God in us; we love him, and God loves us; we love him perfectly, and we have the perfect reception of his love to us, and the benefits flowing thence.

4. That this grace of recovery and restoration is revealed and declared to us in the word; for the gospel word is both the means and the matter of our faith. It is the means: 'For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?' Rom. 10:17. And Christ prayeth, John 17:20, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word.' And it is the matter and object of our faith; for in the text it is said, we believe in the name of the Son of God; that is, all which is revealed concerning him in the scriptures, and the way of salvation and recovery offered by him. Christ is the object of faith, and the covenant of grace is the object of

faith, called therefore, 'The word of faith,' Rom. 10:8. Now we make a gospel to ourselves if we pitch upon benefits only or promises only; for the word of faith consists of precepts as well as promises, and requires duties as well as it offers benefits. Therefore, as we expect pardon and life from God, we must perform the duties due from us to God and man.

5. That the acts of faith are three about this word of truth, or Christ revealed therein—assent, consent, trust or dependence.

[1.] Assent to the truth of the christian doctrine, that Jesus is such as the word representeth him to be, the Christ and the Saviour of the world, who came to recover us to God: John 6:69, 'We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' This is the fundamental principle which supporteth all religion, and enliveneth all the lesser truths, that they have the greater influence upon our hearts. This begets firm adherence to Christ, whatever temptations we have to the contrary: 1 John 5:5, 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' Many have a human credulity that find no such effects, but not a cordial and hearty assent wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. They take up this opinion upon custom, education, and common inducements, but not as a divine testimony brought to us in the word, and sealed and confirmed to us by the Holy Spirit.

[2.] Consent to God's offer of Christ, that he may be our Lord and Saviour: John 1:12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe in his name;' Col. 2:6, 'And as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.' Or to the covenant of grace, called 'A receiving the word,' Acts 2:41. Accepting the benefits offered us, as our only happiness, resolving on the duties required as our constant work.

[3.] Trust or dependence on Christ, or as putting ourselves into his hands, that we may be recovered and saved from sin and punishment, and brought home to God in perfect happiness and glory: Eph. 1:11, 12, '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: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ;' 2 Tim. 1:12, 'For I know whom I believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'

6. The modification of these acts is this, that this assent, joined with consent, is cordial and hearty: Acts 8:37, 'If thou believest with all thine heart;' and both accompanied with a fiducial trust. Now this trust is practical, so as, forsaking all other things, we give up ourselves to the conduct of his word and Spirit.

[1.] It produceth mortification and self-denial. This is included in the nature of faith; for faith implieth a carrying off the heart from things visible and temporal to things spiritual, invisible, and eternal; in a recess from the world and worldly things, and an access to God and heaven: 2 Cor. 4:18, 'For we look not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal;' 1 John 5:4, 'Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' We must forsake all other happiness and hopes in confidence of God's promise through Jesus Christ; in vow and resolution, as soon as we believe; actually, when anything in the world is inconsistent with our duty to Christ and fidelity to him: Mat. 13:45, 46, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it;' Luke 14:33, 'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all

he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' You cannot continue constant in the profession of Christ, nor uniformly perform the duties he requireth of you, unless your hearts be weaned from the world. Christ propoundeth the true happiness, to draw us off from the false happiness. Our accepting the one is a kind of quitting the other, or a lessening of it at least in our esteem, as a thing unworthy to come in competition with Christ or the benefits offered by him, or to obstruct the duty we owe to him.

[2.] A devoting and giving up ourselves to the conduct of his word and Spirit. Certainly all those that believe in the Son of God put themselves into his hands, taking his will for the rule of their lives and actions, and look to be kept by his power unto salvation: 2 Cor. 8:5, 'And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.' His word is their rule: Gal. 6:16, 'As many as walk according to this rule.' His Spirit their guide: Rom. 8:14, 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God.' His precepts show their duty, and by the strength of his Spirit they perform it; so that faith in the Son of God is such a trusting ourselves in his hands as begets fidelity to him. Faith and faithfulness are nearer akin than so, and we must trust Christ if we mean to be true to him. We have sincerity enough in the promise, and fidelity enough in the thing promised.

Secondly, Love to the brethren is the next thing to be opened: 'That ye love one another, as he gave commandment.'

1. There must be an internal affection. He doth not only press us to do good to one another, but to love one another. A real love there must be, otherwise the most glorious actions are insignificant as to our acceptance with God: 1 Cor. 13:1–3. A sincere love there must be to them for God's sake, for the goodness he hath endued them with,

and for the service they may do him, or the relation they have to him as creatures or children; not for our own sakes, to barter courtesies with them. A selfish man can faithfully love none but himself, for he loveth all others for himself.

2. The persons; we must 'love one another.' We are to love all things with respect to God, his natural image in all his creatures, and his moral and spiritual image in his children. There is a love to every one without exception to whom there is an opportunity offered of doing them good. When the wounded man was passed by by the priest and Levite, the Samaritan performed the office of a neighbour; and Christ biddeth us go and do likewise, Luke 10:36, 37. But because love to our neighbour supposeth love to God, and floweth from it as a stream from a fountain, therefore chiefly to the children of God: 1 John 5:1, 'Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments;' 1 John 4:21, 'This commandment we have from him, that he that loveth God, loveth his brother also.' We ought not to live to ourselves only, but for the benefit of one another, especially of our fellow-christians.

3. For the manner of exercising this love, it must be in a self-denying way; it is a Christ-like love, not only as we should love ourselves, but as Christ hath loved us; that is, to seek their benefit with our own loss. In two things Christ showed his self-denial—in washing his disciples' feet, and dying for sinners. By the first he taught us that, if we may be serviceable to one another, we should stoop to the meanest offices, John 13:3, 4. Surely this is more binding upon us who are all mutual servants to one another, as being fellow-members of one body, 1 Cor. 12:25, 26; therefore we ought to employ ourselves in all the duties of love to our neighbour, though never so mean and never so laborious. The apostle speaketh of the labour of love, Heb.

6:10. Though it be laborious and irksome to the flesh, yet the will and love of God must sweeten it. The apostle saith, Gal. 5:13, 14, 'By love serve one another, for all the law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Love will make us stoop to the meanest duties, to the meanest persons. The other example is in dying for sinners; so ought we to love the brethren at the dearest rates: 1 John 3:16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' To prefer their good before our conveniencies and natural desires, especially where their spiritual good and the glory of God is concerned; but alas! few know how to prefer God's glory and their neighbour's good before the fulfilling their own fleshly lusts.

4. The fruits of this love are usually seen in giving and forgiving; giving or parting with our estates for their relief: this I largely pleaded, verse the 17th; and it is elsewhere pleaded from Christ's example: 2 Cor. 8:9, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty you might be made rich.' And he telleth them that this he said to prove the sincerity of their love; if love be hearty, it will discover itself this way. So in forgiving, Eph. 4:32, 'Forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' God hath forgiven greater miscarriages and disingenuities, Mat. 18.; therefore we must forgive with a readiness to do all duties of love and kindness to those that have done the wrong; yea, none of us are so free from infirmities but that we need forgiveness ourselves, not only from God but men.

II. How these are conjoined, faith in Christ, and love to the brethren. And here, first, Of the connection, secondly, Of the order.

First, The connection. There is another sum and abridgment of the commandments given by Christ: Mat. 22:36, 37, 'Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' Other things are mentioned by another apostle: Acts 20:21, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' All have their use, for they speak accommodately to their purpose; Christ of the sum of the law given by Moses, Paul of the sum of evangelical doctrine or covenant, John with respect to the purpose of his exhortation: he might have reduced the sum of the gospel to one head, faith in Christ; yet for more distinct explication's sake includeth love also; and this not without good reason, for these things are often coupled in scripture: Col. 1:4, 'Since we heard of your faith in Jesus Christ, and the love which you have to all the saints.' So Eph. 1:15, 'After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints;' 2 Thes. 1:3, 'Your faith groweth exceedingly, and your love towards each other aboundeth.' But above all, 2 Tim. 1:3, 'Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.' Now this connection must be always observed.

1. With respect to our own personal safety and the good of the church. Faith relateth more to our personal benefit: justification, Rom. 5:1, 'Being justified by faith;' sanctification, Acts 15:9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith;' salvation, 1 Peter 1:9, 'Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.' Love to the good of others, that we may have a tender care of the duty, honour, and prosperity of Christ's church. We are to build up ourselves in our most holy faith; and we are also to love and edify the body, which is by love, and that which every joint supplieth, Eph. 4:16. Surely their welfare should be regarded as your own. Love is called by the apostle,

Col. 3:14, 'The bond of perfection.' Love is the tie and bond which knitteth all the members of the church together, that their several gifts and graces may be employed for the public, whereas otherwise they serve for mutual prejudice. Without love we should, as a besom unbound, fall to pieces; there would be no peace and safety, but only malice and reviling, and that too often mingled with our worship.

2. This connection is necessary, that grace may be found saving and sincere; for faith without love is dead, James 2:17; and love without faith is no saving grace, but a natural inclination, but a little good nature: so that faith and love are in a manner the rivals of a christian, without which he cannot walk; and if any one be wanting, the other is dead and withered.

Second, For the order, first faith, then love; for faith produceth love, and the cause is before the effect. Faith apprehending the love of God in Christ, inflameth the heart in love to God again; and then we keep his commandments, and love other things for God's sake, Gal. 5:6. When faith hath kindled in our souls love to God, then we love God above all, we shall love God in all, and that most which hath most of God. Surely if you love God as God, it will teach you to love the brethren; the example of God's love in Christ will make some impression upon you, and you will love all that belongeth to God in the world.

Use 1. To reprove those that do little regard the planting, growth, or exercise of faith and love; you are not truly subject to God if you decline any of his commandments, much more if you neglect the great commandments of faith and love.

1. By many faith is little minded, believing in Christ is a mystical truth. Moral obedience is evident by natural light; for the law was written on the hearts of men, Rom. 2:14, as well as in the book of

God. Things seen by a double medium are greater. We are not sensible of the evil of unbelief, as we are of immoralities; but now the gospel is confirmed by the Spirit, it is a great sin: John 16:9, 'Of sin, because they believe not on me;' and a dangerous sin: Mark 16:16, 'He that believeth not shall be damned;' John 3:18, 19, 'He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' A double condemnation; we are under condemnation already; the sentence of the law is not reversed till we believe in Christ, it is ratified in the gospel court if we refuse the remedy. Now Christ is come into the world, sufficiently revealed to be Lord and Saviour by the gospel, confirmed by miracles; therefore, this is a business of greater necessity than is usually minded or thought of.

2. And so love to the brethren is very rare: many are quite strangers to it, the best are very imperfect in it; witness the cruelties and frauds that are practised in the world, and the unmercifulness that christians use one to another upon all occasions. Alas! we that should be plentiful in doing good to one another, can hardly live quietly one by another; we that should pardon injuries, offer them, and instead of turning the other cheek to the smiter, we smite ourselves, as if we did bid defiance to all Christ's laws and counsels. We live as if he commanded us to be treacherous, envious, hurtful, designing others' ruin and destruction, and forbidding us to be tender-hearted, compassionate, ready to help and to do good to one another; as if love were too much recommended to us, and were known better by slandering, reviling, and backbiting, rather than by tenderness of each other's welfare and reputation; as if Christ had said, By this

shall all men know that ye are my disciples, not because you love, but because ye hate one another.

Use 2. To exhort us to be tender of this double commandment.

1. Believing in the name of the Son of God; charge it on yourselves as your work when you are sinning, This is none of my business or work. The work of God is to believe in him whom he hath sent; that we should recover out of sin by Christ, and abandon it more and more, not live in the practice of it. When you are hunting after the world, or indulging carnal pleasures, this is not your work. God and heaven are the great objects faith is conversant about, and Christ is the means to bring me thither; nay, other duties are not the commandment, for without faith all is nothing; for in vain do men busy themselves about particular duties when they neglect the main, Heb. 11:6. This, if sincere, draweth other things along with it; faith is the first stone in the spiritual building, 2 Peter 1:5, 6; faith is at the bottom of all: he that is to entertain a king will make reckoning of his train. All the privileges depend on this, pardoned, sanctified, Acts 26:18; glorified, John 3:16; communion with Christ, Eph. 3:17. All blessings, Mat. 15:28. God is at liberty to do for us what we desire; otherwise tied up by his own methods and instituted order: Mark 6:5, 'And he could do no mighty work there because of their unbelief.'

Let it be your constant work, 1 John 5:13. No men believe so much but they may believe more; and the more you grow in faith the more you please God and honour him: Rom. 4:20, 'Being strong in faith, giving glory to God.' And have more comfort in ourselves: Rom. 15:13, 'The God of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing.' The more you believe, the more you know you do believe, and the more will God own your faith: John 1:50, 'Believest thou? thou shalt

see greater things than these.' Weakness of faith is punished as well as total unbelief: Num. 20:12, 'Because ye believed not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring the congregation into the land which I have given them.'

2. For love. We should grow in love as well as faith; he that maketh conscience of the one will make conscience of the other also; both are recommended by the same authority; the one is a necessary effect of the other. Can a man have a due sense of God's love, and not love what belongeth to God?

SERMON XXXI

And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby know we that he abideth in us, by his Spirit which he hath given to us.—1 JOHN 3:24.

HERE is the further happiness of those that make conscience of an entire and uniform obedience to God's holy will—(1.) Access to God in prayer; (2.) Success, ver. 22; (3.) Constant communion with God.

In the words, first, we have an excellent privilege, 'And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.'

Secondly, The proof, fruit, and evidence of it, 'And hereby know we that he abideth in us, by his Spirit which he hath given to us.'

1. The privilege, 'Dwelleth in him, and he in him.' Dwelling noteth the continued presence and influence of Christ.

2. The proof hereby: God is where his Spirit is. Mark, he doth not prove the former, our dwelling in God, for that is our duty as well as our privilege, but his dwelling in us, that needeth most to be

confirmed: and in proving that he proveth both; for Christ dwelleth in none but those that dwell in him. The first is all we can handle at present.

Doct. A near, intimate, and constant conjunction with Christ is the privilege of those who make conscience of keeping the commandments.

First, What is this near, intimate and constant conjunction with Christ? It is expressed here by a mutual inhabitation.

1. Dwelling noteth nearness and intimacy; it is not dwelling by one another, but dwelling in one another: 'You in me, and I in you,' John 14:20; which noteth presence and influence. So John 6:56, 'He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.' As meat is turned into the eater's substance, so they and Christ become one. Christ is present with and in the believer, that is, graciously present; not in substance at all, as man; for 'the heaven of heavens must contain him till the days of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord,' Acts 3:21. Nor in substance only as God, for so he is everywhere: Jer. 23:24, 'Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.' But by his gracious operation and special influence upon them, whereby he conveyeth life, strength, and glory to them. Life: Gal. 2:20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God;' 1 John 4:4, 'Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.' Glory: Col. 1:27, 'Christ is in you, the hope of glory.' The first gift we have from God is Christ; we partake of him before we partake of his benefits: 1 John 5:12, 'He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.' Therefore we are most strictly united to him as members to the head, whence they receive strength and motion; so do we receive gracious influence as from our head.

2. It is a constant habitual presence; for dwelling noteth continuance and perseverance. Christ cometh not for a visit and away, but it noteth his abode and constant residence: he doth not sojourn only for a season, but take up his abode in us: John 14:23, 'We will take up our abode with him.' Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, those blessed guests will dwell there. The Spirit may come upon the carnal by a transient motion, move them at times as they have their good moods and fits; but he doth not act the faithful per modum actus transientis, but per modum habitus permanentis, by a constant habitual influence or principle of life. God hath put our life into Christ's hands: 'Because he liveth we shall live also,' John 14:19. So that we do not use him as an instrument for a turn, which is then laid by till we need it again; or as a pen to write, or a knife to cut; but we constantly live in him, as the principle and root of our life, as branches use the root, and members the head, which they live by, and from which when they are severed they die and wither, 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him,' Col. 3:4. He will convey life to us, begun in grace here and perfected in glory. This life is maintained on his part by a constant influence, on our part by a constant dependence: therefore by dwelling in him and he in us is intended not only intimacy—that is implied in the phrase 'in him'—but constancy, in the word 'abide' or dwell. Being united to Christ, we still cleave to him, and Christ withdraweth not the Spirit from us.

3. It is a mutual presence; we dwell in Christ, and he in us. This must be heeded and regarded for two reasons—

[1.] Because our abiding in him is the way to have him abide in us, and so the communion is mutual: John 15:4, 'Abide in me and I in you.' One clause is the exhortation, the other the promise. No man hath any dwelling in Christ, but Christ hath first his dwelling in him;

he first cometh into our hearts, and then giveth us place in his heart also: we must take the course, use the means, whereby he may abide in us.

[2.] Because there is no danger the union will break on Christ's part: if we abide in him, he will not fail to abide in us. His gracious presence is secured by his love and promise; all the danger is of breaking on our part; and therefore we must be quickened and exhorted to abide in him: and as by other motives, so by the danger of apostasy, not only that we may evidence the reality of our union with him, but that we may keep the bonds entire and unbroken. So doth our Lord testify, John 15:6, 'If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men cast them into the fire and they are burned.' Now should we be wiser than Christ, who minded his own disciples of the danger of apostasy, and the dreadful wrath following upon it, to make them afraid of defection? For this is one means which God useth to contain and keep the elect within the bounds of their duty; and therefore they must not be smoothed up with persuasions of their immutable standing, but he warned of the inseparable connection between apostasy from the known truth and way of godliness, and the dreadful wrath and displeasure of God on supposition they do so. *Suppositiones nihil ponunt in esse.* Such suppositions do not shake the foundation of God, but confirm our constant adherence to him.

4. It is an eximious and excellent privilege; for here it is not propounded by way of exhortation, but motive; not enforced as a duty, but asserted as the reward of a duty, that if we be tender of breaking God's laws, he abideth in us and we in him: and so it is in other places: John 14:23, 'If any one keep my commandments, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.' It is our great work to love God, and our great happiness

to be beloved of him; therefore the greatest expression of his love is to dwell in us, and fix his residence in our hearts. This Christ promiseth to his disciples, as knowing they will prize it, how contemptibly soever the world thinketh of it; and we should also prize and value this above other favours. Take either part for our dwelling in God, to have a lodging in the heart of God, and then God in us; he will dwell in us in these houses of clay before we come to dwell with him in his palace of glory. It is surely the greatest happiness that can befall man in this world, and accordingly it should be valued.

5. This strict union and conjunction is begun by the Spirit, but continued by faith, love, and obedience. It is begun in us by his Spirit; for Christ maketh his first entry into believers wholly by the Spirit: 1 Cor. 6:17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' As in the matrimonial bond, they who are joined together are one flesh, so in this mystical union one spirit; not only to show its spiritual nature, but its author. It is done by the Spirit uniting us to Christ, and by Christ to God: 1 Cor. 12:13, 'We are by one spirit baptized into one body, and we are made to drink into one spirit.' Our first insition or implantation into Christ is represented by baptism, as our nutrition and growth by the Lord's supper; and there it is said to be done by the Spirit; as bees first build their cells, and then dwell in them. But then it is continued by faith, love, and obedience: Eph. 3:17, 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.' It is by his dwelling in us by his Spirit that we receive his influence and assistance; and then it is manifest to us by love: 1 John 4:16, 'We have known and believed the love which God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' When the heart is moulded and framed to love God, upon the apprehension of his great and wonderful love in our redemption, God dwelleth in us and we in God. And John 15:9, 10, 'As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you;

continue ye in my love: if ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.' If they would maintain the exercise of their love to God, and the sense of his love to them, they should obey him. And then, for obedience, it is plainly asserted in the text; and again, 1 John 1:7, 'If ye walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.' Surely the more we fulfil his will, the more God delighteth in us, and to communicate his grace to us; our state of sin was a state of enmity to God, but the state of holiness and obedience to him is our state of conjunction and agreement with him, which is perfect when our holiness is perfect.

6. The effect of this strict union, conjunction, and presence is spiritual influence, or the assistance of his Spirit, on Christ's part; on our part, holiness and fruitful obedience. Hence we have his Spirit to guide us: Rom. 8:14, 'As many as are led by the Spirit.' To quicken us, 'For the Spirit that dwelleth in us is life,' Rom. 8:10. To strengthen us to perform duties: Eph. 3:16, 'To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;' Heb. 13:21, 'Working in us what is pleasing in his sight,' and helping us to fulfil his will. For bearing of burdens: Phil. 4:16, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.' So that they are continually acted, excited, and strengthened by God. On our part the effect is holiness and fruitful obedience; before we made it a means of this conjunction, now we make it the fruit and effect of it, for it is both. It is enforced by two arguments: John 15:4, 5, 'Abide in me and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can you except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.' Where there are two things asserted—First, That without his dwelling in us, and we in him, we can be no more fruitful than a branch which is broken off from the vine; no communion, no

fruitfulness: he cannot do anything acceptable to God; not only nihil magnum, no great thing, but nihil prorsum, nothing at all. As we cannot do the greatest and most difficult things, so not the least thing, if broken off from Christ. Secondly, That if we still dwell and abide in him, we shall abound in fruit; he is able and willing to supply all our wants, and make us ready for every good work.

7. Though Christ do familiarly communicate himself to all believers, so as to dwell in them by his gracious presence, yet not to all alike, but to some in a larger measure and proportion than to others, as he worketh more or more effectually on them than he doth on others. We all receive of his fulness, John 1:16, but all according to our capacity and degree of receptivity: Eph. 4:7, 'To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.' All have the same saving graces for substance: 2 Peter 1:1, 'To them that have obtained like precious faith with us.' But for the degree, every one hath his peculiar measures, some are babes, some young men, and some fathers, 1 John 2:13. Visible professors have common gifts, and there is variety; but all real members have saving gifts in such a measure as Christ judgeth sufficient and most convenient. In the degrees there is much of his sovereignty seen, yea, and also of his justice sometimes, when, being provoked by sin and our unkind dealing, he doth withhold a great measure of that gracious influence which at other times he vouchsafeth more plentifully. There is an influence necessary to the well-being, and to the being of grace. First, Necessary to the well-being, flourishing, and vigorous acting of grace in the heart. So the spouse complaineth that her beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone, after she had been lazy and negligent, Cant. 5:6; yet some influence of his grace still remained, for she opened to him, and he was gone. Secondly, There is an influence which is necessary to the being of grace, and without which grace would utterly die and perish. David telleth us that his feet were

almost gone, and his steps had well-nigh slipped, Ps. 73:2. But what kept him? He telleth us that, ver. 23, 'Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by thy right hand.' He was upon the brink of a precipice, ready to cast off or question a main article of faith or point of religion; but God kept him, and powerfully sustained and supported him from being overcome with that temptation. He doth not forsake us when many times we are ready to forsake him, but by his power doth secretly withhold us and keep us fast to himself. Nay, necessary vital grace may be greatly wounded and weakened, and heinous sins may make such fearful havoc in the soul, and God manifest his displeasure by withdrawing the Spirit in such a degree, that they cannot tell whether they have anything of it or no: Ps. 51:11, 'Cast me not away from thy presence, neither take thy Holy Spirit from me.' They are not utterly cast off from God, nor bereft of saving grace, yet they have lost the sensible communion of the Spirit, both in a way of comfort and grace; they see this is their desert, and that God is provoked; and it is terrible to them to be excluded from the actual sense of God's favour, and therefore deprecate this as their saddest loss.

8. The general rule is, that the strictly obedient have, a greater degree of his indwelling presence than others have. In scripture sometimes God is said to dwell with the contrite: Isa. 57:15, 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' He dwelleth in the highest heaven, and he dwelleth in the humblest heart; they most need him; and he hath work there to do, to comfort them in their serious remorse for sin. Sometimes with the trusting soul: Ps. 91:1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' He that dwells in God shall dwell in God; i.e., he that adhereth to God, and expecteth his safety from God's protection, shall not miss of what he seeketh: God will be with him, as he is always with God. But these are but

branches of holiness and obedience; generally the privilege is restrained to the pure and holy: 'With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure.' He that keepeth himself pure from sin, God will not leave any degree of godliness in him unrewarded; and this is one of his rewards, to vouchsafe them his gracious presence and influence; they have not only his sanctifying, but his comforting presence. His sanctifying presence, for as he doth punish sin with sin, so he doth reward grace with grace, with a further increase of what they seek after. His comforting presence: John 15:11, 'These things have I spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and your joy may be full.' What things were those? concerning abiding in him, in faith and love, and fruitfulness in obedience; he speaketh of his joy and their joy; he causeth it, they felt it, or the comfort they had in his bodily presence, and which should afterward be excited in them by the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, Why it is a privilege proper to them that keep his commandments, for the clause is exclusive of others.

1. Because this is God's instituted order. Now all God's institutions carry a condecency to his nature. God is holy, and requireth holiness, and delights in holiness, and therefore vouchsafeth his intimate presence with them that are holy, as the reward of their fidelity and obedience to him: Ps. 11:7, 'The righteous God loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright.' God's heart is toward the holy and the righteous, they are most amiable in his sight, and he puts most of the marks of his favour upon them, and such marks as they most value and esteem, which is his comfortable and holy presence. The same is true of Christ, for the name and nature of God is in him: 1 John 2:6, 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought also to walk even as he walked.' If we would have Christ dwell in us, we must imitate him in obedience to God.

2. Communion presupposeth union, and union agreement: Amos 3:3, 'How can two walk together except they be agreed?' If not walk together, not dwell together, not dwell one in another. What concord and agreement between Christ and Belial, between a holy God and Saviour and the workers of iniquity? There is none, there can be none: 2 Cor. 6:16, it is enforced out of this, 'I will walk in them, and I will dwell in them;' that excludeth all that is unsuitable.

3. The end and fruit of this union, which is that we may live unto God, and bring forth fruit unto God; that is the end of the spiritual marriage, which is one notion by which this near conjunction is set forth: Rom. 7:4, 'That ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.' It is the end of the spiritual engrafting; John 15:1, 2, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman: every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' This is another notion used; the members receive influence from the head for motion, a free intercourse of blood and spirits, that every part may do its offices. Now if we would keep the commandments, and live unto God, and bring forth fruit unto God, this would not be in vain: Christ hath works to be done by us, as well as comfort to bestow upon us.

4. One part of this privilege would contradict the other; it is a mutual inhabitation spoken of, 'I in him, and he in me.' Now many would have Christ to dwell in them when they are not in him but against him. Our being in him imports duty as well as privilege, that we should be for him, our hearts set upon him and his glory; he is in us by his Spirit, and we are in him by faith and love, both which produce new obedience: Gal. 5:6, 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision

availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith, which worketh by love.'

5. Wherever Christ is, he will be as Lord and sovereign; he will rule where he dwelleth, and dwell alone: Col. 2:6, 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.' He ruleth in us as Lord, therefore he must be obeyed, his commandments kept. Many times in travelling, when we see a great house we ask who dwelleth here, meaning the master of the family, not the servants, the scullions, but the owner and governor of the house; so where Christ dwelleth he will be chief. We intend it in saying, He dwelleth here. When men cool and decline in their affections to him, when they take in another inmate and indweller, whose interest shall command the interest of Christ, and whom they are more ready to serve and obey, this is to discharge Christ, not to suffer Jesus Christ any longer to dwell in them.

6. This near, intimate, and constant conjunction with Christ doth necessarily beget a likeness to him: 2 Cor. 5:17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.' And according to our pattern they are created anew; Christ is formed in them, Gal. 4:19. The stamp of Christ is left upon them. So John 1:16; some expound that 'grace for grace,' for each grace in Christ there is the like and answerable grace in the heart of a believer. As in the wax there is word for word, letter for letter, syllable for syllable, answerable to what was in the seal; or in the body of a child there is limb for limb, part for part, answerable to the parents; so in us and Christ there is patience for patience, humility for humility, obedience for obedience. Now this doth necessarily infer holiness, or keeping the commandments.

Use 1. Is information.

1. That they do in vain boast of communion with God who do not keep his commandments. It was a cheat usually among the heathens to pretend secrecy with their gods, and human nature is the same still: many usurp this high honour of communion with God, but no fruit of it appeareth. Now Christ abhorreth all pretences of communion with him, which do not appear in the effects: 1 John 2:4, 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.' 'I know him,' is there put for, I enjoy him, or I am in him; for in the next verse it is explained, 'Hereby we know that we are in him.' And the Holy Ghost pronounceth there that 'he is a liar!' A lie is more than a falsehood, it is a falsehood with intention to deceive. The gross hypocrite, that liveth in secret wickedness, that contents himself only with a plausible appearance, intendeth to deceive others, as if he were in Christ when he is not; but the more refined hypocrite, that lives in partial obedience, doth deceive himself. If the communion with Christ were real, it would discover itself, and the fruit of the Spirit would be 'all goodness, righteousness, and truth,' Eph. 5:9. It cannot be otherwise while he abideth in you by his Spirit, and you abide in him by faith and love.

2. That those who have tasted the good of communion with God need often to be exhorted and encouraged to continue in it. I observe this, because many are possessed with this thought, that union with Christ will do its own business; and they expect the fruits of it, but do nothing to keep this union being a real, union. *Nomine non cogitante*; they think though man had no thought or apprehension of it, and contributeth nothing in the way of duty to receive the fruits of it, yet it will preserve him and keep him: but this is an abuse, for we are to be in him as well as he in us; and the care of preserving it, though it lieth mainly on Christ, and the grace cometh from Christ, yet it is our duty, and we need often to be quickened to it, for these reasons—

[1.] Because of dulness, laziness, and backwardness to those duties which maintain this communion. Christ abideth in us by constant influence and quickening virtue; but there are duties required on our part of faith, love, and new obedience. As there is a constant influence on his part, so there must be a constant adherence on ours. We are to 'cleave to him with full purpose of heart,' Acts 11:23. And by constant endeavour seek to please him, and frequently draw nigh to him in holy services, as the scripture everywhere showeth; but we are idle and apt to neglect our duty.

[2.] Because of our averseness to self-denial, and dependence by reason of that security and selfishness which is very natural to us, especially if we have received anything by way of ability and power to do that which is good. Man is a proud creature, and would fain be sufficient to himself, live of himself, and do all things by himself; though Christ telleth us, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' The sense of our impotency and emptiness is troublesome and humbling; therefore we need often to quicken you to be nothing in yourselves, and all in Christ, who still giveth and continueth all that we have or can do for God. This dependence begetteth observance, Phil. 2:12, 13; 1 Cor. 15:10, 'Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' We being but inferior agents and instruments under him, though voluntary and obedient instruments, by our own strength, and without the grace of Christ, we are not sufficient to begin or finish any christian duties; it is not we that live, but Christ that liveth in us, and breatheth upon us by fresh and continual inspirations. Peter was confident of the sincerity of his own resolutions, but he was not sensible of his weakness; now this must often be revived upon us, that we may entirely depend upon God.

[3.] We are often hotly assaulted with temptations after our hearts are set for God and heaven. God may permit us to be exercised with

sharp trials, and buffeted very sorely; therefore we need quicken you to abide in him. Do not run away from your defence and strength; do not think that Christ will cast you off. Now is the time to show he is in you, Rom. 8:39.

[4.] We may run into sins which endanger a forfeiture; therefore we need often to be put in remembrance of abiding in Christ, that we may not wrest ourselves out of the arms of mercy.

3. It informeth us how dangerous it is to injure and wrong them that fear God and keep his commandments; they are in Christ, and Christ is in them; he taketh the injuries as done to himself: Acts 9:4, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' You do wrong to the Lord Jesus when you hate what of Christ is in them: Isa. 37:28, 'But I know thy abode, and thy going out and coming in, and thy rage against me,' saith God to Sennacherib. Benefits done to us are taken as done to him, Mat. 25. So injuries, Christ taketh them as done to himself.

Use 2. Is to persuade us to keep his commandments. I shall press this —(1.) From the excellency of the privilege; (2.) The necessity of obedience.

1. The excellency of the privilege; this deserveth our choicest endeavours.

[1.] Consider what an obliging act of condescension it is on God's part to dwell in us. Could we have used these expressions if God had not used them before us? 'But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth?' was the wonder of one of the wisest men on earth, 2 Chron. 6:18. But more to dwell in us and walk in us, 1 Cor. 6:16; to dwell in the hearts of such poor vile creatures as we are. What base and unclean guests lodge within us naturally; but what a blessed thing is it to have God dwell in us and we in him!

[2.] Consider how much the people of God value his external presence: Exod. 33:15, 'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.' But now Christ is not only with us, but in us, 2 Cor. 5:3. It is that which bringeth us nearer to God, and fits us to receive more from him. Temporal blessings, Rom. 8:32; all spiritual blessings, 1 Cor. 1:30; eternal, John 17:23, 24.

2. The necessity of obedience; it is not only profitable for more ample communion, but necessary, the union else is but pretended; it cannot be continued; but is interrupted and broken off. Now when God hath made a difference between you and others, will you seek to unmake it again? He cometh to dwell in you to make you holy.

SERMON XXXII

And we know that he abideth in us, by his Spirit, which he hath given us.—1 JOHN 3:24.

DOCT. That God's dwelling and abiding in us is known by the Spirit given to us.

It is not said merely that he abideth in us by his Spirit, but 'Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by his Spirit, which he hath given to us.' Christ is where his Spirit is. It is a sure sign to us that he hath not forsaken us, but still continueth united to us.

Let us inquire—(1.) What is meant by the Spirit given to us; (2.) Why this is a sure evidence; (3.) How this Spirit worketh.

I. What is meant by the Spirit given to us. By the Spirit is meant the person of the Holy Ghost, or some created gift, called the divine nature, or new creature. The word signifieth both. Sometimes it is

taken for the Holy Ghost himself: Mat. 28:19, 'Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' Sometimes for the gifts and graces of the Spirit: John 3:6, 'And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' That divine nature which is begotten or born in us of and by the Spirit is called spirit also, and both given to us: Rom. 5:5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.' The latter is supposed to be spoken of 1 John 4:13, 'Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit;' bestowed a gracious charitable temper upon us, for that temper which was in Christ is in us also; for those words follow this clause; if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Now it mattereth not much whether we interpret it of the one or the other, for we have both the fruit and the tree, the fountain and the stream. The one cannot be without the other, nor the graces without the Spirit, for they are of his production; nor can the Spirit be said to dwell in any without respect to these graces, for the Spirit dwelleth where he worketh; and his dwelling in the souls of believers is his working there in such a peculiar manner as is not common to all men; a familiar and continued working, such as produceth life, and likeness to Christ in righteousness and holiness, which is the same with gracious habits or the new nature, which is the more immediate principle of man's actions; and the Spirit of God produceth and worketh all that good which we do by the mediation of the new frame of heart which he hath raised in us. Yet I chiefly understand the text of the Spirit of sanctification, by whom being regenerated we live unto God, for these reasons—

1. Because it is brought as a proof of that part of the privilege, his abiding in us. The privilege is mutual and reciprocal; we abide in him and he in us. Now he doth not prove the former, but the latter; the soul dwelleth where it delighteth, but God dwelleth where he

worketh by his Spirit, which is the cause of this intimate and immediate presence, which is here expressed, not by cohabitation, but by inhabitation; and so the meaning is, the constant operations of the Holy Spirit dwelling and working in you show that Christ hath not forsaken us, but taken up his abode in our hearts.

2. Because this is the great fruit of God's love, and reward of our obedience: John 14:23, 'If any man love me, and keep my commandments, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.' 'We,' that is, all the persons of the blessed Trinity; not the Father and the Son only, but the Holy Spirit, who doth constantly and by his habitual effects abide in the hearts of the faithful, and thereby evidenceth God's love to them: John 14:17, Christ speaking of the Spirit of truth, saith, 'Ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.'

3. This Spirit is more discernible by us by his motions and powerful influence, and the ways which he hath to manifest himself; and so more proper to discover and make known the dwelling of God in us than the bare habits of grace, especially both together than the latter singly and alone. Indeed, one way by which he doth discover his sanctifying presence is by that habitual bent of heart towards God which we call the new nature, and the fruits and works of it. When we find the frame of our hearts changed for the better, and if we act accordingly, we may conclude it; but that which maketh all evident is his continual presence and powerful influence, by which we are acted and quickened; for as the apostle saith, 'By the Spirit of God we know the things which are freely given us of God,' 1 Cor. 2:12, both in the gospel and in our own hearts.

4. The Holy Ghost is said to dwell in believers as his temple: 1 Cor. 3:16, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit

of God dwelleth in you?' 1 Cor. 6:19, 'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?' So that the Spirit himself abideth in believers; and not only grace from the Spirit, but he is present in the soul as Christ's agent to convey light, life, and love to us; and not as a distant agent, but as the immediate exciter of all that grace that is in us. There is his power and presence, as in his temple and proper place of residence; he first builds up his temple, and then dwelleth in it.

II. Why this is a sure, rich, full, and pregnant evidence of God's dwelling in us.

1. Because the coming down of the Holy Ghost upon Christ was the evidence of God's love to him, and the visible demonstration of his filiation and sonship to the world: John 3:34, 'The Father loved the Son, and gave him the Spirit without measure.' Now Christ prayed, John 17:26, 'That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.' Before he had said, ver. 23, 'That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.' None will think in degree, therefore in kind, that God manifests his love to us the same way which he did to him, and that is by the gift of the Holy Spirit, or his filiation. John knew Christ to be the Son of God by the Spirit descending and abiding on him: John 1:32, 'I, John, bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.' Yea, God himself declared this to be a visible demonstration of his sonship, Mat. 3:17. So do we know ourselves to be the children of God, by the Spirit's inhabitation and sanctifying work upon our souls.

2. The pouring out of the Spirit was the visible evidence given to the church of the valuableness and acceptation of Christ's satisfaction for us, to set afoot the gospel covenant. When God was reconciled and

pacified, then he shed forth the Spirit: Acts 2:33, 'Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.' So John 7:38, 39, 'He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.' Now this is true of God's reconciliation to us in particular: when pacified towards us, he giveth the Spirit; because the part followeth the reason of the whole: Rom. 5:11, 'And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement' There is the atonement made, and the atonement received; they are both evidenced the same way, by this fountain of living waters, which is given to all believers: John 4:14, 'But whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water which I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life.' And all the good God worketh in us, he worketh as a God of peace reconciled to us by Christ.

3. Because it was the first witness of the truth of the gospel, and therefore the best pledge we can have of the love of God in our hearts; for believers are confirmed the same way which the gospel is confirmed; that which confirmeth Christianity confirmeth the christian, the reality of our interest; as the extract and original charter have value from the same attestation or stamp and seal: Acts 5:32, 'And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost.' And the wonders wrought by the Spirit: Heb. 2:4, 'God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.' This was extraordinary, therefore the christian needeth not to have his Christianity confirmed by miracles, but by the sanctifying Spirit: John 17:17,

'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.' This the believer must have: 1 John 5:10, 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself;' the Spirit comforting the conscience by the blood of Christ, and sanctifying and cleansing the heart as with pure water, ver. 8. This is our evidence that we are true christians: so the testimony of Christ is confirmed in us.

4. It is proper to the matter in hand, union and communion with Christ.

[1.] Consider the privilege itself, the nature of this union with Christ, the object, the author and continual preserver: 2 Cor. 13:14, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.' Communion is imputed to the Holy Ghost, as love to God, and grace to Christ: 1 Cor. 6:17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' As a man and a harlot are one flesh, so we are one spirit, because it is not a communion of bodies, but spirits. There is the same spirit in head and members; therefore the apostle concludeth, Rom. 8:9, 'Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;' is not grafted as a living member into Christ's mystical body.

[2.] For the bands of this union, faith and love and new obedience, they are all wrought in us, and stirred up in us by the Spirit.

(1.) Faith, it is the Spirit which giveth faith: Gal. 5:5, 'For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.' It is he that doth internally enlighten our minds, and incline our hearts to embrace the gospel covenant, and Christ revealed in it. All that faith which we have is the gift of God, Eph. 2:8; and God worketh by his Spirit, 'who openeth the eyes of our mind, that we may believe and receive the gospel,' Eph. 1:17, 18.

(2.) For love, it is his production also, for love is of God, 1 John 4:7, that is, wrought in us by the efficacy of his Spirit. The great design of the gospel is to reveal the love of God, and thereby to recover our love to God, that we may love him again, who hath loved us first, 1 John 4:19. Now the bare revelation of this love in the word will not do it, unless it be shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit given to us, Rom. 5:5. Therefore, as the Spirit of light, he worketh faith; as a Spirit of love, he worketh love in us, and recovereth us from the world and the flesh to God. Naturally we love our own selves, that is, our own flesh, above God; for 'that which is born of flesh is flesh.' And we love the world above God, 2 Peter 1:4. All this is remedied by the new nature given to us by the Spirit, that we may love God, and live to him.

(3.) For new obedience, it is wrought in us by the Spirit also: 'Seeing ye have purified your hearts in obeying the truth through the Spirit,' 1 Peter 1:23. He quickeneth all the acts of the new life: Ezek. 36:27, 'I will put my Spirit into you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' So that the Holy Ghost being given to us as our sanctifier, he resideth in our hearts as the immediate agent of Christ, and the worker of all grace; as a Spirit of light and love maintaining and carrying on our communion with God in Christ. If we have such a spirit, we may know that he abideth in us; but without his illuminating, quickening, sanctifying work on the heart, we are not christians.

[3.] The Spirit given to us is fit only to satisfy us concerning our interest in this blessed and glorious privilege, for these reasons—

(1.) Because the privilege is so high, that we should dwell in God and God in us, that we need some great benefit to assure us of it. Now the Holy Ghost is a benefit becoming God to give and us to receive. For God to give us his Spirit, it is more than if he had given us all the

world. A believer valueth it above all other evidences, and in its own nature it deserveth it, as being the highest demonstration of God's bounty and liberality to us; if he giveth all the world, he giveth something without himself, but when he giveth the Spirit he giveth himself. The uncreated Spirit is a person of the Godhead, and the Godhead is undivided, and saving grace is the permanent effect thereof. Other mercies run in the channel of common providence, but this could only be conveyed to us by the mediation of Jesus Christ. The Father sends him in Christ's name: John 14:26, 'And the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name.' And Christ sendeth him from the Father: John 15:26, 'But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father.' He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and is the fruit of both their loves to us. Christ hath merited this effectual operation, and conveyed the Spirit to us as our head: John 16:14, 15, 'He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.' Other things are given in anger, but not the Spirit; we may have them and perish for ever; but when we have this great benefit, then we know we live in God, and are fitted to live to God, and shall live with him for ever.

(2.) Because it is a privilege into which we are admitted after a breach. Persons that have been at variance will not easily believe one another, and trust one another, unless their reconciliation be sealed by some remarkable good turn and visible testimony of love. A great offender was never reconciled to Augustus unless he did put some mark of favour upon him; as David to Amasa, in giving him the generalship of his army. And further, the breach hath been so great between God and us, that we shall have no peace and joy in believing, till we have some gift that may be a perfect demonstration that he is at peace with us. This is the work of the sanctifying Spirit: 1 Thes.

5:23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;' Heb. 13:20, 21, 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight;' Rom. 16:20, 'And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly;' 2 Cor. 5:18, 'And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ Jesus, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.' Most men's confidence cometh from their stupid security and slightness in soul matters. A christian that is in good earnest must have a sufficient proof of God's love, that he is reconciled, taken into God's family, made 'an heir according to the hope of eternal life.' Now this is done by the Spirit.

(3.) It is an inward and spiritual privilege, and therefore must have a spiritual confirmation. Now this is within our own hearts. The death of Christ was a demonstration of God's love, but that was done without us, and before we were born. Justification is a blessed privilege, but that is either God's act in heaven accepting us in Christ, or else the sentence of his law and new covenant, constituting us just and righteous. But this is done in our hearts by the Spirit: Gal. 4:6, 'He hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts;' 2 Cor. 1:22, 'Given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' This witness we have within ourselves.

(4.) Because the Spirit may act transiently, and in a passing way upon others, and that which is seldom done may be mistaken or suspected, therefore the Holy Ghost abideth in us by his constant operations: John 14:17, 'Ye shall know him, for he abideth in you.' What we feel constantly, frequently, we cannot be deceived in it. They feel his operations comforting, quickening, instructing them, mortifying their lusts, exciting them to holiness, and so may see how

they are beloved of God, and minded by him upon all occasions. The effects of the Spirit show it, such as are life, holiness, faith, strength, comfort, joy, peace, support under our crosses and afflictions, groans after heaven. This constant experience can be no delusion; therefore the observing of this breedeth true and solid comfort.

III. The properties or operations of this Spirit, as he is a proof and evidence of our communion with God.

1. It is a Spirit of life: Rom. 8:2, 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus;' and Gal. 5:25, 'If we live in the Spirit.' The Spirit maketh the soul alive that was dead in sin; therefore when we are dead to the world, we are really alive to God, as will appear by our actions and earnest desires after heavenly things. Many have a name to live, for parts do strangely counterfeit grace; but if the Spirit becometh a principle of life within us, then we live indeed. Surely it is a sign of great weakness, at least, to be alive to other things, and dead-hearted in all acts of religion.

2. It is a Spirit of love as well as of life. Some make the Holy Ghost the love that passeth between the Father and the Son. Surely the operative love of God to us is conveyed by the Spirit. Now according to his nature so he worketh, inclining us to love God and our brother, yea, our very enemies: 'For the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.' The apostle saith, 1 Thes. 4:9, 'We are taught of God to love one another.' God's teaching is by impression and inclination. Envious and bitter zeal, malice, and all uncharitableness and revenge, is not of God, but the devil; therefore they that are acted by these things know not what spirit they are of.

3. It is a Spirit of sanctification, often so called: 2 Thes. 2:14, 'God hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit.' A pure and holy Spirit given to us to renew our natures, and put us into

the way of salvation: Titus 3:5, 6, 'He saveth us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord;' to purge out sin, and suppress the motions of all that pride, worldliness, and sensuality which is so natural to us: Rom. 8:13, 'If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;' and to quicken us to grow more complete in the will of God, that we may both do it and suffer it, and be prepared and fitted to live with God for ever.

4. It is a Spirit of power, enabling us to vanquish temptations that arise either from the terrors and delights of sense, by propounding the blessedness of the other and better world: 2 Tim. 1:7, 'For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.'

5. It is a Spirit of adoption: Rom. 8:15, 16, 'But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God;' and Gal. 4:6, 'And because we are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.' It is the surest sign of God's fatherly love, and the pledge of our adoption, and so inclineth us to God as a Father in Christ, that we may love him, delight in him, and depend upon him. It breedeth a childlike affection to God, childlike confidence, childlike obedience; these are the true fruits of the Spirit of Christ. All God's children have not a childlike confidence, but a childlike inclination; they cannot keep away from God; when they cannot own him as a Father with delightful confidence, yet they dare not offend him; there is an awe of God, though they are not assured of his love. In short, they love him, though they cannot say he loveth them.

6. It is a Spirit of supplication: Zech. 12:10, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of

grace and supplication.' Wherein we manifest our childlike affection to God; and in that duty he doth most help our infirmities, Rom. 8:26, stirring up in us ardent groans and desires, and in giving us life in our prayers, and a holy boldness whenever we come to God. There the renewed soul doth directly apply itself to God, and the work of the sanctifying Spirit is most sensibly acted and discovered.

Use 1. To inform us how to know whether our communion with God be interrupted, yea or no, or whether God be pleased or displeased with us, by observing the motions or withdrawals of his Spirit. We cannot know it by outward things; for God may 'rebuke those whom he loveth, and chasten every son whom he receiveth,' Heb. 12:6, and may give outward comforts in anger; these are not evidences of God's love and hatred, Eccles. 9:2. God will not mark out men by their outward estate, discover the wicked by their afflictions, nor reward the godly with this world's good things, nor distinguish them by the blessings of his common providence, but hath taken another course to show his anger or his love, his pleasure or displeasure, by giving and withholding the Spirit. When he is provoked by his people, there is some abatement, not only of the comforting, but quickening and sanctifying influences of his Spirit. Therefore David prayeth, Ps. 51:10, 'Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.' On the contrary, when he is well pleased with any, they are filled with the Spirit: Acts 11:24, 'For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost;' Acts 9:31, 'They walked in the fear of God, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost;' Acts. 13:52, 'And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.' Therefore when there is any stop of this kind of influence, we should inquire what is the matter, where it sticketh, how came our delightful commerce with God to be interrupted, what unkindness there hath been on our part?

Use 2. To put us upon self-reflection, what kind of spirit dwelleth in our hearts. Some are acted by the wrathful unclean spirit: Eph. 2:2, 'According to the prince of the power of the air, that worketh in the children of disobedience.' Others guided and influenced by the mere corrupt natural spirit: James 4:5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' But all that are adopted into God's family, all that are members of Christ's mystical body, they are guided and influenced by the Spirit of God: Rom. 8:14, 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.' If we will follow the impure and revengeful spirit, he will hurry us to destruction, as he did the herd of swine into whom he entered, Mat. 8. If we be guided by the wisdom of the flesh and our own carnal affections, we shall easily be led away from God and our happiness. It is the Holy Ghost only who bringeth us into a state of communion with God, and is as necessary to make all right between us and Christ, as Christ is between us and God. Now who are those that are guided by the Spirit of God? Our conversation will declare that *principiata respondent suis principiis*. The constant effects declare the prevailing principle; therefore what effects and fruits can you produce of the Spirit's dwelling in you?

1. The Spirit leadeth us to an holy life and perfect obedience to God. His first work is to renew the soul to the image of God, and change us into the likeness of Christ, 2 Cor. 3:18. That is the impression of this seal, left on the hearts of those where he cometh, and by which God's children are distinguished from others. He is given on purpose to heal our natures, destroy our sins, and to excite us to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Now where this effect is accomplished, they may certainly say, God hath given his Spirit, namely, where God doth sanctify the souls of his people, mortify their lusts, and master their strongest corruptions, and raise them to those inclinations and affections which mere nature is a stranger unto. Surely a divine power hath been working there; when they are more like God, and fit

for the service of God, they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. 1:13. His first renewing and sanctifying work, and his carrying on that work, whereby the image of God is more imprinted on us, will be our surest evidence, especially when holiness of life floweth from it; for graces acted and exercised do more discover themselves; and such a supernatural effect as the sanctifying our natures, and the ruling and governing of our lives. Could the love and fear of God be produced by any other cause than the Spirit of God?

2. The Spirit is a perfect opposite to the flesh; and they that are tinder the power and conduct of the Spirit do resist and conquer the desires of the flesh; for it is not a fruitless resistance: Gal. 5:16, 17, 'This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh: for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other;' Rom. 8:5, 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit;' Gal. 6:8, 'For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. They spend their time and strength, life and love, care and thoughts in seeking after spiritual things; their business is not to gratify the flesh, but enrich the soul, to excel in knowledge, love to God, faith in Christ, and hopes of the other world, though with the loss of carnal pleasures; and so they comply with the precepts of Christ, which everywhere call upon us to curb the flesh, to dispossess us of the beast that is gotten into our natures, and to raise us in some measure into the degree and rank of an angel; to draw us off from the natural and animal life to life spiritual and eternal, or, which is all one, to drive out the spirit of the world, and to introduce a divine and heavenly spirit. The brutish part of the world is enslaved to lower things, but they that are recovered out of this defection by the power of the Spirit grow wise and heavenly. The great disease of mankind

was, that our immortal souls are depressed and tainted by the objects of sense, and did wholly crook and writhe itself to earthly things; and instead of likeness to God, the image of a beast was impressed on man's nature, and the better part, his soul, was enslaved and embondaged to the worser part, his flesh. Now the Spirit of God cometh by degrees to restore human nature to its primitive perfection, that the spirit might command his flesh, and man might seek his happiness in some higher and more transcending good than the beasts are capable of, something that suits with his immortal spirit, and to elevate us from a state of subjection to the flesh into a liberty for divine and heavenly things.

3. The Spirit inclineth us to all duties to our neighbours; for it is said, Eph. 5:9, 'The fruits of the Spirit in us are in all goodness and righteousness and truth.' Meaning thereby, he maketh men sincere, good, just in their carriage to men; by 'goodness,' taking all occasions of being useful to others as to their spiritual and bodily estate; by 'righteousness,' just dealings in all our transactions with others; and by 'truth,' a sincere carriage, free from lying hypocrisy and dissimulation. So Gal. 5:22, 23, 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.' Duties to our neighbour are implied in all these graces. By 'love,' understand love to our neighbour; by 'joy,' sweetness of converse, or delighting in their good; by 'peace,' that which concerneth all men as much as possible can be; by 'long-suffering,' patience, bearing and forgiving of injuries; by 'gentleness,' easiness to be entreated; by 'goodness,' a communicativeness to all, especially the household of faith; by 'faith,' fidelity, truth in our commerce; by 'meekness,' restraint of our anger; by 'temperance,' a holy moderation in the use of earthly things and the delights thereof. Well, then, when these things are practised by us, the Spirit is given to us.

4. The Spirit leadeth us to a heavenly life, as the flesh did to things grateful to present sense; he discovereth those things to us: Eph. 1:17, 18, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' The reality of future glory and blessedness, he prepareth and fitteth us for it: 2 Cor. 5:5, 'Now he that hath wrought us to this self-same thing is God, who hath given us the earnest of the Spirit;' Rom. 9:27, 'Prepared unto glory.' The heavenly mind, the purified heart; he assureth us of it: 2 Cor. 1:22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit.' Comforteth us with it, and raiseth our longing after it: Rom. 8:23, 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.' Quickening us to diligence and seriousness in the pursuit of it: Phil. 3:20, 'But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour.' Much of the Spirit's operation is about fitting us for heaven.

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